

# GOVT 2306-600: Texas Government Syllabus

## Instructor Information

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Office hours: 2-3:30pmCT, Mondays and Wednesdays or by appointment

## Course Description

Origin and development of the Texas constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, 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.

TSI Restriction(s): Reading and Writing.

## 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 Requirements

### Required Text

Champagne et al (2025), Norton Governing Texas (7th Edition). ISBN: 978-1-324-08571-3

### Software

InQuizitive access (see Blackboard for more information)

## Grading

### Categories and Point Values

There are **1000** possible points available in this class. The points are broken down as follows:

- Syllabus assignment: 60 points possible
- InQuizitive: 250 points possible
- Policy brief project
  - Project proposal: 110 points possible
  - Project draft: 160 points possible
  - Peer review: 120 points possible
  - Final project: 300 points possible

Because your grade in this class is based on simple point accumulation, you can calculate your grade easily at any point in this class by dividing the number of points you currently have by the total possible points.

Your final grade in the class will be based on the total number of points you accumulate by the end of the semester. See below for the grade scale.

| Letter Grade | Points Range | Corresponding percentage |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| A            | 900 – 1000   | 90-100%                  |
| B            | 800 – 899    | 80 – 89%                 |
| C            | 700 – 799    | 70 – 79%                 |
| D            | 600 – 699    | 60 – 69%                 |
| F            | 0 – 599      | 0 – 59%                  |

### Short description of graded work

Here you'll find a short overview of what each graded assignment entails. Please see the instructions on Blackboard for a more detailed description along with grading criteria.

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

**InQuizitive.** Each week you'll complete a graded assignment through the accompanying InQuizitive/textbook website that corresponds with that week's reading<sup>1</sup>.

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

**Project draft.** You'll submit a draft of your final policy brief before the end of the semester. This will be your best opportunity to receive feedback before you submit the final, complete project.

**Peer review.** Before you complete your final projects, you'll review and comment on a classmate's draft.

**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 Texas government and politics to a real-world context.

## Classroom Policies and Procedures

### 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 10% 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.

Please note: incorrect, inaccessible, and/or corrupted files will be treated as missing and will receive a 0.

### 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: I will drop your one single lowest InQuizitive grade at the end of the semester

### *Use of Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence).*

Because writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are important 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<sup>2</sup> 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.

### E-mail.

I respond to student e-mails within 24 to 36 hours on the weekdays, from around 9am to 5pm. Please feel free to e-mail me whenever your schedule best allows but note that I generally do not respond to e-mail on the weekends or after 5pm on the weekdays.

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 so we can make arrangements. Do not wait until the end of the semester to reach out.

## General Course Rules

- You are responsible for ensuring your file submissions are correct (i.e. not the wrong file) and readable (i.e. correct format). Incorrect and/or corrupted files will be treated as missing.
- You should have a consistent, functioning internet connection to take this course. It is your responsibility to ensure that your computer and connection are functioning properly.
- Please do not try to complete coursework on a mobile phone, if possible.
- You are responsible for all information and announcements made in the course. Prepare to log onto Blackboard at least three times a week to check for updates, changes, or new information.
- Read the course home page thoroughly and check announcements daily.

## Tentative Course Schedule

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

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<sup>2</sup> Including, but not limited to: ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini, Claude, etc.

- “Required reading” refers to the reading you need to have completed for the week.
- All graded work is due by 11:59pmCT of the indicated date.
  - Any work submitted after this date will incur a 10% penalty each day it’s late, up to two days.

| Unit              | Week | Dates                                                         | Topics                                                                                                         | Reading                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Graded Work<br>(due date)                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I. Introduction   | 1    | August 24 - 30                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Constitutions</li> <li>• Texas in the Federal System</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 2</li> <li>• Chapter 3</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 2 InQuizitive (August 30)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 3 InQuizitive (August 30)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Syllabus activity (August 30)        |
| II. Public Policy | 2    | August 31 to September 6<br><br><i>August 31: Census date</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Policy</li> <li>• Public Safety</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 13</li> <li>• Chapter 14</li> </ul> <p>NOTE: You are reading Chapters <b>13 and 14</b> this week; use these chapters to help you complete your project proposals</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 13 InQuizitive (September 6)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 14 InQuizitive (September 6)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Project proposal (September 6) |
|                   | 3    | September 7 – 13                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Finance</li> </ul>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 12</li> </ul> <p>NOTE: You are reading Chapter 12 this week; use this chapter and InQuizitive activities to help write your project draft (due September 27)</p>     | <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 12 InQuizitive (September 13)                                                                                                                            |

|                                       |   |                                                                               |                                                                                                                        |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| III. Institutions of Texas Government | 4 | September 14 – 20                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political Parties in Texas</li> <li>• Interest Groups and Lobbying</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 5</li> <li>• Chapter 7</li> </ul>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 5 InQuizitive (September 20)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 7 InQuizitive (September 20)                                                               |
|                                       | 5 | September 21 – 27                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Texas Legislature</li> <li>• Local Government</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 8</li> <li>• Chapter 11</li> </ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 8 InQuizitive (September 27)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 11 InQuizitive (September 27)<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Project draft (September 27) |
|                                       | 6 | September 28 – October 4<br><br><i>October 2: last day to drop with a “W”</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Executive</li> </ul>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 9</li> </ul>                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 9 InQuizitive (October 4)<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Peer review comments (October 4)                                                                  |
|                                       | 7 | October 5 – 11                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Judiciary</li> </ul>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 10</li> </ul>                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 10 InQuizitive (October 11)                                                                                                                                 |
| IV. Wrapping up                       | 8 | <i>Last class day: October 12</i>                                             | N/A                                                                                                                    | N/A                                                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Final projects (October 11)                                                                                                                                         |