



Texas State and Local Government
 GOVT 2306
 Synonym 34063 Section 082
 Fall 2015

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COURSE OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of the course is to acquaint the student with Texas state and local government. The student will be introduced to: (a) a framework for analyzing Texas politics and government; (b) the constitutional basis for Texas government; (c) the processes of Texas politics and government; (d) the institutions of Texas politics and government; and (e) policies of Texas government. Specific behavioral objectives will accompany each unit of instruction.

GRADING PROCEDURES:

The student will be evaluated through four (4) unit examinations and two written assignments. The unit examinations will consist of objective and essay questions. Each unit examination will consist of thirty (30) multiple-choice questions and two (2) essay questions. The questions will cover the behavioral objectives for the assigned chapters in the textbook and the lectures. Each multiple-choice question will be worth one (1) point, and each essay question will be worth ten (10) points. A student may earn a maximum of 200 points on the four unit examinations.

The written assignments will be an annotated bibliography and a position paper on a public policy issue in Texas state or local government. The papers are described on page 4 of this syllabus and in handouts. A student may earn a maximum of 50 points for his or her annotated bibliography and 50 points for his or her position paper.

The total number of points accumulated during the semester will determine a student's grade for the course:

GRADE	TOTAL POINTS
A	270-300
B	240-269
C	210-239
D	180-209
F	179 or fewer

TESTING PROCEDURES:

The four unit examinations will be administered in class on the dates indicated on the course activity calendar. Students who are unable to take the examination because of an excused absence will take a make-up examination in the Pinnacle Campus (PIN) Testing Center (Room 706). Students who miss an examination because of an unexcused absence will not be allowed to take the examination in the testing center during the semester; however, those students may take an examination on that unit as a retest on the last class meeting of the semester. Students will not be allowed to take more than one unit examination on the last class meeting of the semester. The instructor will determine, on an individual basis, what constitutes an excused absence.

RETESTING PROCEDURES:

Students may retest one unit examination on the last class meeting of the semester. Students may also retest one unit examination in the PIN Testing Center during the semester. The format for retests will be a five-question essay examination and will cover the behavioral objectives for the unit. Each question will be worth ten (10) points. If a student elects to take a retest, the retest score will replace the score on the original examination. A permission slip, issued and signed by the instructor, is required before a student can retest in the PIN Testing Center.

EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS:

Students will be provided an opportunity to earn extra credit points after each unit examination. The extra credit assignments will involve a variety of activities that allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the material covered in the unit. There will be several options for extra credit, but students may complete only one extra credit option for each unit of instruction. The extra credit assignment will be worth a maximum of five (5) points and will be due on the scheduled date for the next unit examination.

INCOMPLETE GRADES:

A student may receive a temporary grade of "I" under the following conditions: (a) the student has a valid, medical reason for requesting an incomplete and has accumulated at least 100 points; (b) the student requests a grade of "I" and completes the required form; and (c) the student agrees to complete the course by the deadline established on the Report of Incomplete Grade form.

ATTENDANCE AND PROGRESS REQUIREMENTS:

Regular attendance is considered essential to the successful completion of this course. Supplemental material covered in lectures will be covered on the unit examinations. To remain enrolled in the course, students must attend class regularly and must not accumulate an excessive number of unexcused absences during the semester. The instructor will determine, on an individual basis, what constitutes an excessive number of absences and whether an absence is excused or unexcused. The student is responsible for informing the instructor of the reason for any absence from class.

WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES:

Students who withdraw prior to the twelfth class day will not receive any grade on their records. After that date and until November 19, 2015, students who withdraw or are withdrawn by the instructor will receive a non-punitive grade of "W" for the course. After November 19, 2015, students may not withdraw nor may the instructor withdraw them. Those students will receive a performance grade (A, B, C, D, or F).

The instructor is permitted to withdraw students whose attendance and /or progress is not satisfactory; however, the student is responsible for withdrawing from this course if she or he is no longer interested in completing the course.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

As described in Austin Community College Student Handbook, academic misconduct compromises academic integrity and is punishable as outlined in the Handbook. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination (either providing answers to or stealing answers from another student), plagiarism, and collusion. Plagiarism includes the use of another author's words or arguments without attribution. Collusion is defined as the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of any course requirement. If a student commits any of the offenses cited above in this class or in the Testing Center, the instructor will recommend and actively seek a grade of "F" for the student for the course.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM:

As described in Austin Community College Policy D-2, academic freedom protects professors and students in their search for truth and its free expression. However, professors and students also share a responsibility to respect the opinions of others and to ensure that course materials and discussions are relevant to the course objectives.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES (SAS):

Each ACC campus offers support services for students with documented physical, cognitive, or psychological disabilities. Students with disabilities must request reasonable accommodations through the Office for Student Accessibility Services on the campus where they expect to take the majority of their classes. Students are encouraged to do this three weeks before the start of the semester.

TEXTBOOK:

Henson, Jim. Texas Politics. 2nd ed. Free online: <http://webtexts.com/texaspoliticsbasic>



UNITS OF INSTRUCTION AND TEXTBOOK ASSIGNMENTS:

Unit I: The Context for Texas Government and Politics	Chapters 1-2
Unit II: Parties, Interests, Campaigns & Elections	Chapters 9, 10, 8
Unit III: Legislature and Executive	Chapters 3-6
Unit IV: Justice System, Local Governments, and Public Policy	Chapters 7, 11,12

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Constitutional Foundations: The student will understand the foundations, development, and features of the Texas Constitution of 1876.

Linkage Institutions: The student will understand how media, interest groups, and political parties serve as institutions to connect people to Texas state and local governments.

Political Learning: The student will understand how political values, attitudes, and behaviors are learned, organized, and expressed.

Campaigns and Elections: The student will understand the operation of a political campaign, types of elections, and the factors that affect election outcomes in the Texas political system.

Institutions of State Government: The student will understand the structure, functions, and operations of the institutions of state government in Texas.

Institutions of Local Government: The student will understand the structure, functions, and operations of the institutions of local government in Texas.

Public Policy in Texas: The student will understand the development and implementation of public policy in Texas.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

Every student is required to submit an annotated bibliography and a position paper on a public policy issue relating to Texas state or local government.

Purpose: The purpose of the written assignments are threefold: to give the student an opportunity to explore a public policy in Texas state or local government, to give the student experience in preparing an annotated bibliography and writing a position paper, and to assist the student in developing his or her research and analytical skills.

Topic: The topic of the annotated bibliography and position paper must be a public policy issue approved by the instructor.

Annotated Bibliography Format: In preparation for writing the position paper, the student will prepare an annotated bibliography that contains a variety of sources, including, for example, books, journals, magazines, and newspapers. Sources in the must conform to the Modern Language Association (MLA) style. The annotated bibliography will include a minimum of eight (8) sources that support the student's position on the issue of public policy and provide counter arguments to the student's position. For more information, see the handout entitled Preparing an Annotated Bibliography.

Position Paper Format: The position paper must be legibly handwritten or typed with a total length of between 5 and 6 pages, not counting the title page and the Works Cited page. The title page will include the public policy issue, the student's name, the course number, and the section number. The paper will include an introduction, a thesis statement, the counter arguments, the student's arguments, and a conclusion. For more information, see the handout entitled Writing a Position Paper.

Grading: The annotated bibliography will be worth a maximum of 50 points. The bibliography will be graded using the following criteria: quantity and quality of the sources (20 points); completeness of the annotations (20 points); and grammar, spelling, writing style, and proper documentation (10 points). The position paper will be worth a maximum of 50 points. The paper will be graded using the following criteria: introduction (5 points); presentation of the counter arguments (20 points); presentation of the student's argument (20 points); and grammar, spelling, writing style, and documentation of sources (5 points).

Deadline: The annotated bibliography is due on October 19, 2015. The position paper is due on November 30, 2015. Five (5) points will be deducted for each class meeting date that the annotated bibliography or position paper is late.

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Class Meeting Dates	ACTIVITY
September 21	Course Requirements; Studying Texas Politics and Government
September 23	Political Culture
September 28	Political Culture; Library Instruction
September 30	Texas' Constitutions; Topic for AB and PP Due
October 5	Texas' Constitutions; Review
October 7	TEST 1 (Chapters 1 & 2); Political Parties
October 12	Political Parties
October 14	Interest Groups; Political Participation
October 19	Campaigns and Elections; Annotated Bibliography Due
October 21	Campaigns and Elections
October 26	Voting Behavior; Review
October 28	TEST 2 (Chapters 8, 9 & 10); Legislature
November 2	Legislature; Legislative Process
November 4	Governor; Executive Branch
November 9	Executive Branch; Review
November 11	Executive Branch; Review
November 16	TEST 3 (Chapters 3, 4, 5 & 6); Justice System
November 18	Justice System; Local Governments
November 23	Local Governments; Public Policy Process
November 25	Public Policy: Fiscal Policy, Health Care, and Education
November 30	Public Policy: Education and Infrastructure; Position Paper Due
December 2	Public Policy: Public Assistance; Review
December 7	TEST 4 (Chapters 7, 11, & 12)
December 9	RETESTS

The instructor reserves the right to change the dates for activities as necessary.

Topics for an Annotated Bibliography and Position Paper

Examples of topics for your annotated bibliography and position paper:

1. Ranked Vote Choice/Instant Runoff Voting
2. Texas 10 percent college admissions policy
3. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
4. Mass transit
5. Judicial Selection
6. Taxation
7. Funding Public Education
8. Voter Identification
9. Religious objections to public policy
10. Restrictions on Abortion