

POLS 2306: TEXAS GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Day and Time: Wednesday, 4:40 p.m. – 7:10 p.m.

Location: LHSB, room 1.102

Instructor: Owen Temby, Department of Political Science

Office: BPOB2 1.103A (Brownsville Campus)

Office Hours: Wednesday, 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., or by appointment

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COURSE MATERIALS

The following materials will be used for this course and must be purchased:

- James R. Henson and the Texas Politics Project, *Texas Politics*, 4th edition (Soomo, 2018). Available to purchase and access through Blackboard.
- A one-term subscription to Top Hat. This will be used for attendance and interactive classroom activities. Subscriptions invitations are automatically sent at the beginning of the semester to all registered students. To use Top Hat, students must bring a mobile device to each class session, such as a smartphone, tablet, or notebook/laptop computer.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PREREQUISITES

From UTRGV 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 FOR CORE CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

This course fulfills a core area requirement in Government/Political Science:

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

COURSE FORMAT

This course will have one 150-minute session per week. We will utilize a discussion-lecture format, with discussions of contemporary news items followed by lectures on the text readings and in-class activities using the Top Hat interactive platform. The goal is to cultivate a vibrant dialogic learning environment. As discussing this topic is crucial for understanding its nuances, regular class attendance and participation is essential. See schedule below for dates and topics.

GRADING POLICIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Item:	Value Each:	Quantity:	Marks:	Due Date:
Participation (via Top Hat)	N/A	N/A	4%	
Attendance	1%	10	10%	
Textbook exercises	2%	13	26%	See course schedule
Exams	20%	3	60%	Feb. 21, Mar. 28, May 9
University Assessment	0%	1	Mandatory	May 9
Total			100%	

Grade Scale:

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

Class participation is calculated the percentage of class sessions a student participated in class discussions using Top Hat. **Attendance** will be taken through Top Hat at the beginning of every class session, beginning the second week. Once attendance has been taken in class, students arriving late cannot record attendance. Students may miss attendance three times before points are deducted. The **textbook exercises** include all of the questions thirteen individual chapters of the textbook. The **exams** will cover material discussed up to that point, and will not be cumulative. They will include only multiple choice and/or true/false questions. For the **university assessment**, there will be a short exam in addition to the final exam that students are required to take. Because this is a university requirement students will not receive a grade for this course unless the short exam is completed at the end of the semester.

Policy on Grade Reviews and Appeals: Students are welcome to request a review of a grade on an assignment or exam. This request must be accompanied on a written explanation of why the original grade should be changed.

Policy on Extra Credit: The instructor will not offer extra credit work or adjust the weight given to any assignment for individuals or for the class as a whole.

Policy on Collaborative Work: Discussing assignments with your colleagues is encouraged, but students are not permitted to submit the same work for evaluation. Therefore, those who copy and those who share their work will both be considered guilty of academic dishonesty. ***Any written assignments deemed by the Instructor to be too similar will be given a grade of 0.*** To prevent the possibility of getting a zero, please:

- **DO NOT** collaborate with other students when writing your assignments or exams;
- **DO NOT** share your written work with anyone else;
- **DO NOT** ask someone else to print your assignment;
- **DO NOT** ask someone else to hand in your assignment.

If you have any questions regarding collaboration or plagiarism in relation to assignments and exams please see the instructor.

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:

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
May 11 - 12	Commencement Ceremonies

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. **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.

MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD:

Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (<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

ATTENDANCE:

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and may be dropped from the course for excessive absences. UTRGV's attendance policy excuses students from attending class if they are participating in officially sponsored university activities, such as athletics; for observance of religious holy days; or for military service. Students should contact the instructor in advance of the excused absence and arrange to make up missed work or examinations.

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. See "policy on collaborative work" above.

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, 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) 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)

LECTURE TOPICS AND SCHEDULE

The course is organized to enable flexibility in covering the course material. The proposed schedule is to serve as a tentative guide only. Some changes may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Week	Topics and Readings	Assignments Due
Jan. 17	Course Introduction	none
Jan. 24	Political Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 1 	textbook exercises
Jan. 31	The Texas Constitution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 2 	textbook exercises
Feb. 7	The Legislature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 3 	textbook exercises
Feb. 14	The Legislative Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 4 	textbook exercises
Feb. 21	The Executive Branch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 5 	Exam #1; textbook exercises
Feb. 28	The Governor of Texas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 6 	textbook exercises
Mar. 7	The Justice System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 7 	textbook exercises
Mar. 14	SPRING BREAK. NO CLASS	none
Mar. 21	Elections, Voting, and Campaigns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 8 	textbook exercises
Mar. 28	Political Parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 9 	Exam #2; textbook exercises
Apr. 4	Interest Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 10 	textbook exercises
Apr. 11	Public Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 11 	textbook exercises
Apr. 18	NO CLASS	none
Apr. 25	Local Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 12 <i>University Assessment assignment available on Blackboard. Due May 9</i>	textbook exercises
May 2	Federalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Politics, Chapter 13 <i>Exam #3 distributed and due May 9</i>	textbook exercises

