

**GOVT 2306: Texas Government (Texas Constitution and Topics)  
Spring 2020**

**South Plains College, Department of Social Sciences**  
Course Time & Location: **T/R 4:00, Levelland – TA 215**

Instructor: Ryan Fitzgerald, M.A.  
Office Location: TA 110 (Levelland) Office Hours: By Appointment  
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**Course Description:** This course is a study of the functions performed in the American system of state governments, with special reference to the development of governance in Texas and its Constitutions. This course satisfies the Legislative requirements for teacher certification.

Credit: 3 Lecture Hours  
Prerequisites: TSI compliance in Reading

**Course Purpose:**

Government 2306, as taught at South Plains College, is a reading intensive course designed to acquaint the learner with the 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. This course meets the statutory requirements as set forth by the state of Texas.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students who have completed this course will be expected to:

- 1) Explain the origin and development of the Texas Constitution.
- 2) Demonstrate an understanding of state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.
- 3) Describe separation of powers, as well as, checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.
- 4) Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of Texas Govt.
- 5) Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.
- 6) Analyze the state and local election process.
- 7) Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
- 8) Analyze issues, policies, and political culture in Texas.

**Foundational Component Area of Core Curriculum:** Social Science for All Undergraduate Degrees

**Fundamental Component Areas (FCAs):**

Students will be expected to perform satisfactorily in four FCAs.

1. Critical Thinking Skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information by:
  - a. Generating and communicating ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information,
  - b. Gathering and assessing information relevant to a question,
  - c. Analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information.

2. Communication – to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral or visual communication by: developing, interpreting, and expressing ideas through written, oral, or visual communication.
3. Social Responsibility Skills – to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively I regional, national, and global communities by:
  - a. Demonstrating intercultural competence,
  - b. Identifying civic responsibility,
  - c. Engaging in regional, national, and global communities.
4. Personal Responsibility –to include the ability to connect choices, action, and consequences to ethical decision-making by:
  - a. Reading, understanding and affirming agreement and acceptance of principles, guidelines and requirements set forth in the “Statement of Personal Responsibility of Students” (Attached)
  - b. Evaluating choices and actions and relating consequences to personal decision-making
  - c. Accepting personal responsibility for decisions and actions taken or not taken

**Text** – No text is required.

However – for supplemental reading, the following text is optional:

**Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas, 6th Edition** by Collier, Galatas and Harrelson-Stephens (January 2019) ISBN: 9781544316291

Textbook Website:

<https://edge.sagepub.com/collier6e>

\*Previous editions of this book will work as well - however, the page numbers and content may be slightly different.

### **Grading:**

**Exams** – 180 pts (Three exams - each exam is worth 60 points – **FINAL IS NOT COMPREHENSIVE**)

**Writing Assignments** – Three writing assignments – each assignment is worth 20 points.

- These writing assignments/essays are aimed at getting you to reflect on key concepts, theories and approaches discussed in class, while in return applying them to the real world, in an attempt to understand current political issues.
- Handouts will include detailed instructions...

Total Possible Points: **240**

**A:** 216 – 240 **B:** 192 – 215 **C:** 168 - 191 **D:** 144 – 167 **F:** 143 & below...

If you think that an error has been made in calculating your final grade, it's your responsibility to provide me with documentation demonstrating that a calculation error has been made.

Late Work – Your work must be turned in *by the beginning of class on the due date* if your submission is to be considered for full credit. Turning in assignments after the agreed upon due date is circumstantial and would be accepted at the discretion of the instructor...late assignments will always be assessed a penalty.

Extra Credit: There will be several opportunities to score extra points throughout the semester, therefore no major extra credit opportunities (additional papers, essays or special assignments...) will be offered to or accepted from students at the end of the semester.

Lastly, class structure is purely provisional - every assignment, due date, and the allotted number of points for each assignment are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

**Attendance and Participation:** You are expected to come to class prepared to engage in a critical evaluation of the topic of the day. Although participation & attendance do not make up a portion of the final grade for the course, both may prove to be a significant factor in determining borderline grades. For example, participation may be used as a criterion for a student whose final grade in the class is an 89.75% (B)...a student who participated often in class discussions may receive an A as the final course grade. Additionally, roll may be kept for SPC purposes.

**Remember:** Poor attendance normally results in a poor grade...

Whenever absences become excessive and, in the instructor's opinion, minimum course objectives cannot be met due to [the excessive] absences, the student can be withdrawn [i.e., dropped] from the course...so, once a student has accumulated four unexcused absences (at any time; for any reason) this will result in the student being dropped from the course, while receiving a final letter grade of an "F."

Also, absences which are not "approved" or "excused" by the instructor shall be considered "unexcused," and documented as such. (Yes, I get to determine whether or not the reason for your absence was an acceptable one).

Students who enroll in a course but have "Never Attended" by the official census date, as reported by the faculty member, will be administratively dropped by the Office of Admissions and Records. A student who does not meet the attendance requirements of a class as stated in the course syllabus and does not officially withdraw from that course by the official census date of the semester, may be administratively withdrawn from that course and receive a grade of "X" or "F" as determined by the instructor.

**Classroom etiquette:**

Please demonstrate common courtesy to your fellow students by avoiding the following during class:

- Engaging in text messaging, Facebooking, and similar activities.
- Watching movies, television shows, and other media.
- Answering cell phone calls.

The professor reserves the right to dismiss disruptive students from class.

**IMPORTANT:** Please silence your cell phone, laptop, iPad, etc. If your **electronic device** goes off in class, you will be required to perform an embarrassing task (i.e. sing) in front of the class (hint: learn the words and motions to "I'm a Little Teapot")

**Additionally:** Referencing the rule above - "Please silence your cell phone, laptop..."

If you are texting, you will be required to sing something in front of the class. This rule also applies to students caught pursuing other entertaining alternatives on the World Wide Web, instead of focusing on yours truly...if I also catch you on Facebook during class, you will get up and lead the entire class in a group sing-along.

If you engage in any of these activities you will be asked to leave the classroom for the day, and your behavior will be noted. Moreover, I reserve the right to eject any student who violates these or other rules, in addition to commonly accepted classroom norms (i.e., be on time, be polite to fellow classmates, etc.)

**Academic Integrity (See Academic Catalog for Additional Information)**

It is the aim of South Plains College to foster a spirit of complete honesty and a high standard of integrity. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own any work which he or she has not honestly performed is regarded by the faculty and administration as a most serious offense and renders the offender liable to serious consequences, possibly suspension.

**Cheating:** Dishonesty of any kind on examinations or on written assignments, illegal possession of examinations, the use of unauthorized notes during an examination, obtaining information during an examination from the textbook or from the examination paper of another student, assisting others to cheat, alteration of grade records, illegal entry or unauthorized presence in an office are examples of cheating. Complete honesty is required of the student in the presentation of any and all phases of course work. This applies to quizzes of whatever length, as well as to final examinations, to daily reports and to term papers.

**Plagiarism:** Offering the work of another as one's own, without proper acknowledgment, is plagiarism; therefore, any student who fails to give credit for quotations or essentially identical expression of material taken from books, encyclopedias, magazines and other reference works, or from the themes, reports or other writings of a fellow student, is guilty of plagiarism.

Anything that borders on cheating, plagiarism, or affects the academic integrity of the assignment or of the course will be dealt with using the harshest measures possible -more than likely, you will receive zero credit for the assignment, and be dismissed from the class roster with a failing grade.



"This is not 'Nam...there are rules!"

Please reference the "Writing for Political Science" PowerPoint slide deck on Blackboard...general writing tips, along with how to properly cite information is included.

SPC Policy regarding "Academic English": South Plains College requires all students to become proficient in "academic English," a form of English that is typically used in academic, professional, and business contexts. While slang, regional idioms, and informal kinds of self-expression are appropriate in some contexts, they are out of place in academic writing. Students in this course are expected to demonstrate proficiency in using the conventions of academic English in all written work. Therefore, I reserve the right to take off points on all written assignments do to use of bad grammar, and general negligence of one's duties to pursue proper written scholarship.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities, including but not limited to physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities, who wish to request accommodations in this class should notify the Disability Services Office early in the semester so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodations must provide acceptable documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, call or visit the Disability Services Office at Levelland (Student Health & Wellness Office) 806-716-2577, Reese Center (Building 8) 806-716-4675, or Plainview Center (Main Office) 806-716-4302 or 806-296-9611.

### **Title IX Pregnancy Accommodations Statement**

If you are pregnant, or have given birth within six months, Under Title IX you have a right to reasonable accommodations to help continue your education. To activate accommodations you must submit a Title IX pregnancy accommodations request, along with specific medical documentation, to the Director of Health and Wellness. Once approved, notification will be sent to the student and instructors. It is the student's responsibility to work with the instructor to arrange accommodations. Contact Chris Straface, Director of Health and Wellness at 806-716-2362 or email [cstraface@southplainscollege.edu](mailto:cstraface@southplainscollege.edu) for assistance.

### **Nondiscrimination Policy**

South Plains College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Vice President for Student Affairs, South Plains College, 1401 College Avenue, Box 5, Levelland, TX 79336. Phone number 806-716-2360.

### **Diversity Statement**

In this class, the teacher will establish and support an environment that values and nurtures individual and group differences and encourages engagement and interaction. Understanding and respecting multiple experiences and perspectives will serve to challenge and stimulate all of us to learn about others, about the larger world and about ourselves. By promoting diversity and intellectual exchange, we will not only mirror society as it is, but also model society as it should and can be.

### **Recording Devices**

The use of recording devices is prohibited.

### **Amendment(s) to the Syllabus**

If need arises, the instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus at any time. Students will be notified of such change(s) with adequate time to adapt.

**Tentative Thematic Calendar**

(Subject to change, depending on course progress)

**Week 1 – Week 2**

Texas Political Culture & Diversity

Social Policy: Environment, Immigration, & Transportation

Social Policy: Education, Healthcare, & Welfare

**Week 3**

The Texas Constitution in Perspective

**Week 4**

Texas in the Federal System

**Week 5**

Local Government

**Week 6 – Week 8**

Voting, Campaigns and Elections

Political Parties

**Week 9**

Organized Interests & the role of Interest Groups at the State Level

**Week 10 – Week 11**

The Texas Legislature & Fiscal Policy

**Week 12**

The Executive Branch & the Governor

**Week 13**

Texas Judiciary & the Law

***\*NO CLASS Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup> – Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> – Spring Break!***

***\*NO CLASS Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>!***

**Exam 3 (Final Exam): Date TBA**