

Texas State Government
GOVT 2306 - 002: FALL 2024
(8/26/2024 – 12/13/2024)
Tuesday/Thursday 3:30 p.m.-4:45 p.m.
CAB 334
Texas A & M University-San Antonio

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Lecturer

email: slugo@tamusa.edu

*emails will be answered within 48 hours

Office Hours:

TBD

Course Description: This course is an introduction to the procedures of state and local governments within the United States, with particular emphasis on Texas. The processes of the Texan political system will be lectured on, analyzed over, and discussed within class. Topics include the history of state government and the Texas constitution, the state legislature, political parties, political participation as well as the state court systems and current administrative issues within state government. County and municipal organizations' interactions with the state will also be examined. Throughout the course students will learn numerous facts in order to better articulate insightful responses toward the various issues occurring within state and local politics.

Student Learning Objectives:

1. Understand and explain the origins and continual development of the Texas constitution.
2. Exhibit an understanding of state and local political systems as well as their relationship with the federal government.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in Texas, in both theory and practice.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches within the Texas government.
5. Evaluate the roles public opinion, interest groups, and political parties play in Texas.
6. Analyze the state and local election process.
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of the Texan citizenry.
8. Examine issues, policies, and political culture of Texas.

Blackboard Announcements:

The Announcements tab will on Blackboard will be utilized this semester. Updates to the syllabus, coursework, or any reminders at all, will be posted as an "Announcement". Powerpoints, study guides, & video segments will be uploaded into the "Course Content" tab. **It is incumbent upon yourself to check Blackboard daily/weekly and keep look out for any updates/announcements.**

Course Textbook:

The Texas Experience: Lone Star Politics, Policy, and Preparation: 1st edition. By Paul Benson & Anthony Giardino; Powered by The Texas Tribune (Pearson 2020).

Any additional readings or documentary (or links to them), if assigned, will be posted on BLACKBOARD.

Email:

Please use my email (slugot@tamusa.edu) as a tool to set up a one-on-one meeting with me through my **virtual office hours** via Zoom. In every email you **MUST** include the course title, course section, & class time in your message so I can identify you quickly and assist you in setting up a meeting, OR, in order to answer any question you may have about class or content. NOTE: Use my email when necessary but, be mindful we will be utilizing Blackboards COURSE MESSAGES throughout the semester for questions as well.

Grading Scale:

100-90: A
89-80: B
79-70: C
69-60: D
59-50: F

Make-up Policy: Students have ample time in which to complete the assignments so there will be no make-up for any required submission. Exceptions to this will be made only in extreme situations in which a student is unable to submit the assignment due to unforeseen, devastating circumstances.

Grading:

Discussion Board Questions: 10% [5 during the course session]

Online Quizzes: 10% [8 during course session]

Online Exam 1: 20%

Online Exam 2: 20%

Essay Paper: 15%

Online Final Exam: 25%

Online Quizzes: Quizzes will be made available online via Blackboard. They will consist of multiple-choice questions concerning key terms and concepts for the given chapter of that week. You will have 35 minutes to complete the quiz and may use your eBook. You must work alone.

Online Exams: Exams will include a variety of questions (essay questions, some multiple choice) and will evaluate your knowledge of both the readings assigned as well as the materials covered in class lectures. It is expected you put your critical thinking skills to work. The exam will be essay-heavy, therefore, grammar, spelling, sentence structure, etc. will be crucial in obtaining the highest grade possible. The exam will have a time limit and you must download **Respondus Lockdown** at the beginning of the semester in order to access each exam; this will lockdown your browser to prevent cheating. This is NOT an open-book exam. [Lowest regular exam grade will be dropped].

Blackboard Discussion Questions: Weekly discussions within the “discussion” tab within your Blackboard course page consist of a two-step process: You will be asked key discussion questions weekly and must provide a *thorough paragraph answer* that would constitute a half a page. These discussion question responses **MUST** be typed in YOUR OWN WORDS (not the authors) and must utilize political science terminology and insight. These responses will be helpful in preparing you for future exam essay questions. **NOTE:** For full credit, you must respond to 1 of your classmates' responses. Be sure to comment on their main point and insert your perspective on whether you agree or disagree and why. **NOTE: DO NOT USE QUOTES FROM YOUR TEXTBOOK &** be sure to watch your grammar, sentence structure, spelling, capitalization.

Essay Paper: *Legislative Analysis*

Video Segments/Documentaries: These will be posted all throughout the semester as listed/scheduled within your syllabi course schedule. It is IMPERATIVE you watch these as they will provide visual representations alongside your virtual lectures and course readings.

The **Final Exam** will be comprehensive, covering ALL chapters listed in the syllabus. Study guides will be provided throughout the semester.

Weekly Class Schedule:

The following schedule illustrates what will be covered each week.

Week 1: August 27th & 29th

Course Syllabus

Introduction to Texas Content

Documentary Video: Remember the Alamo

Week 2: September 3rd & 5th

Chapter 1: Texas Society & Political Culture

(Online quiz 1)

Discussion Board Question #1

Week 3: Sept. 10th & 12th

Chapter 2: Federalism and the Texas Constitution

(Online quiz 2)

Week 4: Sept. 17th & 19th

Chapter 7: The Legislative Branch

(Online quiz 3)

Essay Paper Prompt Delivered

Discussion Board Question #2

Week 5: Sept. 24th & 26th

Chapter 8/9: The Plural Executive

(Online quiz 4)

Week 6: October 1st & 3rd

Chapter 10: The Texas Judiciary

(Online quiz 5)

Exam 1 study guide posted

Discussion Board Question #3

Week 7: Oct. 8th & 10th

In-Class Review Session for Exam 1

Exam 1

Week 8: Oct. 15th & 17th

PBS Documentary: The Longoria Affair

Post-Exam 2 Review

Week 9: Oct. 22nd & 24th

Chapter 3: Voting & Elections in Texas

(Online quiz 6)

Discussion Board Question #4

Week 10: Oct. 29th & 31st

Chapter 4 & 5: Political Parties & Interest Groups in Texas

(Online quiz 7)

Week 11: November 5th & 7th
Chapter 6: The Media & Public Opinion
(Online quiz 8)
Exam 2 Study Guide Posted

[November 11th: Last day to drop with an automatic "W"]

Week 12: Nov. 12th & 14th
In-Class Review for Exam 2
Online Exam 2

Week 13: Nov. 19th & 21st
Chapter 11: Local & County Governments
Short Video Segment: The Patron System

Discussion Board Question #5

Week 14: Nov. 26th & ~~28th~~
Chapter 12: Criminal Justice Policy in Texas
{NO CLASS THURS: THANKSGIVING BREAK}

--Essay Paper Due via TURNITIN

Week 15: December 3rd & 5th (*last week of class*)
Chapter 12: Criminal Justice Policy in TX (Cont.)
Final Exam Review Session

Week 16: Final Exams
TBD

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

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.

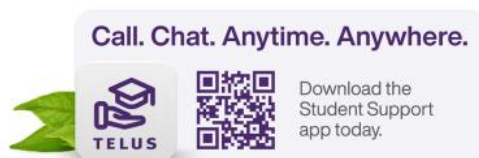
Academic Learning Center: The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the 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. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

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>).

No Use of Generative AI Permitted: GOVT 2306 assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a

person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standard of academic integrity.

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>.