Required Materials

The web-text is the only required item that must be purchased; all other reading and film material posted free.


Access to the web-text should cost no more than $60. It is very important that you register in the correct course section (POLS-2306-88L). You can register at https://www.webtexts.com/. Click on “New Student” to create an account to access the web-text. You must use your official UTRGV email and full name as it appears in UTRGV records when registering. Once you have registered for the web-text, you will be able to access the web-text directly through Blackboard. Go to the “Required Webtext Reading” link under the Resources list on Blackboard to connect to the web-text straight through the Blackboard portal.

Email Procedure (Very Important)

If you have a question about an aspect of the course, please email the course assistant assigned to you (check above box), and they will forward your question to me if they cannot answer the question. All emails should have the following subject line: "POLS2306-88L INSERT BRIEF SUBJECT DESCRIPTION HERE." Use your official UTRGV email for all communications in the class! While your course assistant will not always grade your assignment, they will be able to answer questions about the assignment, as they have full access to all submissions and graded feedback.

Course Description and Prerequisites

From the University Catalog: This course examines the origins and development of the Texas state system of government and politics, which includes the Texas Constitution, policymaking processes, political action, power relations, and various political issues. This course fulfills three of the six-hour legislative requirement in U.S. and Texas government and politics. Open to freshmen. Prerequisites: TSI exemption in Reading, or College Ready TSI status in Reading, or Satisfactory grade for ENGL 0301/WRLS 0300.

Learning Objectives/Outcomes for the Course

As the instructor of this course, I expect that my students at the end of the course will:

1. Describe the unique historical trajectory and political culture of Texas.
2. Explain the origin and development of the Texas state constitution.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the foundation, structure, and process of the Texas state legislature.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the boundaries of power the Governor of Texas has relative to the chief executives of other states.
5. Analyze how the Texas judicial system functions.
6. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas policymaking.
7. Explain the nature of campaigning and elections in Texas.
8. Describe the prominent public policy topics currently being debated within Texas.
9. Develop meaningful digital literacy and writing skills.
10. Construct impartial assessments of policy perspectives rooted in substantiated evidence from non-ideological sources.
11. Coordinate the creation of accurate and informative resources about Texas politics with a group.

Learning Objectives for Core Curriculum Requirements
This course fulfills a core area requirement in Government/Political Science:

(1) Courses in this category focus on consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas.

(2) Courses in this area involve the analysis of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations.

(3) The following four core objectives must be addressed in each course approved to fulfill this category requirement: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility.

The core objectives are defined as:

Critical Thinking
Students will demonstrate comprehension of a variety of written texts and other information sources by analyzing and evaluating the logic, validity, and relevance of the information in them to solve challenging problems, to arrive at well-reasoned conclusions, and to develop and explore new questions.

Communication Skills
Students will demonstrate the ability to adapt their communications to a particular context, audience, and purpose using language, genre conventions, and sources appropriate to a specific discipline and/or communication task.

Personal Responsibility
Students will demonstrate an awareness of the range of human values and beliefs that they draw upon to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Social Responsibility
Students will recognize and describe cultural diversity, the role of civic engagement in society, and the link between ethics and behavior.

University Assessment – There will be a short quiz of questions in addition to the final exam that students are required to take by the university. This assessment does not count in terms of your grade in the course. Nonetheless, since the assessment is required by UTRGV, it is important to make sure you submit your answers at the end of the semester.

Grading Policies
Grading will be based on the several assessments listed below. There is no extra credit offered or curving of any grade distributions. Each of the quizzes involves material only pertaining to reading materials assigned for the week, while the final exam is cumulative of all reading and film materials assigned in the course.
Active and frequent participation in the online course is essential for success, as there are several assignments due each week. It is imperative that you use effective time management to guarantee you do as well as possible in the course.

Textbook Interaction (13 chapters worth 14 points each): 182 points
Reflection Essay (5 essays worth 15 points each): 75 points
Group Wiki Collaboration (5 wikis worth 15 points each): 75 points
Group Blog Collaboration (5 blogs worth 15 points each): 75 points
Weekly Personal Assessment Activities (15 activities worth 5 points each): 75 points
Weekly Reading Quiz (15 quizzes worth 20 points each): 300 points
Final Exam (109 questions worth 2 points each): 218 points

Total Points Possible in Class: 1000 points

Textbook Interaction Breakdown:
Scores are based on whether the student participates by responding directly within the web-text to items like “get the gist questions” and “short answer questions.” The web-text gives the total percentage of questions asked in the chapter that the student responds to by the deadline for each chapter (refer to the schedule for the deadlines). This percentage is then used to calculate the number of points earned by interacting with each chapter. You can earn 14 points for each of the thirteen chapters in the web-text. The due date for each chapter is presented in the course schedule at the end of the syllabus. You can always look back at prior chapters and respond to questions after each due date, but you will not earn credit for this.

Reflection Essay:
With this written assignment, students must respond to the prompt provided in no more than a two-page essay (single-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, one-inch indentation all sides, no title page, and a consistent source citation/referencing style) that is submitted through Blackboard. Prompt questions will usually call for students to connect aspects from the film for the week to materials presented in the web-text, as well as other scholarly academic materials available online through the UTRGV Library that have not already been assigned in the course. Please note that all submissions are evaluated for academic similarity to work that has been already submitted or published in the past. All entries must be entirely in the words of the person submitting the assignment. The rubric for each reflection essay is presented in the Blackboard module folder in the week it is assigned. Five reflection essays are written over the course of the semester, and each essay is worth fifteen points. The due date for each reflection essay is presented in the course schedule at the end of the syllabus.

Group Wiki Collaboration:
With this online collaborative exercise, students are expected to provide an informative wiki entry about the concept/topic assigned to them that relates to substantive materials from the week. The class is broken down into smaller groups, and you will consistently work with this group across the entire semester for group activities. Over the course of a class week, people are expected to work together in researching information about the assigned concept, as well as communicating information about the concept. You will be able to talk about the assignment with each other in your own group Blackboard discussion threads.

The summary of the concept/topic should be a minimum of 1000 words long, and should include citations to five academic sources found in the UTRGV Library that are not already assigned in the course. To make sure each person in the group contributes to the construction of the wiki page, each person is responsible for at least three unique wiki page edits before the deadline. Please note that all submissions are evaluated for academic similarity to work that has been already submitted or published in the past. All entries must be originally worded, meaning no quoting is allowed. The rubric for each group wiki is presented in the Blackboard module folder in the week it is assigned. Unless there are unique circumstances (e.g. academic dishonesty committed by one student), every member of the group earns the same grade on each wiki collaboration. Five group wiki pages are developed over the course of the semester, and each group wiki page is worth fifteen points. The due date for each wiki collaboration is presented in the course schedule at the end of the syllabus.
Group Blog Collaboration:
With this online collaborative exercise, students are expected to provide a thorough analysis of the prompt assigned to them through several blog entries. The prompt will relate to concepts relevant to the materials presented for the week in which the activity is assigned. Each member of the group is expected to write two entries into the group blog, with each entry at least 300 words long. Every entry to the blog must include the citation to a unique academic resource found in the UTRGV Library that is not cited by another blog entry or assigned in the class. Some form of audiovisual content must be posted with each blog entry that is not used by another blog entry in the group (a picture, a link to a relevant podcast, a YouTube video link, etc.). Please note that the group you will be working with is the same as the one you collaborate with on the wiki activities.

Grades for the group blog will be determined by the ability to analyze the relevant concepts using scholarly materials and audiovisual tools in a way that follows the directions. Please note that all submissions are evaluated for academic similarity to work that has been already submitted or published in the past. All entries must be originally worded, meaning no quoting is allowed. The rubric for each group blog is presented in the Blackboard module folder in the week it is assigned. Unless there are unique circumstances (e.g. academic dishonesty committed by one student), every member of the group earns the same grade on each blog collaboration. Five group blogs are developed over the course of the semester, and each group blog is worth fifteen points. The due date for each group blog collaboration is presented in the course schedule at the end of the syllabus.

Weekly Personal Assessment Activity:
Each week students will be able to gauge their level of comprehension of concepts from the week through the response to questions presented in the form of a single task (e.g. crossword puzzle, matching terms to definitions, chronological ordering of events, etc.). Each person has one chance/attempt to complete the assessment activity, so it is imperative that students complete the assessment activity once they have a level of comfort with the material. While every person in the class will be doing the same activity for the week, that does not mean people will be presented with the same questions/items. This means students need to complete their own assessment activity on their own. These activities serve as a nice way to practice for the weekly quiz and final exam. There are fifteen personal assessment activities due over the course of the semester, with each one worth five points and posted in the module folder for the week. The due date for each weekly personal assessment activity is presented in the course schedule at the end of the syllabus.

Weekly Reading Quiz:
For each week’s reading, there will be a recollection assessment of the reading material assigned for the week. You will have fifteen minutes to respond to ten multiple choice questions. The quizzes are open-book and open-note, but no collaboration is allowed. Collaboration is actually a futile endeavor, since it is impossible that any people will have the exact same quiz (although the level of challenge in the question sets are equivalent). Given the time limit, it is best students are prepared to take the quiz after reviewing the assigned reading for the week.

Final Exam:
During finals week, students will have between May 4th at 12:01 am to May 10th at 11:59 pm to complete the exam at a time that works for them. You have one shot at taking the final exam, and it must be completed in one ninety-minute sitting. There are 109 questions on the final exam, and questions can be in a variety of formats (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, etc.). Each question is worth two points. The final exam is open-book and open-note, but no collaboration is allowed. Once again, collaboration is not really helpful, as every final exam will be different from each other (although the level of challenge in the question sets are equivalent). Unlike the weekly reading quizzes, questions about the films screened in the class are possible in the final exam. There is no chance to reschedule the final. You must take it during the time window specified above. Please take the final at a time within this window that you know you can complete the exam in one sitting.
Final Letter Grade Breakdown:
A grade = Earned 90% to 100% of the total points possible in class
B grade = Earned 80% to 89.99% of the total points possible in class
C grade = Earned 70% to 79.99% of the total points possible in class
D grade = Earned 60% to 69.99% of the total points possible in class
F grade = Earned 59.99% of the total points possible in class

Some key items to make note of:
*Percentages are not rounded up; please do not ask and/or demand anything else.
*Any academic integrity violation in textbook interaction assessments, such as plagiarism of one sentence in a response, results in an automatic 0 on the chapter for the week, as well as an academic integrity report filed with UTRGV administration.
*Any intentionally inflammatory comments or disruptive behavior in class designed to create a negative or hostile classroom environment will result in a student having a conduct report filed with UTRGV administration. Multiple instances of this type of behavior can result in you being dismissed from the course.
*Any academic integrity violation with any written work, be it an individual submission or a group assignment, will result in an automatic 0 score on that specific activity. When the academic integrity violation is conducted by one student in a group project setting, only the student that engaged in the academic integrity violation is penalized. The person found to be in violation of academic integrity rules will be reported to UTRGV administration.
*Any academic integrity violation during a quiz or the final exam results in an automatic 0 score for that particular quiz/exam.
*Any students needing special accommodations to complete assessments must submit documentation from Student Accessibility Services in advance of the assessment, and must discuss with the instructor potential accommodation solutions. No consultations with the instructor make it almost impossible for the instructor to determine what specific accommodation needs are necessary for the student.
*Any and all grade disputes must be addressed within 3 days (72 hours) of the grade being available in the gradebook. You should email your course assistant with a clear explanation of the basis for the dispute, as well as some reference from university policies that supports your objection. After receiving this email, the course assistant will confer with the instructor. The course instructor can decide to lower or increase your grade based on their own evaluation of the quality of the work. Grade disputes raised after 3 days of the grades being made live (released for you to see) will not be addressed. Grade disputes sent directly to the instructor without contacting your course assistant will not be addressed. Do not CC the instructor in your initial grade dispute email to the course assistant.

Calendar of Activities
The UTRGV academic calendar can be found at https://my.utrgv.edu/home at the bottom of the screen, prior to login. Some important dates for spring 2018 include the following:

January 16 First day of classes
January 19 Last day to add a course or register for spring 2018
March 12 – 17 SPRING BREAK – NO classes
March 30 – 31 EASTER HOLIDAY – NO classes
April 12 Last day to drop a course; will count toward the 6-drop rule
May 2 Last day of classes
May 3 Study Day – NO class
May 4 – 10 Spring 2018 Final Exams

UTRGV Policy Statements
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:
Students with a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects academic performance) who would like to receive academic accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services
(SAS) as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to initiate services. Accommodations can be arranged through SAS at any time, but are not retroactive. Students who suffer a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester are eligible for temporary services. **Brownsville Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at [ability@utrgv.edu](mailto:ability@utrgv.edu). **Edinburg Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at [ability@utrgv.edu](mailto:ability@utrgv.edu).

**MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD:**
Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account ([http://my.utrgv.edu](http://my.utrgv.edu)); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available:
- Spring 2018 Module 1: February 14 – February 20
- Spring 2018 Module 2: April 11 – April 17
- Spring 2018 (full semester): April 11 – May 2

**SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY:**
As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, and VIOLENCE:**
In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “Responsible Employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at [www.utrgv.edu/equity](http://www.utrgv.edu/equity), including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

**COURSE DROPS:**
According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.

**STUDENT SERVICES:** Students who demonstrate financial need have a variety of options when it comes to paying for college costs, such as scholarships, grants, loans and work-study. Students should visit the Students Services Center (U Central) for additional information. U Central is located in BMAIN 1.100 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 1.145 (Edinburg) or can be reached by email ([ucentral@utrgv.edu](mailto:ucentral@utrgv.edu)) or telephone: (888) 882-4026. In addition to financial aid, U Central can assist students with registration and admissions.
Students seeking academic help in their studies can use university resources in addition to an instructor’s office hours. University Resources include the Learning Center, Writing Center, Advising Center and Career Center. The centers provide services such as tutoring, writing help, critical thinking, study skills, degree planning, and student employment. Locations are:

- **Learning center:** BSTUN 2.10 (Brownsville) or ELCTR 100 (Edinburg)
- **Writing center:** BLIBR 3.206 (Brownsville) or ESTAC 3.119 (Edinburg)
- **Advising center:** BMAIN 1.400 (Brownsville) or ESWKH 101 (Edinburg)
- **Career center:** BCRTZ 129 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 2.101 (Edinburg)

**Course Dismissal:**
Students that are repeatedly disruptive in the classroom or in the online course portal are subject to both dismissal from the course and contact from university administration.

**Course Schedule:**
**NOTE: NO LATE SUBMISSIONS ARE ACCEPTED**

**Week One** (Week of 1/16)
Film: Remember the Alamo (link in Blackboard module)
Discussion Board: Introduce Yourself first post due 1/19/18 at 5:00 pm CST (ungraded activity for UTRGV attendance purposes)
Reading: Political Culture in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 1/21/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week One Personal Assessment Activity due 1/21/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Reflection Essay #1 due 1/21/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Political Culture Quiz responses due by 1/21/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Two** (Week of 1/22)
Film: Larry v. Lockney (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: The Texas Constitution in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 1/28/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Two Personal Assessment Activity due 1/28/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Group Wiki #1 due 1/28/18 at 11:59 pm CST
The Texas Constitution Quiz responses due by 1/28/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Three** (Week of 1/29)
Film: Stolen Education (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: The Legislature in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 2/4/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Three Personal Assessment Activity due 2/4/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Group Blog #1 due 2/4/18 at 11:59 pm CST
The Legislature Quiz responses due by 2/4/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Four** (Week of 2/5)
Film: The Revisionaries (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: The Legislative Process in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 2/11/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Four Personal Assessment Activity due 2/11/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Reflection Essay #2 due 2/11/18 at 11:59 pm CST
The Legislative Process Quiz responses due by 2/11/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Five** (Week of 2/12)
Film: Third Ward Texas (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: The Executive Branch in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 2/18/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Five Personal Assessment Activity due 2/18/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Group Wiki #2 due 2/18/18 at 11:59 pm CST
The Executive Branch Quiz responses due 2/18/18 at 11:59 pm CST
**Week Six** (Week of 2/19)
Film: Death by Fire (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: The Governor in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 2/25/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Six Personal Assessment Activity due 2/25/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Group Blog #2 due 2/25/18 at 11:59 pm CST
The Governor Quiz responses due 2/25/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Seven** (Week of 2/26)
Film: Unreal Dream - The Michael Morton Story (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: The Justice System in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 3/4/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Seven Personal Assessment Activity due 3/4/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Reflection Essay #3 due 3/4/18 at 11:59 pm CST
The Justice System Quiz responses due 3/4/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Eight** (Week of 3/5)
Film: Willie Velasquez - Your Vote is Your Voice (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: Elections, Voting, and Campaigns in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 3/11/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Eight Personal Assessment Activity due 3/11/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Group Wiki #3 due 3/11/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Elections, Voting, and Campaigns Quiz responses due 3/11/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Nine** (Week of 3/19)
Film: Two Towns of Jasper (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: Political Parties in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 3/25/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Nine Personal Assessment Activity due 3/25/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Group Blog #3 due 3/25/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Political Parties Quiz responses due 3/25/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Ten** (Week of 3/26)
Film: Above All Else (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: Interest Groups in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 4/2/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Ten Personal Assessment Activity due 4/2/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Reflection Essay #4 due 4/2/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Interest Groups Quiz responses due 4/2/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Eleven** (Week of 4/2)
Film: No Sanctuary - Big Business and Family Detention (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: Public Policy in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 4/8/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Eleven Personal Assessment Activity due 4/8/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Group Wiki #4 due 4/8/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Public Policy Quiz responses due 4/8/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Twelve** (Week of 4/9)
Film: An Eye for an Eye (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: Local Government in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 4/15/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Twelve Personal Assessment Activity due 4/15/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Group Blog #4 due 4/15/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Local Government Quiz responses due 4/15/18 at 11:59 pm CST
**Week Thirteen** (Week of 4/16)
Film: Los Años de Fierro (link in Blackboard module)
Reading: Federalism in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 4/22/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Week Thirteen Personal Assessment Activity due 4/22/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Group Blog #5 due 4/22/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Federalism Quiz responses due 4/22/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Fourteen** (Week of 4/23)
Film: The Forgotten Americans (link in Blackboard module)
Reading (posted in Blackboard):


Week Fourteen Personal Assessment Activity due 4/29/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Group Wiki #5 due 4/29/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Colonias Quiz responses due 4/29/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Fifteen** (Week of 4/30)
Film: Vaquero - The Forgotten Cowboy (link in Blackboard module)
Reading (posted in Blackboard):


Week Fifteen Personal Assessment Activity due 5/6/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Reflection Essay #5 due 5/6/18 at 11:59 pm CST
Rio Grande Valley Quiz responses due 5/6/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Final Exam Period:** Between May 4th at 12:01 am CST to May 10th at 11:59 pm CST, you have one attempt to take the final exam in one sitting. Ninety-minute cumulative final exam over Blackboard.