

GOVT 2306 – 900: Texas Government
Texas A&M University – San Antonio
Spring 2024

Time: 2:00 – 3:15pm, Thursday
Location: CAB 218

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/W 9:30 am — 10:30 am or by appointment.
Location: <https://tamusa.webex.com/meet/thomas.beaumont>

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. I will be holding office hours remotely via WebEx every Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:30 am to 10:30 am.

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: discussion board assignments (30%), weekly writing assignments (30%), Midterm Assignment (20%), and a Final Assignment (20%). To receive credit for the course, your participation must be made and your work submitted by the stated deadlines and within the guidelines and confines of the course during the academic semester. 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:

30% Discussion

30% Weekly Writing Assignments

20% Midterm Assignment

20% Final Assignment

Course Requirements

- **Readings:** Readings for each class period should be completed prior to beginning the weekly assignments. You are responsible for all required reading selections.
- **Discussion Boards:** Posted on BlackBoard and due each Sunday no later than 11:59 pm. You should be prepared to engage thoughtfully in discussion. At the beginning of every week, I will ask you question(s) to get a sense of your initial thoughts about the readings and to focus our discussion. Each week you will be 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 each 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.
- **Midterm Assignment:** Your midterm exam will consist of a take home, short response essay.
- **Final Assignment – Voting in Texas:** Specific details for this assignment will be given towards the end of the semester but the assignment will consist of detailing the processes for registering to vote, finding information on candidates, and casting a vote in 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 (January 16 – 21):

- 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, January 21st via BlackBoard
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, January 21st

Week 2 (January 22 – 28):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 2 - Federalism and the Texas Constitution
- Writing Assignment #2 due Sunday, January 28th via BlackBoard
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, January 28th

Week 3 (January 29 – February 4):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 3 – Voting and Elections in Texas
- Writing Assignment #3 due Sunday, February 4th via BlackBoard
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, February 4th

Week 4 (February 5 – 11):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 4 - Political Parties in Texas
- Writing Assignment #4 due Sunday, February 11th
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, February 11th

Week 5 (February 12 – 18):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 5 – Interest Groups in Texas Politics
- Writing Assignment #5 due Sunday, February 18th
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, February 18th

Week 6 (February 19 – 25):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 6 - The Media and Public Opinion in Texas
- Writing Assignment #6 due Sunday, February 25th
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, February 25th

Week 7 (February 26 – March 3):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 7 - The Texas Legislature
- Take-home Midterm Assignment: due Sunday, March 3rd
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, March 3rd

Week 8 (March 4 – 10):

- Documentary *The Revisionaries*, accessible through in Kanopy through the university library: <https://tamusa.kanopy.com/video/revisionaries>
- Writing Assignment #7 Due Sunday, March 10th

Week 9 (March 11 – 17): SPRING BREAK

- Reading Assignment: none
- Writing Assignment: none

Week 10 (March 18 – 24):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 8 – The Governor in Texas
- Writing Assignment #8 due Sunday, March 24th
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, March 24th

Week 11 (March 25 – 31):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 9 – The Plural Executive and the Bureaucracy in Texas
- Writing Assignment #9 due Sunday, March 31st
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, March 31st

Week 12 (April 1 – 7):

- Reading Assignment: Chapter 10 - The Texas Courts System
- Writing Assignment #10 due Sunday, April 7th
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, April 7th

Week 13 (April 8 – 14):

- Reading Assignment: Cybernetics and the Experience Machine
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, April 14th

Week 14 (April 15 – 21):

- Reading Assignment: The End of Forgetting (handout)
- BlackBoard Discussion: Due Sunday, April 21st

Week 15 (April 22 – 28): Last week of classes

- Reading Assignment: Economic Justice
- BlackBoard Discussion: none
- Work on Final Paper.

Week 16 (April 29 – May 5): Finals Week

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

FINAL PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN MAY 3rd @ 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 Persons with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Title II of the ADAAA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that students with disabilities be guaranteed equal access to the learning environment through the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodation of their disability. If you have a diagnosed disability that may require an accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is dss@tamusa.edu.

Academic Learning Center: All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center is an appointment based center where appointments are made through the Navigate platform. Students access Navigate through Jagwire in the Student Services tab. The Center is active on campus outreaching to students to highlight services offered. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu or calling (210)-784-1332. Appointments can also be made through JagWire under the services tab.

Counseling Resources: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and/or negatively impact your daily functioning. If you or someone you know is experiencing life stressors, emotional difficulties, or mental health concerns at Texas A&M University – San Antonio, please contact the Student Counseling Center (SCC) located in Modular C, Room 166 (Rear entrance) or call 210-784-1331 between the hours of 8:00AM and 5:00PM. All mental health services provided by the SCC are free, confidential (as the law allows), and are not part of a student's academic or university record. SCC provides brief individual, couples, and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information, please visit www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling. In a crisis situation, please walk-in to the Student Counseling Center (SCC) any time between the hours of 8:00AM and 5:00PM to be seen by a licensed clinician. After hours, please contact UPD at 911 or text "HOME" to 741-741 24/7/365 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. The National Suicide Prevention hotline also offers a 24/7/365 hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

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 and/or phone call with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit:
<https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about Emergency Preparedness and the Emergency Response Guide can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/upd/index.html>.

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.

Jaguar 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. The Writing Center is currently holding all appointments digitally. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the student services tab. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an “Online Appointment.” Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an “eTutoring” appointment. 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 www.tamusa.edu/Writing-Center. The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamusa.edu.

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 contact the Dean of Students (DOS@tamusa.edu) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources they may possess.

Military Affairs: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, and special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the Patriots’ Casa in-person room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military@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 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.

Respect for Diversity: We understand that our students represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives. When we are equity-minded, we are aware of differences and inequalities and are willing to discuss them so we can act to resolve them. The University is committed to building cultural competencies, or the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that enable individuals and organizations to acknowledge cultural differences and incorporate these differences in working with people from diverse cultures. Respecting and accepting people different than you is vital to your success in the class, on campus, and as a future professional in the global community.

While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- Share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs.
- Be open to the views of others.
- Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues.
- Value each other's opinions and communicate respectfully.
- Keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature.
- Use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in this course and across the A&M-San Antonio community.

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, equality of 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, diversity, pluralism 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, or gender expression. 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 helping create 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 has staff members trained to support survivors 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 university. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and other healthcare providers 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 or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331, Modular C.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: The purpose of the following statement is to enumerate the essential provisions for the student freedom and responsibility to learn at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. All students are required to follow all policies and regulations as set forth by The Texas A&M University System. This includes the [A&M-San Antonio Student Code of Conduct](#).

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 procedure 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, genetic information 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 the 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, University Catalog and students must comply with them and the laws of the land.
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 an environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notification.
6. 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. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.