

# Texas Government Syllabus

(GOVT 2306-608)

3 credit hours

Fall 2024

August 26, 2024 to December 5, 2024

Online Course

## Instructor Information

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## 1. COURSE OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION

Origin and development of the Texas Constitution, structure and powers of state and local governments, federalism, and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.

As with any other social or behavioral science course, this course aims to increase students' knowledge of interactions among and between individuals, groups, institutions, and ideas. In doing so, students will leave with a better understanding of the political process and the role they themselves play in federal and state politics.

## 2. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

**Student Learning Outcomes.** Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system (Communication Skills)
- Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice (Social Responsibility)
- Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the Texas government (Communication Skills; Personal Responsibility)
- Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system (Critical Thinking; Personal Responsibility)

- Analyze the election process (Critical Thinking)
- Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens (Personal Responsibility; Social Responsibility)
- Analyze issues and policies in Texas politics (Critical Thinking; Social Responsibility)

**Course Objectives.** Upon completion of this course, students will have a greater understanding and appreciation for state political structures, institutions, and processes, including:

- the cultural and institutional origins of Texas government
- the motivation for and basic principles of the Texas constitution
- political organization and structures under federalism
- the major branches of Texas government
- how political ideology impacts attitudes and behavior
- the important function that informal political institutions like parties, interest groups, and the media serve
- how public policy is shaped and made

### 3. GRADING

**Grade scale.** To calculate your grade at any point in this class, divide the number of points you currently have by the total possible points (as found in Blackboard).

Your letter grade in this class will be based on the following scale:

- (A) 90 - 100%
- (B) 80 - 89%
- (C) 70 - 79%
- (D) 60 - 69%
- (F) Below 60%

There are **570** possible points available in this class. The points are broken down as follows:

- **Discussion Forums:** 200 points possible
- **InQuizitive:** 180 points possible
- **Final Project:** 100 points possible
- **Project Check-In:** 50 points possible
- **Syllabus Assignment:** 25 points possible
- **Policy proposal:** 15 points possible

**Discussion Forum.** Active engagement is vital to success in online classes. To help facilitate engagement and discussion in this course, we'll make use of Blackboard discussion forums. The final, maximum number of points possible for discussion forums is 200 points. You'll participate in the forums through original threads and response posts (see below) until you reach the required 200 points.

Instead of responding to a prompt or series of questions, you'll be responsible for creating an open-ended question of your own, related to that week's reading. Each week's forum will stay open for 2 weeks (e.g. if the Week 1 forum opens on August 26 it will close on September 8).

- Original question threads
  - 10 points each
  - Limit: 2/week
- Response posts
  - 5 points each
  - Limit: 4/week

I will award extra credit points (up to 10 points) for anything over the required 200 points.

**InQuizitive.** Each week you'll complete a graded assignment through the accompanying InQuizitive/textbook website that corresponds with that week's reading. See Blackboard for more information on accessing and registering with InQuizitive.

**Policy Brief (final project).** Instead of a final exam, you'll be asked to create a policy brief describing an issue impacting either San Antonio or Texas residents. In this brief, you'll summarize the policy issue, describe the context, identify the relevant policy actors, and offer potential solutions. The purpose of this project is to apply what you've learned about state governments and politics to a real-world context. See course calendar and Blackboard for the due date and instructions.

**Policy Brief Check-In.** To help ensure you're staying on track with the final project (and won't have to complete the entire project at the last minute), you'll be required to submit a project check-in halfway through the semester. See assignment directions for more information.

**Policy proposal.** In order to help get you started on your final projects, you'll submit a policy topic proposal within the first few weeks of the semester.

**Syllabus Assignment.** Everything you need to know about the course can be found in this syllabus or Blackboard. To ensure you've carefully read through and understand this syllabus, you'll complete a short syllabus assignment at the start of the semester.

#### 4. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

##### **Required Materials.**

- Champagne et al (2023), Norton *Governing Texas*(6th Edition). ISBN: 978-1-324-03922-8
- InQuizitive access (see Blackboard for more information)

#### 5. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**A&M-San Antonio Academic Policies.** See the current *A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook*

**Writing Center.** The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Students can make individual or group appointments with a writing tutor. The Writing Center is located in Central Academic Building, Suite 208. The Writing Center can be reached by emailing [writingcenter@tamusa.edu](mailto:writingcenter@tamusa.edu) or calling 210-784-1222. Students can also make appointments with the Writing Center under the Student Services tab in JagWire.

**Americans with Disabilities Act Statement.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disability. If you believe you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. DSS is located at the Main Campus on the 2nd floor of the Central Academic Building in suite 210. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is [dss@tamusa.edu](mailto:dss@tamusa.edu).

**Attendance and Participation.** In order to be successful in this course, you must log-in and participate on a regular basis. You should expect to spend two to three days each week interacting with the course materials in some capacity. Note that some weeks will require more time than others.

**Discussions and Classroom Civility.** Students are expected to keep up with the weekly assigned readings and are expected to fully participate in this course. We may touch on some sensitive topics, and rudeness or inappropriate comments will not be tolerated at all. Discussion posts and forums give students a chance to increase their understanding of the material and how it relates to their everyday

lives. As such, discussions will not be a platform or a license for un-civil behavior. Rude, sexist, racist or otherwise uncouth language is not welcome and will be penalized.

**Plagiarism and Cheating.** Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a 0 for the assignment and may face further punitive actions from the University. I do not take this issue lightly and reserve the right to fail a student from the course for cheating and/or plagiarizing. For more information, please refer to the University's Student Handbook.

*Use of Generative AI(Artificial Intelligence).* Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments must be prepared by the student and the student alone. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated and/or assisted submissions are *not* permitted in this course and will be treated as plagiarism.

Any student suspected of using AI to complete an assignment will be called in for an oral defense of their assignment.

**Technology.** Because this is an online course, students should have a basic level of computer literacy in order to fully participate in the course. Students are responsible for ensuring the compatibility of their own computers and software prior to beginning this course. Students are also responsible for securing high speed internet connectivity throughout the duration of this course.

*Technical Issues.* Technical difficulties of the student's computer or internet provider are not excused. When such difficulties occur, students are expected to locate an alternative source for submitting assignments.

**E-mail and Communication.** E-mail is the best way to get in touch with me. I respond to student e-mails within 24 to 36 hours on the weekdays, from 9am to 5pm. I generally do not respond to e-mail on the weekends, so your best bet is to contact me during the weekdays. If you haven't received a response to your original e-mail within 36 hours, please e-mail me again.

Please stay in touch! Should extenuating circumstances arise that prevent you from completing your coursework please let me know as soon as you are able to. It's much easier to course-correct in Week 2 than it is in Week 15.

*Etiquette.* When you contact me (or any other faculty for that matter), please observe appropriate e-mail formatting guidelines and etiquette. To ensure a timely response, please include the following in your e-mail:

- A descriptive subject in the subject line that includes:

- your course number and section (found at the top of this syllabus) and
- a brief description of the subject matter
- An appropriate greeting with the recipients preferred title (either Dr. Naasz or Professor Naasz are fine with me)
- A brief description of the reason for the e-mail
- Full sentences with punctuation
- Your full legal name (as it appears in the class roster) *and* if you would prefer to go by something different

**Late Work.** Staying on top of your work is one of the best ways to do well in the course. Late work will incur a 5% penalty each day it's late, up to two days after the due date; any work submitted after the second day will receive a 0.

**Grade Appeals.** If you wish you to contest a grade, you must submit a written appeal over e-mail within one week logically explaining why you feel your assignment should be reviewed.

**Student Academic Progress.** Students are encouraged to discuss academic goals and degree completion with their instructors. Specific advising is available throughout the semester from academic advisors and career specialists.

## 6. TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: this is a tentative reading and course schedule and is subject to change. I reserve the right to amend this syllabus as necessary. I will notify students, via Blackboard should changes be made.

“Required reading” refers to the readings you will need to complete in advance for that week’s content. Unless otherwise noted, all graded work is due by 11:59pmCT of the indicated date. Any work submitted after this date will incur a 5% penalty each day it’s late, up to two days.

Unit	Week	Dates	Topic	Reading	Graded Work (due date)	Notes
					*All graded work is due by 11:59pmCT on the indicated date	
i. (Course Introduction)	1	August 26 – September 1	Course Introduction	N/A	*Week 1 discussion forum open (closes September 8)  *Syllabus activity (September 1)	Familiarize yourself with the syllabus, course calendar, and Blackboard course page
I. Foundations of Texas Government	2	September 2 – 8	Texas Political Culture	Chapter 1	*Week 2 discussion forum open (closes September 15)  * InQuizitive Chapter 1 (September 8)	
	3	September 9 – 15	State Constitutions	Chapter 2	*Week 3 discussion forum open (closes September 22)  * InQuizitive Chapter 2 (September 15)  *Policy issue proposal (September 15)	
	4	September 16 – 22	Texas in the Federal System	Chapter 3	*Week 4 discussion forum open (closes September 29)  *InQuizitive Chapter 3 (September 22)	

II. Informal Institutions of Texas Government	5	September 23 – 29	Political Parties in Texas	Chapter 4	*Week 5 discussion forum open (closes October 6)  *InQuizitive Chapter 4 (September 29)	
	6	September 30 – October 6	Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas	Chapter 6	*Week 6 discussion forum open (closes October 13)  *InQuizitive Chapter 6 (October 6)	NOTE: You will be reading Chapter 6 this week, not Chapter 5.
III. Formal Institutions of Texas Government	7	October 7 – 13	Campaigns and Elections	Chapter 5	*Week 7 discussion forum open (closes October 20)  *InQuizitive Chapter 5 (October 13)	
	8	October 14 – 20	The Texas State Legislature	Chapter 7	*Week 8 discussion forum open (closes October 27)  *InQuizitive Chapter 7 (October 20)  *Policy brief check-in (October 20)	
	9	October 21– 27	The Executive	Chapter 8	*Week 9 discussion forum open (closes November 3)  *InQuizitive Chapter 8 (October 27)	
	10	October 28 – November 3	Texas Courts	Chapter 9	*Week 10 discussion forum open (closes November 10)  *InQuizitive Chapter 9 (November 3)	



	11	November 4 – 10	Local Government	Chapter 10	*Week 11 discussion forum open (closes November 17) *InQuizitive Chapter 10 (November 10)	<i>Election Day: November 5</i>	
IV. Texas State Policy	12	November 11 - 17	Public Finance Public Policy	Chapter 11 Chapter 12	*Week 12 discussion forum open (closes November 24) *InQuizitive Chapter 11 (November 17) *InQuizitive Chapter 12 (November 17)	NOTE: You are reading two chapters this week	
	13	November 18 – 24	Criminal Justice Policy	Chapter 13	*Week 13 discussion forum open (closes December 5) * InQuizitive Chapter 13 (November 24)		
	14	November 25 – December 1 <i>Open virtual office hours</i>	Thanksgiving Break				
	15	December 2 – 5	Wrapping Up		*Week 15 discussion forum open (closes December 5) *Final projects (December 5)		

**Final projects due December 5 by 11:59pmCT**