

GOVT 2306 – 004: Texas Government
Texas A&M University – San Antonio
Fall 2024

Time: 12:30 – 13:45pm, M/W
Location: MADLA 237

Instructor:
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CAB 351-A
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Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the institutions and political processes of the Texas state government. Topics to be covered include constitutionalism, Texas political culture, civil rights and civil liberties, bureaucracy, political parties, interest groups, and the role of the media, among others. We will survey the general institutions and cultural underpinnings of Texas state government as structures that shape public policy and political experience. Throughout the semester we will attempt to answer several core questions concerning government: What are the critical institutions of Texas state government and how do they shape our political life? What is the nature of Texas political culture and how does it affect our politics? Ultimately, the goal of this course is to help each member of the class arrive at a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape government and politics, so that he or she may be both a more discerning student and critic of the system and a more informed and reflective participant in it.

Digital Office Hours:

Time: T/F 9:00 am — 10:00 am or by appointment.

[Schedule Office Hours meeting](#)

I will be holding office hours via Microsoft Teams every Tuesday and Friday from 9:00 am to 10:00 am. You are highly encouraged to make use of my office hours throughout the semester to discuss any ideas you have – big or small – pertaining to this course or your general course of study. If you cannot make the designated time, please do not hesitate to email me to set up an appointment. Click the link above to schedule a meeting.

Student Learning Objectives

After completing GOVT 2306 students will be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate the ability to read and evaluate government documents and data critical to the study of Texas government and politics.
- Articulate contrasting points of view on one or more major political issues.
- Demonstrate the political knowledge to understand what is being reported/discussed in the media.
- Describe and evaluate the impact of government on the lives of individuals and society as a whole.
- Understand the institutions of the state of Texas and how they function.
- Identify and evaluate information sources for political news, data, and opinion.

Grading

Your grade for this course will be based on the following: (10%) REVEL Chapter Quizzes, discussion assignments (30%), weekly writing assignments (30%), Midterm Assignment (15%), and a Final Assignment (15%). Submissions with vague and generic language that omit the specific issues/questions raised in the assignment prompt and class lectures will get a maximum grade of 49%. To receive credit for the course, your participation must be made and your work submitted by the stated deadlines: late work will be accepted, with 5% being taken off for each day passed the assignment deadline. No assignments will be accepted more than one week late.

Grade breakdown:

10% REVEL Chapter Quizzes

30% Discussion Assignments

30% Weekly Writing Assignments

15% Midterm Assignment

15% Final Assignment

Course Requirements

- **Attendance:** “Students are expected to attend all scheduled activities for all of the classes for which they are registered” ([A&M-SA attendance policy](#)).
- **Readings:** Readings for each class period should be completed prior to beginning the weekly assignments. You are responsible for all required reading selections.
- **Discussion Assignments:** Discussion Assignments will come in two forms throughout the semester: in-class discussions and Discussion Boards posted on BlackBoard. Discussion will be graded in accordance with the rubric posted on BlackBoard.
 - In-class Discussions: Various discussions will be assigned in class that will be submitted for credit.
 - Discussion Boards: Posted on BlackBoard and due on Sunday no later than 11:59 pm. You should be prepared to engage thoughtfully in discussion. At the beginning of every week, I will post question(s) to get a sense of your initial thoughts about the readings and to focus our discussion. You are expected to answer my initial question, post a question of your own that you had about the text or what the text suggested (place this at the end of your initial post), as well as respond to at least two other classmates. Responses to classmates must be more than “I agree/disagree with what you said.” You must build on / add to the discussion being had.
- **Writing Assignments:** Posted on BlackBoard and due on Sunday no later than 11:59 pm. Writing assignments should be double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins, and at least 1 complete page in length to be considered for full credit. Take time to carefully consider your responses and be sure to proofread each submission. Responses for Writing Assignments should address each topic/item in the assignment prompt. Writing Assignments will be graded in accordance with the rubric posted on BlackBoard.
- **Midterm Assignment:** Your midterm exam will consist of a take home, short response essay.
- **Final Assignment – Campaign for Governor:** Specific details for this assignment will be given towards the end of the semester but the assignment will consist of detailing the processes of running a personal campaign for governor of Texas. Due via BlackBoard.

This is a take-home paper and there is no other ‘final exam’ for this course.

Required Books

Title: *The Texas Experience: Lone Star Politics, Policy, and Participation*

Publisher: Pearson

Link to the E-Book is available on BlackBoard in the Course Content folder. The text will need to be purchased through Pearson.

Course Schedule and Readings

Each week, your assignments will be posted in the “Course Content” folder on the BlackBoard menu. REVEL chapter quizzes are located on the Pearson REVEL online platform.

Week 1 (August 26 – Sep 1):

- Review the syllabus and familiarize yourself with the BlackBoard course, the textbook, and REVEL.
- Reading Assignment: Chapter 1 – Texas Society and Political Culture
- Writing Assignment #1 due Sunday, Sept 1st via BlackBoard
- In-class discussion due Wednesday
- REVEL Chapter Quiz

Week 2 (Sep 2 – Sep 8):

- Monday: NO CLASSES – LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
- Reading Assignment: Chapter 2 - Federalism and the Texas Constitution
- Writing Assignment #2 due Sunday, Sep 8th via BlackBoard
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, Sep 8th
- REVEL Chapter Quiz

Week 3 (Sep 9 – Sep 15):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 3 – Voting and Elections in Texas
- Writing Assignment #3 due Sunday, Sep 15th via BlackBoard
- In-class discussion due Wednesday
- REVEL Chapter Quiz

Week 4 (Sep 16 – Sep 22):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 4 - Political Parties in Texas
- Writing Assignment #4 due Sunday, Sep 22nd
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, Sep 22nd
- REVEL Chapter Quiz

Week 5 (Sep 23 – Sep 29):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 5 – Interest Groups in Texas Politics
- Writing Assignment #5 due Sunday, Sep 29th
- In-class discussion due Wednesday
- REVEL Chapter Quiz

Week 6 (Sep 30 – Oct 6):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 6 - The Media and Public Opinion in Texas
- Writing Assignment #6 due Sunday, Oct 6th
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, Oct 6th
- REVEL Chapter Quiz

Week 7 (Oct 7 – Oct 13):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 7 - The Texas Legislature
- Take-home Midterm Assignment: due Sunday, Oct 13th
- In-class discussion due Wednesday
- REVEL Chapter Quiz

Week 8 (Oct 14 – Oct 20):

- Documentary *The Revisionaries*, accessible through in Kanopy through the university library: <https://tamusa.kanopy.com/video/revisionaries>
- Writing Assignment #7 Due Sunday, Oct 20th
- In-class discussion due Wednesday

Week 9 (Oct 21 – Oct 27):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 8 – The Governor in Texas
- Writing Assignment #8 due Sunday, Oct 27th
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, Oct 27th
- REVEL Chapter Quiz

Week 10 (Oct 28 – Nov 3):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 9 – The Plural Executive and the Bureaucracy in Texas
- Writing Assignment #9 due Sunday, Nov 3rd
- In-class discussion due Wednesday
- REVEL Chapter Quiz

Week 11 (Nov 4 – Nov 10):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 10 - The Texas Courts System
- Writing Assignment #10 due Sunday, Nov 10th
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, Nov 10th
- REVEL Chapter Quiz

Week 12 (Nov 11 – Nov 17):

- Reading Assignment: Cybernetics and the Experience Machine
- In-class discussion due Wednesday

Week 13 (Nov 18 – Nov 24):

- Reading Assignment: The End of Forgetting
- In-class discussion due Wednesday

Week 14 (Nov 25 – Dec 1):

- Wednesday: NO CLASSES – STUDY DAY/THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
- Reading Assignment: TBD

Week 15 (Dec 2 – Dec 8): LAST WEEK OF CLASSES

- Reading Assignment: TBD
- Work on Final Paper

Week 16 (Dec 9 – Dec 15): FINALS WEEK

- No Discussion or Writing Assignment this week.
- Work on Final Paper.

FINAL PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN DEC 9th @ 11:59 PM

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Use of Generative AI: In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Using an AI-content generator (such as ChatGPT) to complete coursework without proper attribution or authorization is a form of academic dishonesty. It is important to note that if AI tools like chatGPT are permitted to be used for an assignment, then they should be used with caution and proper citation. AI is not a replacement for your own thinking and research. AI is a tool that can facilitate critical thinking and skillset development; don't use it as a crutch that will hinder your progress.

Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us <https://www.tamusa.edu/Disability-Support-Services/index.html> or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

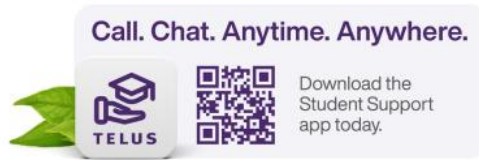
Academic Learning Center: The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

Counseling/Mental Health Resources: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information on SCC services visit tamusa.edu/studentcounseling

Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 (after-hours select option '2').

Additionally, the TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including support for in the moment distress, an anonymous peer to peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



Emergency Preparedness: JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/about-us/emergency-management/>.

Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend by the census date will have their financial aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester, a Care report will be submitted, and you will possibly be dropped from the class. Your financial aid may have to be recalculated and a portion of your federal aid may have to be returned to the DoE.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center: The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on "Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center" to make your appointment. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at <https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/>.

Meeting Basic Needs: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a CARE referral

(<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities/file-a-report.html>) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources.

Military Affairs: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances: Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

The Six-Drop Rule: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB

439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students: Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status (titleix@tamusa.edu; 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

Students' Rights

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.

4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, [Student Code of Conduct](#), on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated. Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the Student Code of Conduct (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/documents/Student-Handbook-2022-23.pdf>) or visit the resources available in the OSRR website (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/academic-integrity.html>).

Important Dates:

August 26	First day of class
September 2	Labor Day Holiday
November 11	Last day to drop with an automatic "W"
November 19	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University
November 27	Study Day – No classes
November 28-30	Thanksgiving Holiday – No classes
December 5	Last day of classes
December 6	Study Day – No classes
December 7-13	Final exams

The complete academic calendar is available online:
<https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/academic-calendar/index.html>.