

GOVT 2306 – 002: Texas Government
A&M University – San Antonio
Spring 2026

Instructor: Carlos S. Markham

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Location: Senator Frank L. Madia Building, room #237

Date/Time: Tuesday / Thursday, 2:00 PM - 3:15 PM

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the institutions and political processes of the state government. Topics to be covered include constitutionalism, 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 the 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 state government, and how do they shape our political life? What is the nature of 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.

Office Hours:

Time: M/W 1:00 pm — 2:00 pm or by appointment.

I will be holding office hours at the above-listed times, exclusively face-to-face. There will be no online or virtual meetings. You are highly encouraged to utilize my office hours throughout the semester to discuss any ideas or concerns you may have – big or small – about this course or your overall course of study. If you cannot make the designated time, please do not hesitate to set up an appointment at;

Email - cmarkham@tamusa.edu

Message/voice - 210-343-1706

Student Learning Objectives

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

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas Constitution.

2. Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups and political parties in Texas.
6. Analyze the state and local election process.
7. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues, policies and the political culture of Texas.
9. Express oneself with precision and clarity, whether orally or in writing.

Grading

This is a face-to-face course. This means that this class will be conducted exclusively in person. Attendance for both Monday's and Wednesday's class is highly encouraged and mandatory, and will consist of lecture and discussion. Exams and writing assignments will be accomplished outside the classroom.

Your grade for this course will be based on the following: Chapter Questions (10%), Class Participation (20%), Writing Assignments (20%), Module Exams(25%), and a Final Exam (25%). 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 10%.

All assignments outside of class will be given with several days to be completed, so, it is the students' responsibility to ensure a working internet connection. The only exception will be in the event of technical problems that affect the entire class (i.e. BlackBoard becomes unavailable). However, if the student is aware of a personal issue that prohibits him/her from complying with the stated deadline, this must be discussed with the professor before the end of class on the day the assignment is issued.

Students must be present for all module exams and the final exam, since any unexcused absence (see attendance policy, below) will result in an automatic zero (0). If a student has an excused absence on the day of a module exam, the next class date will be used to complete the exam, during the professor's office hours. The only opportunity students will have to take the final exam will be during class hours on Wednesday, May 13, 2026. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

Grade breakdown:

10% Chapter Questions

20% Class Participation
20% Writing Assignments
25% Module Exams
25% Final Assignment

Late Work

Any assignment outside of class, completed after the assigned deadline, will NOT be accepted, regardless of circumstances, resulting in a grade of “zero”.

There will be no “extra credit” assignments given in the course of this class.

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](#)). This class will be held to a total of 6 unexcused absences prior to dropping 10 points from the final grade. The only excused absences that will be accepted fall under the following categories:

- Military or Veterans Administration requirement or appointment, with documentation.
- Participation in a government procedure, with documentation.
- Observance of a religious holiday, religions as recognized by the U.S. Government, with prior notification and documentation.
- University-sponsored event, to include athletic competitions
- Pregnancy and related conditions, as covered in Title IX

Students arriving at class 15 minutes after the starting time will be counted as absent, in accordance with the exceptions listed above.

At no time will the student relate a medical condition or procedure to the professor, either via email, text, or voice

• **Readings:** Readings for each class period should be completed before beginning the class. You are responsible for all required reading materials.

• **Discussion Assignments:** Class participation will take place in class throughout the semester. Students must be familiar with the subject matter prior to the start of class and are expected to engage in the topic being discussed.

• **Writing Assignments:** Posted on BlackBoard and due no later than 10:00 pm on the posted deadline. Writing assignments can be double/single single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman, and at least 500 words in length to be considered for minimum credit. All essays must be typed or copied/pasted into the Blackboard text box; a hyperlink link (ie Google Docs) to the essay will not be accepted and will result in a “zero” grade.

- **Module Exams:** A total of 4 module exams will be given, and students will have one attempt with time restrictions. These exams will consist of multiple-choice questions. The test will be taken outside the classroom, and the lowest grade will be dropped.

- **Final Assignment:** The final assignment will consist of multiple-choice questions, which will be taken outside of the classroom at the end of the semester.

Required Books

Title: *The State of Texas, Government, Politics, and Policy, 2025 Release, Sherri Mora, McGraw-Hill Publishing.*

Link to the e-book is available on BlackBoard in the McGraw-Hill folder. The textbook can be purchased through McGraw-Hill, from the A&M-SA bookstore, or online. Older versions are not acceptable.

Course Schedule and Readings

Prior to class.

- Review the syllabus and familiarize yourself with the BlackBoard course and textbook.
- Complete the “smart start quiz” located at the end of this module

Week 1 (January 19 – 24):

- Introductions
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 1 - Introduction to Texas History and Politics
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 2 (January 25 - 31):

- Discuss Chapter 1
- Complete Essay #1, “Federalist Paper 51” due on Saturday, January 31, at 10 PM - Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 2 – American Federal System and Texas Constitution - Complete the Chapter Questions
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 3 (February 1 – 7):

- Discuss Chapter 2
- Discuss Essay #1, “Federalist Paper 51”
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 7 -Local Governments
- Complete the Chapter Questions

Week 4 (February 8 -14):

- Discuss Chapter 7
- Complete Exam #1
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 3 - The Texas Legislature
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 5 (February 15 – 21):

- Discuss Chapter 3
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 4 - The Executive Department
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 6 (February 22 – 28):

- Discuss Chapter 4
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 5 - The Court System
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 7 (March 1 – 7):

- Discuss Chapter 5

- - Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 6 - The Criminal Justice System
- Complete Chapter Questions
- Complete Essay #2, "Death by Fire", due Friday, March 7, at 10 PM
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 8 (March 8-14):

- Spring Break, the university will be closed.

Week 9 (March 15 – 21):

- Discuss Essay
- Discuss Chapter 6
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 9 - Voting and Political Participation
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Discuss current events related to the Government

Week 10 (March 22 – 28):

- Discuss Chapter 9
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 10 - Campaigns and Elections
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 11 (March 29 - April 4):

- Discuss Chapter 10
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 11 - Political Parties
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 12 (April 5 – 11):

- Discuss Chapter 11
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 12 – Interest Groups and Lobbying
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 13 (April 12 – 18):

- Discuss Chapter 12
- Complete Exam #3
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 13 - Public Policy
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Complete Essay #3, “Targeting El Paso” . Due Saturday, April 18 at 10 PM
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government **Week**

14 (April 19 – 25):

- Discuss essay
- Discuss Chapter 13
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 8 -Public Opinion and the Media
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 15 (April 26 - May 2):

- Discuss Chapter 8
- Reading Assignment/Lecture: Chapter 14 -Financing State Government
- Complete the Chapter Questions
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Week 16 (May 4 - 9):

- Discuss Chapter 14
- Complete Exam #4
- Be prepared to discuss current events relative to the Government

Finals Week (May 11-13)

- Complete a comprehensive review in preparation for the Final Exam
- Complete the Final Exam within the given time

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

No Use of Generative AI Permitted

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 standards of academic integrity.

University Email Policy and Course Communications: All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at helpdesk@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact them again. They have many requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them.

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 at the website 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 academic accommodations with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

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 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. Online tutoring is also available for after hours and weekend assistance. While tutoring hours may change based on tutor schedules and availability, the current tutoring hours for MATH in the ALC are as follows:

Appointments available

Walk in Tutoring No appointment needed

MONDAY 8 am – 6 pm 9 am – 5 pm

TUESDAY 8 am – 6 pm 9 am – 5 pm

WEDNESDAY 8 am – 6 pm 9 am – 5 pm

THURSDAY 8 am – 6 pm 9 am – 5 pm

FRIDAY 8 am – 5 pm 11 am – 4 pm

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, visit our website, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. 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. Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the TELUS student support App. The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including 24/7/365 support for in the moment distress, crisis support, 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 system. 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. 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 by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (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, Language, and Digital Composing Center (WLDCC): The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing 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. The Writing Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on “Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center” to make your appointment. 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 . 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 submit a CARE report for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources. A food pantry is available on campus; [click here](#) for hours and contact information.

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 wide variety 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 on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to 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, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamusa.edu. 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 discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, 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 sex-based 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. Young Jaguars can support parenting students with daycare if students meet this criteria: (1) must be enrolled in classes at Texas A&M-San Antonio in the current semester, (2) must be Pell eligible or a single parent, (3) child(ren) must be aged 3 to 12-years-old, and (4) child(ren) must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. For more information, please contact Young Jaguars at youngjaguars@tamusa.edu or call (210) 784-2636.

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, 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, 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 or visit the resources available in the OSRR website

Important Spring 2026 Dates:

Dates Event

January 13 Tuition & Fee Payments deadline

January 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. – No Classes

January 20 First day of class

February 4 Census date

March 23-March 6 Midterm grading period

March 9-March 14 Spring Break

April 3 Study Day – No classes

April 17 Last day to drop with an automatic “W”

May 1 Last day to drop a course or withdraw

from the University

May 4 Last day of classes

May 5 Study Day – No classes

May 6-May 12 Final exams

May 19 Commencement

The complete academic calendar is available online