Common Course Syllabus
Government 2306
Revised March 26, 2024

Department: Social Sciences

Discipline: Government

Course Number: GOVT 2306

Course Title: Texas Government

Credit: 3 Lecture, 0 Lab

This course partially satisfies a core curriculum requirement: Government/Political Science Foundational Component Area (070)

Available Formats: Conventional (Fully Face to Face), Fully Online, Hybrid, ITV

Campus: Levelland, Downtown Center, Plainview, Dual Credit

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: 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 Objectives addressed:
1. **Critical thinking:** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
2. **Communication:** to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
3. **Social responsibility:** to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
4. **Personal responsibility:** to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Students who have completed this course will:

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.
2. Describe 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. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues, policies and political culture of Texas.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: A writing assignment rubric will be used to determine the extent of improvement that the students have gained during the semester.

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

Attendance Policy: Students must make every effort to attend face-to-face courses. Whenever absences become excessive and in the instructor's opinion, minimum course objectives cannot be met due to absences, the instructor may recommend that the student withdraw from the course. Each instructor will have additional information about attendance on his/her course information sheet.

Dropping a Course: Students may drop courses through Texan Connect, the Admissions and Records Office, or Advising and Testing Center through the late registration period.
After late registration has closed, a student must complete the online Student Initiated Drop Request to drop a course.
Students may also drop courses in person at any campus location by completing a Student Initiated Drop Form. Complete a Student Initiated Drop Form and return the signed form to the Levelland Admissions and Records Office, the Student Support Center at the Lubbock Downtown Center, the Lubbock Career and Technical Center, or Plainview Center. You must have a picture ID to complete the drop.
A mark of "W" will be given for student-initiated drops that occur prior to and through the last day to drop as indicated in the online Academic Calendar found here: https://www.southplainscollege.edu/academiccalendar/index.php.

Syllabus Statements: For information about Artificial Intelligence, Disabilities, Non-Discrimination, Intellectual Exchange, Title IX Pregnancy Accommodations, CARE (Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation) Team, Campus Concealed Carry, and COVID-19, please use this link: https://www.southplainscollege.edu/syllabusstatements/.

GOVT 2306-604/GOVT 2306-H604
Instructor: Greg Ramzinski (gramzinski@southplainscollege.edu)
Office Hours are found on Blackboard and posted outside of each office.
Office location: Downtown campus in 1015C

Grading

Grading will be based on the following breakdown:
- Exams – 40%
- Quizzes – 25%
- Assignments – 35%
  - Assignments include preparing for each class, class participation, and online discussions.

There will be three (3) exams during the semester. Each exam will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. Exam questions will be taken from the lecture materials, supplemental videos, and articles provided during the semester. All materials can be found in the course folder on Blackboard.

Assignments and quizzes will be given during the semester and will be found in the weekly folders on Blackboard. All assignments must be submitted on Blackboard. Assignments e-mailed to the instructor, unless otherwise directed by the instructor, will not be accepted. If there is an issue uploading the assignment, please contact the instructor immediately. Late assignments will not be accepted. Do not provide a link to an assignment. The assignment must be uploaded or completed in Blackboard. You may type your response in a Word document and upload it as a document to Blackboard.

The grading scale will be:
- A = 90 – 100
- B = 80 – 89
- C = 70 – 79
- D = 60 – 69
- F = 0 – 60
- If a student receives a final grade ending in .5 or higher, the grade will be rounded up to the next whole number (e.g.: 89.5 would be rounded up to 90).
- If a student received a final grade ending in .4 or lower, the grade will be rounded down to the previous whole number (e.g.: 89.4 would be rounded down to 89).

Late Assignments & Extra Credit
- Extra credit is not available for this course.
- No late work will be accepted without an approved excuse. Medical excuses must be submitted to the instructor in no more than 7 days from the absence. Please see the SPC General Catalog under "Class Attendance"

- This will also apply to the missing of quizzes or exams which are open for a limited period of time. If you are unable to access a quiz or exam during the time it is open, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor **immediately** to rectify the situation.

Course Materials and Process
- The materials for this course are all open sources. The student will need access to a computer and the internet to be able to view the referenced materials and videos used during the course. The material and video links will be posted on Blackboard.
- This course uses a flipped classroom model designed to maximize our in-class time for interactive learning and practical application of federal government concepts. Instead of traditional lectures, our face-to-face sessions will be dedicated to hands-on exercises, debates, and simulations that deepen your understanding and hone your critical thinking, research, and communication skills.
- Each week, you'll be responsible for reviewing all assigned materials on Blackboard *before* coming to class. These materials, which may include readings, videos, or other resources—provide the foundational knowledge for that week's topic. Your preparedness is crucial and will be assessed by your ability to actively participate in and complete our in-class exercises. For instance, you might be tasked with fulfilling the role of a lobbyist, legislator, or advocate, working to pass or defeat a proposed bill. Coming to class unprepared will directly hinder your ability to complete these exercises, as they build directly on the pre-class content. This model also encourages the development of your research skills, both using traditional methods like library resources and internet searches, and by integrating tools like Large Language Models (LLMs) responsibly. Embrace this opportunity to engage with the material in a dynamic and meaningful way!

Drops and Withdrawals
- If you wish to drop a course, please go to the SPC website, and complete the online form. Click here to access the website.

For information regarding official South Plains College statements about intellectual exchange, disabilities, non-discrimination, Title V Pregnancy Accommodations, CARE Team, and Campus Concealed Carry, please visit https://www.southplainscollege.edu/syllabusstatements/.

Academic Honesty & Integrity
- Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor) or the attempt to commit such an act. This includes the submission of work completed by another individual or the purchase and submission of materials completed by another individual as your own work.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Resources:** There are now websites that will generate semi-unique material that resembles original material. Since technology is available to create this content, technology is also available to detect this content. Make no mistake; this is plagiarism. If you submit work that is not your own, original material, it will be considered plagiarism and receive a grade of zero. The incident will also be detailed to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. If material is marked as AI generated material, it is the student's responsibility to prove the material generated is their own work and not the work of AI or from another source.

  - The students will be using AI chatbots to complete assignments during the course. The instructor will provide instructions and access to chatbots to be used in the course.

- Certain assignments will require the student to share comments about course material. If comments are pasted into the comment section of the assignment, the assignment will be given a grade of zero.

- *Any student found to be in violation of the academic honesty policy could immediately be dropped from the course.*

AI Use in This Course

- This course recognizes AI tools as valuable research resources when used transparently and ethically. Students are encouraged to utilize Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Claude, or similar tools as starting points for research and idea development. However, AI output must be properly cited using the format: [AI Tool Name, prompt: "your question," response generated on Date], and any direct use of AI-generated content must be clearly indicated through quotation marks or highlighting within your work.[1]

- **Important limitations**: Students may incorporate up to 20% of AI-generated content in their assignments, meaning **80% of all submitted work must represent your own original thinking, analysis, and development of ideas**. AI output should serve as a foundation for deeper exploration, not as a final product. You must demonstrate how you have built upon, analyzed, critiqued, or expanded the initial AI response through your own research, critical thinking, and connection to course materials. Students should retain copies of their AI interactions for potential review.

- **Academic Integrity Distinction**: There is a critical difference between *disclosed, limited, and developed* AI use (which is encouraged as a research tool) and *undisclosed or wholesale* AI use (which constitutes plagiarism). Submitting predominantly AI-generated work without proper citation, development, or original analysis will be treated as academic dishonesty and result in a grade of zero, with the incident reported to the Dean of Students. When in doubt about appropriate AI use, consult with the instructor before submitting your work.

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[1] Claude, generate a prompt about the use of AI in a college course: "You are a college professor designing a policy for the use of AI in the course." Response generated on May 15, 2025.

Student Code of Conduct

- The SPC Student Code of Conduct can be found here
http://catalog.southplainscollege.edu/content.php?catoid=59&navoid=2027

Blackboard Accessibility Standards

- Blackboard measures and evaluates accessibility levels using two sets of standards: Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act issued from the United States federal government and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). A third party conducts audits of our software releases to ensure the accessibility of the products. For Blackboard Learn 9.1's conformance with the accessibility standards under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act using the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template® (VPAT®) tool, see the VPAT for Blackboard Learn Release 9.1. For Blackboard Learn 9.1 SP11 conformance statement for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, Level AA see Learn Accessibility Conformance Statement. To learn more about Blackboard's commitment to accessibility, see http://www.blackboard.com/accessibility. (These resources are available in English only.)
- All technological questions should be directed to the SPC technology center. The instructor does not solve technological/computer issues.

Student Privacy

- South Plains College is bound by the Texas Open Records Law and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Information on these topics can be found in the South Plains College Catalog. As far as this class is concerned, the instructor will NOT release or discuss the student's class performance, grades, averages, or attendance with anyone but the student. This means that your parents, class counselors, principals, or any other interested party will not obtain this information from the instructor – if they need this sort of information, they must ask the student for it. This provision does not apply to student athletes or those for whom a grade check is part of their scholarship support.

Contact Information

- If you have questions during the semester, please contact the instructor sooner rather than later. The sooner we resolve the situation and get your questions answered, the sooner you can continue in the course. If the presentation of the material is not clear, please ask. Contact information can be found at the top of this syllabus, in the section below and on Blackboard.
- **The best way to contact the instructor is by e-mail.**

The instructor is available to answer questions in the following manners:
- For face-to-face and hybrid classes, before and after class to answer questions.
- Feel free to stop by during posted office hours; no appointment is necessary to meet during scheduled office hours.
- The instructor is also able to meet virtually. Please send an e-mail to set up an online meeting via Zoom or a face-to-face meeting if you prefer a live conversation. The instructor will send you a link for the meeting or schedule the time to meet.

- The best way to contact the instructor is e-mail at
  gramzinski@southplainscollege.edu

Honors Course Option

For students seeking to deepen their understanding of the complexities of the U.S. federal government, an **Honors Course Option** is available. This program offers highly motivated students the opportunity to conduct in-depth research and analysis on a specific topic or issue related to federal governance, extending beyond the standard course curriculum. It's an excellent chance to engage with current events, historical contexts, and critical analysis of governmental functions.

The student interested in the honors course option will need to meet with the instructor to review the items below and discuss the Honors Program Showcase requirements. A copy of this document will be provided at the meeting by the instructor.

Requirements for the Honors Option:

- **Comprehensive Project Development:** You will develop a comprehensive project focused on a significant aspect of the U.S. federal government. The specific nature of this project will be determined through discussions with the instructor, allowing you to tailor it to your interests. Project examples include:
    - An analysis of current decisions made by one branch of government and the resulting reactions or responses from the other branches.
    - A study of U.S. trade relations with specific nations, including both allies and non-allies.
    - Examining the impact of a recent federal policy.
    - A case study of a landmark Supreme Court decision.
    - An investigation into the legislative process for a specific bill.
    - Researching the history and evolving role of a particular federal agency.
    - A project focused on a specific constitutional amendment and its contemporary relevance.
    - A comparative study of federalism in the U.S. versus another country. The primary methodology for these projects will involve in-depth research and analysis of your findings.
- **Monthly Progress Meetings:** You are required to meet with the instructor at least once a month to discuss your project's progress. These meetings can be conducted either face-to-face or virtually. Please come prepared to share your work, discuss any initial findings, and ask any questions you may have. These check-ins serve as your primary progress updates; there are no other intermediate deadlines for project components.
- **Final Project Submission:** Your completed final project is due on the first day of final exams for the current semester. The specific deliverable will depend on the nature of your project and could be a formal paper, a detailed report, or another appropriate artifact agreed upon during our discussions.

- **Grading:** Your final project will be evaluated using a clear rubric designed specifically for your project's scope and deliverables, ensuring a fair and transparent assessment of your work.

Registering for the Honors Option:

If you are interested in pursuing the Honors Option, you must register for the specific honors section of this course through the Registrar's Office. This registration can be completed during the regular course registration period. The deadline to register for an honors section is the last day of course registration for the current semester.

Getting Started and Support:

To explore potential project ideas and determine if the Honors Option is a good fit for you, please schedule a meeting with me. I am also available during regular office hours and by appointment for any additional questions or support you might need throughout your project.

Class Schedule

All materials for the week will open at 12:00 AM on the Sunday of the week. Please note materials for the week are due no later than 11:59 PM (End of day) the Sunday following their opening, unless otherwise noted. Please check your calendar on Blackboard for specific dates. For example – if an assignment opens on Sunday, January 28, it will be due no later than the end of day on Sunday, February 4, unless otherwise noted.

Week 1 – Week of January 11
Week 2 – Week of January 18
Week 3 – Week of January 25
Week 4 – Week of February 1
Week 5 – Week of February 8
Week 6 – Week of February 15
Week 7 – Week of February 22
Week 8 – Week of March 1
Week 9 – Week of March 8
Week of March 15 is Spring Break
Week 10 – Week of March 22
Week 11 – Week of March 29
Week 12 – Week of April 5
Week 13 – Week of April 12
Week 14 – Week of April 19
Week 15 – Week of April 26
Week 16 – Week of May 3 *(Finals week)*

Topic Schedule

Week 1 – Critical thinking and the use of AI
Week 2 – Public policy, the media, and individual responsibilities to the state
Week 3 – History and development of the government of Texas, the State Constitution and its relationship to the US Constitution
Week 4 – The State Constitution and local government
Week 5 – Review & Exam #1
Week 6 – The development of federalism
Week 7 – Demographics of Texas
Week 8 – Industries shaping Texas politics
Week 9 – State political culture (political parties)
Week 10 – Review & Exam 2
Week 11 – The state legislature structure and function
Week 12 – The Governor and relationship with legislature
Week 13 – The Texas court system and the criminal justice system
Week 14 – Third-party movements, interest groups, and lobbying
Week 15 – State finances and budgeting
Week 16 – Review & Exam #3