

Core Course Syllabus Template

Year Course Offered: 2014
Semester Course Offered: Fall
Department: Social and Cultural Sciences
Course Number: POLS 2306
Name of Course: Texas Government
Name of Instructor:

The information contained in this class syllabus is subject to change without notice. Students are expected to be aware of any additional course policies presented by the instructor during the course.

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

Learning Objectives

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 political culture of Texas.

Core Objectives

Texas Government addresses the following core objectives to ensure students develop the essential knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college, in a career, in their communities, and in their lives. The core objectives meet the Texas Core Curriculum objectives for the Government/Political Science Foundational Component Area

- Critical Thinking Skills - to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information

- Communication Skills - to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- Social Responsibility - to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
- Personal Responsibility - to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making

Major Assignments/Exams

Exams:

Exam I	20%
Exam II	25%
Final Exam	25%

Assignments:

Texas State Legislature Project	25%
a. Approval of State Legislator	
b. Copy of Bills	

<i>Class Participation</i>	5%
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Exams: All exams will consist of essay questions (short) and multiple-choice questions. The exams dictate the student being able to apply the materials taught in class. The exams will cover only lectures and assigned reading materials. LO 5-8, CO: COM, CT

Texas State Legislature Project: Students are to search the Texas State Legislature website to find information on a state senator or representative. First, identify demographic information about the state legislator (i.e. chamber of the legislature, party affiliation, district, tenure in office, education, occupation, gender and age). LO 1-4, CO: COM, CT, SR, PR

Second, provide information about their leadership status and their committee assignments in the legislature (i.e. Leadership positions include the Speaker, majority leader, minority leader, assistant majority/minority leadership, party whips, assistant party whips, and committee chairmanship). If the legislator holds a leadership position, explain the importance of the position and responsibilities of the position. Be sure to find a legislator that serves on at least three committees.

Third, choose eight bills sponsored (introduced) or co-sponsored by the state legislator. Research these bills to understand the importance of the bill, how it relates to serving the interests and needs of constituents in their district or citizens of the state of Texas. Make suggestions, offer solutions, and critique the utility/benefit of the bill. Find out if the legislation was enacted (passed). Students are encouraged to select a bill from the legislative areas of education, employment, economic development, health care, social welfare/services, agriculture, energy, natural disasters, homeland security, and illegal immigration.

Finally, provide an overall conclusion that evaluates the state legislator (i.e. does the state legislators hold a leadership position, serve on policy-relevant committees, introduce important legislation and/or provide substantive representation to their constituents).

Organization (Subheadings):

- I. Introduction
- II. Demographics of State Legislator
- III. Leadership Positions and Committee Assignments
- IV. Legislative Productivity
- V. Conclusion

Websites:

Chambers

Texas State Legislature	http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/
House of Representatives	http://www.house.state.tx.us/welcome.php
Senate	http://www.senate.state.tx.us/

Bills (Issue Areas):

The policy areas stated above are central to the completion of this project. Students are encouraged to select a bill from each of the areas (or as many applicable). While students can review other bills, make sure that the bills do not have overlap unless students are making a strong argument for/against a bill. **All bills chosen must be printed/attached to receive credit for the assignment. If the bill is extensive, make sure to print the front page.**

Paper Guidelines:

The paper **must** contain an introduction and conclusion. It is to be a minimum of **10-12** typed pages of the actual text (Times News Roman), 12 point font, Justified alignment, doubled-spaced and pages numbered. Attach a title page with your name, identification number (last four of SSN or student ID), title of the paper, name of the course, course number, and instructor's name. **(The title page and print out of the bills do not count as one of the required pages)** The instructor will **not** grade papers that have been typed in 13 or more font, type set other than Times News Roman, not justified, more than the standard double-space, and pages not numbered. **FOLLOW DIRECTIONS.**

Learning Outcomes	CO	Assessment Methods	Criteria/Targets
1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.	COM, CT, SR, PR	The Texas State Legislature Project students' ability to critically think, organize materials, evaluate the legislature, and gain knowledge of knowledge of civic responsibilities.	Using the rubric of Excellent, Acceptable, and Unacceptable, 80% or higher of students in POLS 2305 will score acceptable or better.
2. Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.	COM, CT, SR, PR	The Texas State Legislature Project students' ability to critically think, organize materials, evaluate the legislature, and gain knowledge of knowledge of civic responsibilities.	Using the rubric of Excellent, Acceptable, and Unacceptable, 80% or higher of students in POLS 2305 will score acceptable or better.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.	COM, CT, SR, PR	The Texas State Legislature Project students' ability to critically think, organize materials, evaluate the legislature, and gain knowledge of knowledge of civic responsibilities.	Using the rubric of Excellent, Acceptable, and Unacceptable, 80% or higher of students in POLS 2305 will score acceptable or better.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.	COM, CT, SR, PR	The Texas State Legislature Project students' ability to critically think, organize materials, evaluate the legislature, and gain knowledge of knowledge of civic responsibilities.	Using the rubric of Excellent, Acceptable, and Unacceptable, 80% or higher of students in POLS 2305 will score acceptable or better.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.	COM, CT	Three tests	Using the rubric of Excellent, Acceptable, and Unacceptable, 80% or higher of students in POLS 2305 will score acceptable or better.
6. Analyze the state and local election process.	COM, CT	Three tests	Using the rubric of Excellent, Acceptable, and Unacceptable, 80% or higher of students in POLS 2305 will score acceptable or better.
7. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.	COM, CT	Three tests	Using the rubric of Excellent, Acceptable, and Unacceptable, 80% or higher of students in POLS 2305 will score acceptable

			or better.
8. Analyze issues, policies and political culture of Texas.	COM, CT	Three tests	Using the rubric of Excellent, Acceptable, and Unacceptable, 80% or higher of students in POLS 2305 will score acceptable or better.

Required Reading

Bessette, Pitney, Brown, Langenegger, Garcia, Lewis, Biles. 2014. *American Government and Politics: Deliberation, Democracy, and Citizenship*, Texas Edition. Wadsworth Publishing, ISBN- 978-113358790-3

Hoston, William T. 2012. *Listen To Me Now, or Listen To Me Later: A Memoir of Academic Success for College Students* (1st Ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 2012. ISBN- 978-1-4652-0137-9. Book available @ <http://www.kendallhunt.com/hoston>

List of Discussion/Lecture Topics

Part I: PRINCIPLES AND FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY.

Weeks 1-2: Studying State Politics

- **Chapter 1:** Deliberation and Citizenship in Service of Freedom and Democracy
- **Chapter 2:** The American Constitution
- Structure and Demographic of Texas State Legislature
- Political and Legislative Issues in the Texas State Legislature
 - State Budget impact on Health (SCHIP) & Education (Public Education)

Week 3: State Rights

- Chapter 3: Federalism
 - Domestic Terrorism, A Case Study of Home Grown Terrorists

Part II: LIBERTIES AND RIGHTS.

Week 4: Defining American Citizenship

- **Chapter 4:** American Citizenship
- **Chapter 5:** Civic Culture
 - Political Ideologies; Belief and Values systems.

Week 5: Exam I

Part III: DEMOCRATIC POLITICS AND PUBLIC DELIBERATION.

Week 6: Public Deliberation

- **Chapter 6:** Public Opinion and Political Participation

Week 7:

- **Chapter 7:** Interest Groups
- **Chapter 8:** Political Parties
 - The Influence of Interest Groups in Texas.

Week 8: Campaign Finance

- *Gierzynski, Anthony and David Breaux. 1991. "Money and Votes in State Elections." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* Vol 16, No. 2, pp. 203-17.
- **Chapter 9:** Elections and Campaigns

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10: Legislative Process

- *Bratton, Kathleen A. and Kerry L. Haynie. 1999. "Agenda Setting and Legislative Success in State Legislature: The Effects of Gender and Race." *Journal of Politics* 61: 658-79.

Week 11: Exam II

Weeks 12-13: Policy Issues

Education

(The layoff of Public School Teachers)

Criminal Justice

(Death Penalty in Texas)

Social Welfare

(The Impact of Social Welfare on the State Budget)

Week 14: Governors

(Case Study of Rick Perry)

Week 15: Presentation of Texas State Legislature Project

Week 16: Final Exam

