

GOVT 2306: Texas Government
Texas A&M University- San Antonio
Department of Criminology and Political Science
Spring 2026

Section 4: 11:00-12:15, Monday and Wednesday, Madla 208

Section 6: 3:30-4:45, Monday and Wednesday, Madla 208

Section 7: 2:00-3:15, Monday and Wednesday, Madla 210

Instructor: Dr. Nathan Ilderton

Office: 348 CAB

Office Hours: 9:30-10:30 and 12:30-1:30 Mondays and Wednesdays*

Email: Nathan.Ilderton@tamusa.edu

*Zoom appointments available upon request.

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.

Learning Outcomes:

After completing GOVT 2306 students will be able to:

- Understand and explain the origins and continual development of the Texas constitution.
- Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in Texas, in both theory and practice.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches within the Texas government.
- Understand the roles public opinion, interest groups, and political parties play in Texas.
- Describe the rights and responsibilities of the Texan citizenry.

- Examine issues, policies, and political culture of Texas

Required Textbook:

The Texas Experience: Lone Star Politics, Policy, and Participation

Publisher: Pearson

Links to the textbook and associated REVEL account are available on Blackboard.

Additional material may be posted on Blackboard.

Assignments and Grading:

The grades for the course will have three components: 11 weekly quizzes, 2 writing assignments, and 3 exams.

Weekly Quizzes

The weekly quizzes will cover the material in the readings and class lectures from the previous week. They will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. These quizzes will be administered via Blackboard. They will open on Thursday morning and will be due at 11:59pm on Sunday evening. These quizzes will be open book and open notes. You will have a 15 minute time limit.

Writing Assignments

During the semester you will complete two writing assignments. These will be assigned in class and over Blackboard on March 4th and April 22nd. The assignments will be due March 25th and May 4th, respectively. The writing assignments are to be submitted via Blackboard. They will be 500 words in length and will use APA citation format.

Exams

Exams will be administered in class on February 25th, April 8th, and during the final exam period (see course calendar for your section's date and time). The exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer (one or two paragraph response) questions. The exams will be closed book and closed notes. Exams are not cumulative.

Grading

Assignments will be weighted on the following scale:

Weekly Quizzes: 25%

Writing Assignments: 25%

Exams: 50%

Final Grades will be awarded on the following scale:

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

Census Date:

The census date for this course is February 4th. To confirm your attendance and engagement, you must complete a short, one-question Census Date Quiz, located in the Quizzes and Exams tab. This quiz does not count toward your grade. Please complete it as soon as possible after joining or adding the course. Failure to complete the quiz may be interpreted as non-participation and could result in being dropped from the course.

If you have any questions or issues accessing the quiz, please reach out right away.

Course Calendar:

Please note that I reserve the right to add or subtract readings to adequately cover all topic areas for the course. Any changes will be announced in class and on Blackboard the week prior to the original assignment.

Week 1: January 21

Course Introduction

Week 2: January 26, 28

Texas Political Culture and the Texas Constitution

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapters 1, 2

Assignment: Quiz 1: Open 1/29, Due 2/1

Week 3: February 2, 4

Texas Voting and Elections

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 3

Assignment: Quiz 2: Open 2/5, Due 2/8

Week 4: February 9, 11

Political Parties in Texas

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 4

Assignment: Quiz 3: Open 2/12, Due 2/15

Week 5: February 16, 18

Interest Groups in Texas

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 5

Assignment: Quiz 4: Open 2/19, Due 2/22

Week 6: February 23, 25

Review and Exam 1

Reading: Review *Texas Experience*, Chapters 1-5

Assignment: **Exam 1, February 25th**

Week 7: March 2, 4

Public Opinion in Texas

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 6

Assignment: Quiz 5: Open 3/5, Due 3/8

Writing Assignment 1 Opens on Blackboard

Spring Break, March 9th-14th

Week 8: March 16, 18

Texas Legislature

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 7

Assignment: Quiz 6: Open 3/19, Due 3/22

Week 9: March 23, 25

Texas Governor

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 8

Assignment: Quiz 7: Open 3/26, Due 3/29

Writing Assignment 1 Due in Blackboard, Wednesday, March 25th, 11:59pm

Week 10: March 30, April 1

Texas Bureaucracy

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 9

Assignment: Quiz 8: Open 4/2, Due 4/5

Week 11: April 6, 8

Review and Exam 2

Reading: Review *Texas Experience*, Chapter 6-9

Assignment: **Exam 2, April 8th**

Week 12: April 13, 15

Texas Court System

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 10

Assignment: Quiz 9: Open 4/16, Due 4/19

Week 13: April 20, 22

Local and County Government in Texas

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 11

Assignment: Quiz 10: Open 4/23, Due 4/26

Writing Assignment 2 Opens on Blackboard

Week 14: April 27, 29

Criminal Justice Policy and Finance Policy in Texas

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 12-13

Assignment: Quiz 11: Open 4/30, Due 5/3

Week 15: May 4

Finance Policy and Exam 3 Review

Reading: *Texas Experience*, Chapter 13, Review Chapters 10-12

Writing Assignment 2 Due in Blackboard, Monday, May 4th, 11:59pm

Exam 3 During Final Exam Period:

Section 4: Monday, May 11: 10:00am-11:50am

Section 6: Wednesday, May 6: 2:00pm-3:50pm

Section 7: Monday, May 11: 2:00pm-3:50pm

Course Policies:

Expectations

“Students are expected to attend all scheduled activities for all of the classes for which they are registered” ([A&M-SA attendance policy](#)). While attendance is not a part of your grade, I expect you to attend class unless prevented by extenuating circumstances.

I encourage you to take notes and engage in the lecture and other activities during class time. Power point slides will be posted on the Blackboard page.

Please silence and put away cellphones. Laptop computers are permitted for note taking.

Communication

I prefer that you utilize the messages feature in Blackboard when sending me emails. If you use my university email, please include the section number of this class to help me keep organized.

I will endeavor to answer all emails within 24 hours of receiving them, but responses may take longer during weekends and holidays.

Late Work

I will not allow missed assignments to be made up without a documented university excused absence. If you know ahead of time that you will miss a scheduled assignment, please inform

me prior to the due date and time. If you cannot inform me ahead of time, please inform me as soon as possible after the assignment deadline.

If you miss an assignment without a documented university accepted excuse, I will accept late assignments with penalty. These penalties begin at 10% per business day that the assignment is late. I encourage you to contact me as quickly as possible if you miss an assignment to make arrangements for late submission.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

This course 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 standards of academic integrity.

University Policies:

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 as soon as possible.

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 <mailto: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 with 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.

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 students' 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/academicintegrity.html>).