

# GOVT 2306.F4 Texas Government

Nathan Crosby

Template

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Web: **Moodle**

Office: Social Sciences M

Class Room: Social Science 8

Office Hours: MTWRF **Teams Only**

Class Hours:

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## Course Description

The goal of this class is to discover how the State Government affect our everyday lives. We investigate Texas politics through the framework of "interests, interactions, and institutions." We learn that how policies or decisions that are made are impacted by the institutions that they are surrounded by and by the behavioral decisions of key actors.

Throughout the course of the semester, we will identify different actors in Texas politics and investigate why those actors conflict at some times and cooperate at others. Our focus will then turn to political institutions and the origins of these institutions. By the end of the semester, you will understand a variety of political challenges facing the Texas today.

## Required Materials

- Jones, Mark P., William Maxwell, Ernest Crain, Morhea Davis, Christopher Wlezein, and Elizabeth Flores. 2018. *Texas Politics Today, 18th Edition*. Boston:Cengage Learning.

## Course Objectives

Successful students:

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 separations 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.
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.

## **Course Structure**

The primary method of instruction will be lecture, however participation in discussion is also a required component of this course. As a hybrid course, much of the additional instruction will take place on Moodle where articles and other additional reading material will be posted for you to read for the weekly discussion posts. The professor reserves the right to include other methods of instruction, such as, videos, group activities, and other similar methods that facilitate the learning process.

## **Course Requirements**

### **Readings**

Daily reading assignments are listed in the syllabus. Students are required to complete all reading assignments PRIOR to attending the class for which they are assigned. Keeping up with the reading assignments will be essential for success in this class and will facilitate lecture and discussion. Although the overall theme between daily reading assignments and lecture will be the same, the exact material may not. There will be reading assignments that are not covered in class and class lectures that are not covered in the readings. Students are responsible for all information covered by readings and lectures on the exams.

### **Quizzes**

Each chapter of the Jones et. al (2018) textbook will include a quiz over the whole chapter after you complete the readings. Your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the semester. These quizzes will be required to be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm of each week. The exact due dates are listed in the schedule. These quizzes will total 25% of your final grade.

### **Introduction Paper**

During the first week of the course, you will be required to complete a short introduction paper. The topic of this paper will be discussed during the first meeting of the course and is due by Sunday, INSERT DATE by 11:59 pm on Moodle. This introduction paper is expected to be between 500-700 words long and will encompass 5% of your final grade.

### **Midterm Exam**

There will be one in-class midterm exam that will encompass 20% of your final grade. This exam will consist of multiple choice questions and at least one short answer essay. The date of this exam is listed in the schedule, but is subject to change.

### **Final Exam**

There will be a final exam that will total 25% of your final grade. This exam will be similar to the midterm exams, by consisting of multiple choice questions and at least two short answer essays. One of these essays will be cumulative, but the remainder of the exam will not be cumulative.

### **Discussion Boards**

Six times during the semester, there will be an discussion boards posted based on a set topic from the syllabus. You are expected to submit a 350-450 word response the prompt and respond to two of your classmates posts in 150-250 words. I expect civility and if you can not be civil you will receive a 0 for all of your discussion boards and banned from posting. These discussions are worth 15% of your overall grade.

### **Participation and Attendance**

Finally, attendance is required for this course and will encompass the final 10% of your overall grade. The university allows instructors to withdraw students after they exceed a set number of absences depending the number of weekly meetings. For this course, the number is 4.

### **Grading Policy**

Grading Scale is as follows:

A = 100-90  
B = 89-80  
C = 79-70  
D = 69-60  
F = 59 and below

Any curve will only ever make it easier to obtain a certain letter grade, and not lower the students final grade. The grade will count the assessments using the following proportions:

- 25% Quizzes
- 5% Introduction Paper
- 20% Midterm Exam
- 25% Final Exam

- 15% Discussion Boards
- 10% Attendance

## Course Policies

### During Class

I understand that the electronic recording of notes will be important for class and so computers will be allowed in class. Please refrain from using computers for anything but activities related to the class. Phones are prohibited as they are rarely useful for anything in the course. Eating and drinking are allowed in class but please refrain from it affecting the course. Try not to eat your lunch in class as the classes are typically active.

### Attendance Policy

Texarkana College's absentee policy allows instructors to withdraw a student from a course due to excessive absences. If a student leaves and returns during class or leaves the class before the class is over, they **may** be considered absent. Three tardies constitute one absence.

Faculty members **are not** obligated to provide opportunities for students to make-up missed assignments and tests as a result of a student's absence from class.

*Attendance will be taken at the beginning of the class every day. A roll sheet will be passed out to all students to sign. If a student is caught signing for another student, they will be treated as if they did not attend the lecture meeting as well as the student they attempted to sign for. If a student is late or missed class, it is their responsibility to notify me. A student is allowed a maximum of 2 absences (which constitutes 1 classes per week. Any more than 2 absences could result in the student being dropped from the course by the professor.*

A student should not stop attending a class without formally withdrawing from the course by the institution's published Last Day for Students to Drop. If a student stops attending after the published Last Day for Students to Drop, the student may receive a grade of "F" in the class. The professor will submit the last date of attendance for students receiving a grade of "F" or "W".

Withdrawal from a course(s) **may** affect a student's current or future financial aid eligibility. Students should consult the Financial Aid Office to learn both short and long term consequences of a withdrawal.

### Computer Requirement Policy:

Students are required to have a computer with Internet access for classes. The computer must be an actual computer – smart phones, iPads, Androids, Chromebooks, etc., are not acceptable substitutes because they lack software compatibility necessary to complete all assignments and tests. Financial costs for the necessary equipment and internet access are the responsibility of the

student.

Students needing to purchase a computer may do so through the Texarkana College Bookstore. Systems purchased through the bookstore meet or exceed all requirements, are competitively priced, and may be purchased using financial aid funds. If the system is purchased through another source, it is the student's responsibility to ensure the system meets all requirements.

**Computer systems requirements:**

- Webcam, microphone, and speakers or headphones
- Windows 10 or a recent version of Mac OS (minimum Sierra). Windows 10 S mode is not supported (Contact professor to upgrade from S to regular Windows 10)
- Hardware capable of running Microsoft Teams (free download) and supports multi-media playback
- Support for Chrome or Microsoft Edge – Note: Firefox, Safari, or other browsers may not work on all TC applications
- Able to run Microsoft Office which will be provided free to TC students
- Adobe Reader or another PDF viewer
- Antivirus software such as Windows Defender or another 3rd party anti-virus solution
- The Respondus Lockdown browser is used for taking tests; therefore, the system must be capable of running this software. Most newer systems that meet other specifications should work.

Students should regularly backup content to prevent loss of coursework due to hardware failure. Backup copies of documents and other coursework may be placed on OneDrive cloud storage. OneDrive is included free of charge for all TC students.

A list of Internet service providers can be found on the TC website at: [TC Fall 2020 FAQ](#).

**Alternative Operations during Campus Closure**

In the event of an emergency or announced campus closure due to a natural disaster or pandemic, Texarkana College may need to move to altered operations and course delivery methods. During this time, Texarkana College may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include, but are not limited to: online learning management system ([Jenzabar](#) or [Moodle](#)), online conferencing through TEAMS, email messaging, and/or an alternate schedule. It is the responsibility of the student to monitor [Texarkana College's website](#) for instructions about continuing courses remotely, instructor email notifications on the method of delivery and course-specific communication, and Texarkana College email notifications for important general information.

## COVID-19 Online/Virtual Environment Instructional Commitment

The ongoing COVID-19 situation will require that some course materials and instruction are provided through an online and/or virtual format. Even if all or a portion of a class was originally scheduled to meet face to face, social distancing guidelines associated with COVID-19 will limit the number of students who are able to attend face to face classes in person simultaneously. Further, circumstances associated with COVID-19 could cause the college to be forced to shift completely to an online and/or virtual delivery at any time during the semester. **While TC faculty members are committed to providing students the option of face to face instruction if possible, students should be prepared to continue their classes in an online and/or virtual environment if necessary.** Texarkana College is committed to maintaining engaging, high quality instruction regardless of the delivery format.

## Make-up Exams and Missed Assignments

Missed exams will be excused and made-up after the fact in case of illness or personal emergency *only with proper documentation*. Please contact the instructor as soon as possible if an emergency arises that prevents you from taking the exam. Exams missed due to university sponsored events or religious holidays may also be excused, provided that the student informs me of the absence *at least two weeks in advance*. Vacation (e.g. leaving early for fall, spring or semester break) and social engagements will *not* be excused. Absolutely *no* excuse will be accepted for late assignments or missed exams, unless they are formally approved by the university. There will be no exceptions to this policy. Additionally, the documentation must explicitly state that the student was unable to attend class on the date in question.

Students must provide proper documentation and make-up the missed assignment (or exam) within two weeks of the originally scheduled date. Failure to do so will result in a zero. Make-up exams may differ significantly in both structure and content from the original exam.

## Academic Integrity and Honesty

Scholastic dishonesty, involving but not limited to cheating on a test, plagiarism, collusion, or falsification of records will make the student liable for disciplinary action after being investigated by the Dean of Students. Proven violations of this nature will result in the student being dropped from the class with an "F". This policy applies campus wide, including TC Testing Center, as well as off-campus classroom or lab sites, including dual credit campuses. This information can be found in the Student Handbook at <https://texarkanacollege.edu>. Don't cheat. Don't be that guy. Yes, you. You know exactly what I'm talking about.

## Classroom Conduct

Activities that are disruptive to class will not be tolerated. Arriving late for class, reading newspapers, speaking while others are speaking, packing prior to the end of class, and cell phones are all highly disruptive. Cell phones, ipods, and other similar devices must be turned off during class. Laptops may be used for note-taking only; use of laptops for purposes other than note-taking will result in the banning of laptops from the classroom.

In addition, students are encouraged to discuss and express opinions on the many issues, some

controversial, that are covered in class. Although differing opinions are encouraged, I will not tolerate any attacks of a personal nature or statements that single out students based on their race, gender, religion, age, ethnicity, nationality, or sexual orientation. Any student engaging in disruptive or disrespectful activities will be asked to leave the classroom.

### **Religious Observances**

Texas House Bill 256 regarding religious observances requires that faculty and the university make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Students are advised to notify the course instructor well in advance of the conflict and must make-up the missed assignment within two weeks of the original due date.

### **Disability Act Statement**

Texarkana College complies with all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and makes reasonable accommodations upon request. Please contact Larry Andrews at 903.823.3283, or go by the Recruitment, Advisement, and Retention Department located in the Administration building for personal assistance.

If you have an accommodation letter from their office indicating that you have a disability which requires academic accommodations, please present it to me so we can discuss the accommodations that you might need for this class. *It is best to request these changes at the beginning if not before the start of class so there is ample time to make the accommodations.*

## **Course Schedule**

The schedule is tentative and subject to change.

### **Week 1, 02/01 - 02/05: Political Culture**

- Tuesday - Introduction
- Thursday - Chapter 1 Jones
- Chapter 1 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm
- Introduction Paper Due Sunday at 11:59pm

### **Week 2, 02/08 - 02/12: Texas and Federalism**

- Tuesday - Chapter 2 Jones
- Thursday - American Exceptionalism
- *Faultlines Chapter 1* (American Exceptionalism) Discussion Forum Due Sunday at 11:59pm
- Chapter 2 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

**Week 3, 02/15 - 02/19:** Constitution and Voting

- Tuesday - Chapter 3 Jones
- Thursday - Chapter 4 Jones
- Chapters 3 and 4 Quizzes Due Sunday at 11:59pm

**Week 4, 02/22 - 02/26:** Parties

- Tuesday - Chapter 5 Jones
- Thursday - Two- vs. Multi-party Systems
- *Faultlines Chapter 11* (Two- vs. Multi-party Systems) Discussion Forum Due Sunday at 11:59pm
- Chapter 5 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

**Week 5, 03/01 - 03/05:** Interest Groups

- Tuesday - Chapter 6 Jones
- Thursday - Race in America
- *Multiple Readings on Moodle* (Race in America) Discussion Forum Due Sunday at 11:59pm
- Midterm Essay and Review Posted
- Chapter 6 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

**Week 6, 03/08 - 03/12:** MIDTERM

- Tuesday - Midterm Review
- Thursday - **MIDTERM - Multiple Choice in class**
- No Quiz or Discussion Forum Due this week

**Week 7, 03/15 - 03/19:** *SPRING BREAK*

- *No Assignments Due this Week*

**Week 8, 03/22 - 03/26:** The Legislature

- Tuesday - Chapter 7 Jones
- Thursday - Gender in America
- *Multiple Readings on Moodle* (Gender in America) Discussion Forum Due Sunday at 11:59pm
- Chapter 7 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

**Week 9, 03/29 - 04/02:** The Executive

- Tuesday - Chapter 8 Jones
- Thursday - Topic of choice of students
- Chapter 8 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

**Week 10, 04/05 - 04/09:** The Judiciary

- Tuesday - Chapter 9 Jones
- Thursday - Immigration
- *Faultlines Chapter 3* (Immigration) Discussion Forum Due Sunday at 11:59pm
- Chapter 9 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

**Week 11, 04/12 - 04/16:** Law and Due Process

- Tuesday - Chapters 10 Jones
- Thursday - Topic of choice of students
- Chapter 10 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

**Week 12, 04/19 - 04/23:** Local Government

- Tuesday - Chapters 11 Jones
- Thursday - Marijuana Legalization
- *Multiple Sources on Moodle* (Marijuana Legalization) Discussion Forum Due Sunday at 11:59pm
- Chapter 11 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

**Week 13, 04/26 - 04/30:** Public Policy in Texas

- Tuesday - Chapter 12 Jones
- Thursday - Topic of choice of students
- Final Exam Essays posted
- Chapter 12 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

**Week 14, 05/03 - 05/07:** Final Exam Review (Teams Only)

- Final Review Posted
- **FINAL EXAM ESSAY DUE SUNDAY, INSERT DATE AT 11:59pm!!!**

**Week 15, 05/10 - 05/14:** Multiple Choice Final Exam

- **INSERT DATE in class**