

South Plains College

GOVT 2306

SUMMER SESSION ONE 2017

## **Texas Government**

Traditional Course, AD129, RC 323

Professor Drew Landry

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Levelland Campus, Administrative Building 132

Office Number: (806) 716 - 4032

Office Hours: By appointment only

### **Common Course**

Department: Social Sciences

Discipline: Government

Course Number: GOVERNMENT 2306

Course Title: Texas Government (Texas Constitution and Topics)

Credit: 3 Lecture, 0 Lab

Satisfies a core curriculum requirement? Yes, Social Science and ALL Undergraduate Degrees

Prerequisites: TSI compliance in Reading

Available Formats: Conventional, INET, ITV

Campus: Levelland, Reese, ATC, Plainview

Textbook: Varies according to instructor. Refer to each instructor's instructions for textbook requirements.

Course Specific Instructions: Each instructor will attach his/her course with specific instructions.

Course Description: This course is a study of the functions performed in the American system of state governments, with special reference to the development of governance in Texas and its Constitutions. This course satisfies the Legislative requirements for teacher certification.

Course Purpose: Government 2306, as taught at South Plains College, is a reading intensive course designed to acquaint the learner with the origin and development of the Texas Constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas. This course meets the statutory requirements as set forth by the state of Texas.

Approval Number: 45.1002.51 25

Course Requirements: To maximize a student's potential to complete this course, he/she should attend all class meetings, complete all homework assignments and examinations in a timely manner, and complete all other projects or papers as assigned in the instructor's specific instructions.

Course Evaluation: See the instructor's course information sheet for specific items used in evaluating student performance.

Attendance Policy: Whenever absences become excessive and in the instructor's opinion, minimum course objectives cannot be met due to absences, the student will be withdrawn from the course. Each instructor will have additional information about attendance on his/her course information sheet.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Students who have completed this course will:

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas Constitution.
2. Demonstrate and understanding of state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas Government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.
6. Analyze the state and local election process.
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues, policies, and political culture of Texas.

Fundamental Component Areas (FCA):

Students will be expected to perform satisfactorily in four FCA.

1. Critical Thinking Skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information by:

- a. Generating and communicating ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information,
  - b. Gathering and assessing information relevant to a question,
  - c. Analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information.
2. Communication – to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral or visual communication by:  
Developing, interpreting, and expressing ideas through written, oral, or visual communication.
3. Social Responsibility Skills – to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively I regional, national, and global communities by:
- a. Demonstrating intercultural competence,
  - b. Identifying civic responsibility,
  - c. Engaging in regional, national, and global communities.
4. Personal Responsibility – to include the ability to connect choices, action, and consequences to ethical decision-making by:
- a. Reading, understanding and affirming agreement and acceptance of principles, guidelines and requirements set forth in the “Statement of Personal Responsibility of Students” (Attached)
  - b. Evaluating choices and actions and relating consequences to personal decision-making
  - c. Accepting personal responsibility for decisions and actions taken or not taken

### **Course Description**

This course is a study of the functions performed in the American system of state governments, with special reference to the development of governance in Texas and its Constitutions. This course satisfies the Legislative requirements for teacher certification. In this course, students will learn about the origin and development of the Texas constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.

### **Course Requirements/Expectations**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and prepared. This means fully completing the weekly readings and homework ***before*** arriving to class. No late work – including exams – will be accepted without a note from a medical doctor.

Please no cell phone, pager, iPod, etc. usage during class. This is rude to me and distracting to your classmates. Please be respectful of others and power down your cellular devices, pagers, iPods, etc.

Students may use a laptop computer during class but are not permitted to instant message others, check social network updates, email, etc. I was a student once and am aware of the telltale signs of when the aforementioned is happening. The usage of the laptop computers is meant for taking

notes and considered a privilege, not a right, given to you by me and can be taken away at any time.

While this course requires no prior knowledge of Texas politics, there is considerable reading related to a wide range of topics. It is essential that students complete the weekly readings before class. We cover a great deal of material so it is critical that you attend class regularly, take careful notes, keep abreast of the readings, and participate fully in class discussions. If you feel you need extra help in managing the course materials, contact me and I will help you.

### **Required Textbooks (come bundled; only purchase at SPC bookstore)**

Donovan, T., Smith, D.A., & Mooney, C.Z. (2015). *State and Local Politics: Institutions and Reform, Brief Contents*. Mason, OH: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Jones, M.P., Maxwell, W.E., Crain, E.,(2016). *Texas Politics Today*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

### **Coursework**

Students will be given three (3) to five (5) exams throughout the semester. The exams are aimed to evaluate student progress in the class. If discrepancies exist, notify me immediately. There are no makeups except in the case of an emergency.

Also, students will be given one (1) writing assignment. The writing assignment will be turned in through turnitin.com via Blackboard. Students will receive a written explanation on what is expected one (1) week before the assignment is due. For every day late – including weekends – the paper will succumb to a five (5) point deduction on its final grade.

There will be content quizzes throughout the semester. These are conducted through the class' Blackboard site and will be about five (5) to ten (10) questions covering the material and current Texas political news from class to class. There are no makeups for these quizzes.

Last, and certainly not least, is class participation. Students are required to participate in class. A significant amount of class points lies in participating and if a student is absent, she/he cannot participate in class. If students are late and/or arbitrarily leave class for a significant amount of time, uses cell phone during class, etc., their participation grade will suffer. If an emergency occurs, that is a different situation and I should be notified.

#### *Exam Day Conduct*

When taking exams, students need a pencil and an eraser. Cellular devices, tablets, iPods, pagers, etc., need to be either turned off or silenced – **not on vibrate** – and stowed away in backpack, purse, bag, or any other packaging device. All backpacks, purses, bags, etc., need to be on the floor and all course material need to be inside it and closed. If an unsilenced phone goes off during an exam, your professor reserves the right to answer it.

If any student chooses to ignore this directive and his/her phone goes off, the entire class will receive a ten (10) point deduction on his/her exam.

### *Yawning*

If any student feels the need to yawn during class, it is expected to do so silently while covering his/her mouth. Failure to follow such a simplistic social norm may result in the professor responding to such action.

## **Grades**

Students are ingrained to think a percentage ending in “.5” will be rounded to the nearest whole number. I only round to the nearest whole number if a student has at least a “.9.” This is my practice and I have done this for numerous years. I have no intention of changing it. If you desire a better grade, earn it.

In calculating grades, I keep it very simple. I take the total points a student accumulated and divide that number into the total points possible and multiply by one hundred (100). The result from this basic math is your class percentage. A scale of what percentage constitutes a letter grade is below.

### *Grading Scale*

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 100 – 90%     | A |
| 89 – 80%      | B |
| 79 – 70%      | C |
| 69 – 60%      | D |
| 59% and below | F |

## **Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to regularly attend class so absences should be rare. Students, however, may not miss more than four (4) classes before point deductions are made from their participation grade. Once a student misses two (2) classes, his/her advisor will be notified. If, at any time, a student misses two (2) weeks of class, he/she will be dropped by the instructor.

If at any time a student feels as though he/she cannot make it to class, notify me immediately. My contact information is on the front page of the syllabus.

If any student accumulates excessive absences after the last day to drop classes (06/26/17), he/she will earn an “F” for the course.

## **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism is the taking credit for something that is not the work of the owner. It is cheating and will not be tolerated. See the General Catalog for more information on plagiarism.

## **Technology Policy**

The following is Professor Landry's policy on the usage of laptop computers, iPads, and other mobile tablets in the classroom. Professor Landry will not allow students to use them. Also, please refrain from taking pictures of the notes, unless given permission to do so. Repeated violations of the terms of use will result in the loss of this liberty.

The use of cellular/mobile phones is prohibited in the classroom. If caught, the professor will ask you to stow it away. If a phone rings in class, Professor Landry will answer the phone for you, politely inform the caller that you cannot answer the phone, and will keep the phone until the end of class.

Texting is a neat method of communicating but will not be tolerated in the classroom. It is obvious when a student is texting and if/when a student is spotted, he/she will be asked to stow it away. If a student is caught a second time, the phone will be confiscated until the end of class.

If you are expecting a call or have children in daycare, notify me immediately and I will make an exception for you.

I do not desire to be the "bad guy" but have no problem playing that role. If you do not want an uncomfortable classroom setting, then please do not update social media or text during class. That can wait until class is over.

## **Academic English**

South Plains College requires all students to become proficient in "academic English," a form of English typically used in academic, professional, and business contexts. While slang, regional idioms, and informal kinds of self-expression are appropriate in some contexts, they are out of place in academic writing. Professors expect all students to demonstrate proficiency in using the conventions of academic English in all their written work, whether it is in-class exams or take-home essays.

## **Diversity Statement**

In this class, the teacher will establish and support an environment that values and nurtures individual and group differences and encourages engagement and interaction. Understanding and respecting multiple experiences and perspectives will serve to challenge and stimulate all of us to learn about others, about the larger world and about ourselves. By promoting diversity and intellectual exchange, we will not only mirror society as it is, but also model society as it should and can be.

## **Nondiscrimination Policy**

It is the policy of South Plains College and this instructor not to discriminate on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation (choices of sports team, however, are fair game – ha).

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities, including but not limited to physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities, who wish to request accommodations in this class should notify the Disability Services Office early in the semester so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodations must provide acceptable documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, call or visit the Disability Services Office at Levelland Student Health & Wellness Center 806-716-2577, Reese Center (also covers ATC) Building 8: 806-716-4675, Plainview Center Main Office: 806-716-4302 or 806-296-9611, or the Health and Wellness main number at 806-716-2529.

### **Tobacco Use**

Students are to follow SPC's rules and regulations on cigarette and electronic cigarette use. Also, students are not to use smokeless tobacco in class. This includes but not limited to: snuff, dip, chew, packets, etc. It is rude and distracting to do this during class and any violation will be dealt with accordingly.

### **Overall Classroom Use**

Snacks and drinks are allowed in the classroom but any messes made by the student are to be cleaned by the student. The custodial staff works incredibly hard day in and day out to make the campus as clean as possible so it takes little effort on your part to make sure your space is clean upon your entry.

### **Amendments**

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus at any time. Students will be notified of such change(s) with appropriate time to adapt

### **Course Outline**

Week 1 – Intro; Texas Culture and Diversity; Texas Constitution  
Week 2 – Texas Constitution; Voting and Elections  
Week 3 – Voting and Elections; Political Parties; Interest Groups  
Week 4 – The Legislature; Executive; Judiciary  
Week 5 – Public Education

### **Dates to Remember**

Monday, June 26 –*Last Day to Drop Classes!*

Monday, July 10 – **Final Exam**