**Course Information**

**Course Title:** Texas Government

**Course Prefix & Number:** GOVT 2306

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| **Instructor Information** |

**Instructors Name:** Doug Saffel

**Office Location and #:** Social Science Building Office A

**Office Phone:** 903-823-3228

**Email:** [doug.saffel@texarkanacollege.edu](mailto:doug.saffel@texarkanacollege.edu)

**Office Hours:** Office hours are virtual (TEAMS) only.

How to use TEAMS “Microsoft Teams Training for TC Students” -YouTube

I may be available outside of these hours by appointment. Please understand, I may not check emails or respond to TEAMS requests on weekends and some evenings, but I will work with you as best as I can outside of normal ‘day’ hours.

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| **Course Description** |

A study of the Texas Constitution and government emphasizing political institutions including: political parties, interest groups, the legislature, the governor, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and local government.

**Pre/Co-requisite**  
 Successfully completed the reading portion of the TSI Test.

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| **Textbook & Course Materials** |

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| https://www.cengage.com/covers/imageServlet?image_type=LRGFC&catalog=cengage&epi=135010233717760720926659893931572218076 | ***Texas Politics Today:***  **18thEdition (2017-2018) Loose-leaf version**  **By Mark P. Jones, William Earl Maxwell, Ernest Crain, Morhea Lynn Davis, Christopher Wlezein, Elizabeth N. Flores**  ISBN: 978-1-337-59803-3 |

**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
* 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: <https://www.texarkanacollege.edu/coronavirus/>.

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| **Student Learning Outcomes** |

**This course is designed to increase students’ interest and knowledge of how state and local governments operate. After completing this course, students should be able 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 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. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues, policies, and political culture of Texas.

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| **Grading** |

**Grading Scale:**

900-1000 = A

800-899 = B

700-799 = C

600-699 = D

Below 600 = F

**Student Assessment**

Your final grade for this course will be determined by the following method:

Student assignments are worth a total of **1000 points**, broken down in the following:

1. **Syllabus Acknowledgment** and **Getting to Know You** forum post (50 points, practically a freebie)
2. **4 exams** worth 100 points each (exams are multiple choice and essay tests designed to test your knowledge from readings, lectures, class activities, and video assignments). You will submit your tests in TCOnline.
3. **Guest Speaker (100 points).** A short, written summary on municipal government.
4. **1 FINAL EXAM** worth 100 points (multiple choice).
5. **Wiki Notes.** 12 submissions (150 points). A short assignment based on assigned readings
6. **1 Video Presentation** (200 points), choosing one of the pre-selected topics, students will record a 3 to 7-minute video for teaching to the class. Recorded on Loom.

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| **Class Schedule** |

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| This course is divided into the following Units of study: **1) Texas Political Culture, Federal system, and Constitution; 2) Parties, Elections, and Interest Groups 3) Executive and Legislative Branch 4) Judiciary, Law, and Local Government** |

**Alternate 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 (www.texarkanacollege.edu) 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.

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| **Course Calendar:** |

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| **TOPIC ADDRESSED; ASSIGNMENTS** |
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| Course Introduction; Read Prologue, **Syllabus** and **GtKY** forum |
| Texas Political History |
| **Read** Chapter 1, **Wiki Notes** (no class meeting) |
| Texas Political Culture lecture; **Read** Chapter 2, **Wiki Notes** |
| Texas in the Federal System lecture; **Read** Chapter 3, **Wiki Notes** |
| Constitution lecture |
| TCOnline, Video Assignment, and Writing Workshop |
| **Unit Test 1** (Prologue and Chapters 1-3) |
| Texas political parties activity; **Read** Chapter 4, **Wiki Notes** |
| Voting and Elections Lecture; **Read** Chapter 5, **Wiki Notes** |
| Political Parties Lecture, **Read** Chapter 6, **Wiki Notes** |
| A Special Look at Interest Groups in Texas activity |
| Interest Groups Lecture |
| **Unit Test 2** (Chapters 4, 5, 6) |
| Video Presentation Assignment tutorial |
| A Look at Texas Legislature in video; **Read** Chapter 7, **Wiki Notes** |
| Legislature Lecture; **Read** Chapter 8, **Wiki Notes** |
| Executive Branch Lecture; **Read** Chapter 12, **Wiki Notes** |
| Public Policy Lecture |
| Tutorial Session |
| **Unit Test 3** (Chapters 7, 8, 12) |
| **Video Assignment DUE** (no class scheduled) |
| **Read** Chapter 9, **Wiki Notes** (no class scheduled) |
| Judiciary Lecture; **Read** Chapter 10, **Wiki Notes** |
| Law and Due Process Lecture; **Read** Chapter 11, **Wiki Notes** |
| Local Government **Guest Speaker** assignment |
| Local Government lecture |
| Thanksgiving Break\* all classes will go to virtual |
| **Unit 4 Test** (Chapters 9, 10, 11) |
| Tutorial Session |
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| **Final Exam** |

**Absentee Policy**

*SPECIAL NOTE: Attendance can be tracked in TCONLINE and TEAMS, as well as face to face. The following applies no matter how you are involved in the class.*

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, he/she **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. ***However, I do have a make-up procedure.***

**Attendance will be taken at the beginning of the class every day. A verbal roll call will be conducted. If a student is late and missed call, it is his/her responsibility to notify me at the end of class.** A student is allowed a maximum of 4 absences (which constitutes 2 class-weeks) of the course. Any **more than 4 absences may result in the student being dropped by the instructor.**

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 class after the published Last Day for Students to Drop, the student **may** receive a grade of “F” in the class. The instructor 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.

**Excused Absences**A student’s absence due to school trips and/or school business will not be counted against a student’s allowable number of absences. Military duty and absences for Holy Days (FBD LEGAL) are covered in a separate section of the catalog and the student handbook. These are the only excused absences that are considered by Texarkana College. Responsibility for work missed for any absence is placed on the student. Instructors are required to allow students to make up work missed if the absence is due to military duty or religious holy days when students follow the correct notification procedures.

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| **Make-up Policy** |

If you miss ***an exam*** FOR ANY REASON, you must submit a Make-up Exam Form (copies are located in the classroom and at my office door) if you wish to make-up the test. If you submit no form to me within two weeks of your return, you will be given a zero for the missed assignment. On the form, you will schedule an appointment with me for a date and time for the make-up. Failure to keep your appointment may result in a zero. I**n-class assignments/quizzes are not intended to be made up**.

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| **Extra Credit** |

I **do not** allow students to retake exams, give bonus points, ***or give extra credit work.***

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| **Academic Dishonesty Policy** |

This information can be found in the TC Catalog/Student Handbook at <https://texarkanacollege.edu>.

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| **Disability Act Statement** |

This information can be found in the TC Catalog/Student Handbook at https://texarkanacollege.edu.

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| **Financial Aid** |

**Attention!** Dropping this class may affect your funding in a negative way! You could owe money to the college and/or federal government. Please check with the Financial Aid office before making a decision.

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| **Complaint Process** |

The complaint process can be found at <https://www.texarkanacollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/online-classes-complaint-procedure.pdf>.

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| **Basic Needs Security Statement** |

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing enough food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in this course or ability to remain in school, is urged to contact Tonja Blase, Director of Student Retention, at 903.823.3349 for support.  Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so.

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| **PART II**  **Classroom Policy and the Professional Skill Set** |

The professional skill set includes being prepared, organized, operating on schedule, conducting one’s self professionally and cordially, working with others and working independently, meeting new challenges, and perhaps most importantly, **understanding that life is 10% percent what happens to you and 90% how you react to it** (anecdotally, of course). My classroom policy is based on *professional culture.*

* While drinks are acceptable, please **do not eat in class. Eating should be done before or after class.**
* Today’s professional world expects everyone to be well versed in device usage. While I would prefer no cell phone usage during class (and NEVER for talking or texting), **limited usage for class purposes such as recording lectures, ebook reading, taking photos of notes, etc. is permissible** as long as they are not distracting to myself or other students. The same guidelines apply to tablets or laptops. **Make sure your phone does not ring in class.** **Failure to follow this guideline may result in your being asked to leave for the day.**
* There will be a **zero tolerance policy for any behavior that is disruptive** of classroom learning. This includes use of vulgar language or rude behavior toward instructor or any other student in the class.
* **Remember, an emergency on your part does not necessarily constitute one on mine or your fellow students.** Cars that do not start, children who are sick, a change of work schedule, an inability to wake up in the morning, not having materials for class, a failure to understand the final exam schedule and other similar problems *should not be brought into our classroom*. **If you need exceptions or adjustments, please see me during office hours or schedule an appointment.** I am very willing to work out alternate arrangements with students, but I cannot fix these life problems.
* Class begins promptly. Class may not begin with my lecture, but it is your responsibility to arrive before or at start of class. Remember, you choose your schedule, so do not be late. Tardiness should almost never happen. **If you are late more than once, we will need to talk during office hours.** Walking into class during lecture is a major distraction.
* Present means you are alert, prepared, and participating. Sleeping in class is distracting, disrespectful, and counterproductive. If you are going to sleep, stay at home. **If you sleep in class, I may ask you to leave and I will mark you absent for the day.**
* Students should **make arrangements with the instructor in advance** if they need to leave class before dismissal. However, these should be rare occurrences. School should always be at or near the top of your priority list and rarely should other things override class time.
* The courses I teach deal almost exclusively with the two most potentially volatile subjects known to humankind: religion and politics. However, here we consider these on academic terms only. Please, do not take topics discussed personally. Learn to **separate the intellectual from the emotional**.

**Essay Exam Rubric**

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| CRITERION | 0-10 Points | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 41-50 |
| Demonstrates understanding of key concepts | No  Understanding  to incorrect  understanding | Weak, superficial understanding | Correct  understanding  with insufficient  supporting  rationale | Correct  understanding  with sufficient  supporting  rationale | Correct  understanding  with excellent  supporting  rationale |
| Provides specific examples and details | Key course  concepts and  terms not used,  or used  incorrectly | One key concept used correctly | Key course  concepts and  terms used  incorrectly or  seldom used  correctly | Key course  concepts and  terms used  sufficiently  throughout  answers | Key course  concepts and  terms used  correctly and  exceptionally well  throughout  answers |
| Format,  grammar,  sentence  structure,  spelling, and  punctuation | Ineffective  introduction,  body, or  conclusion;  gross  grammar,  sentence  structure,  spelling, or  punctuation  errors | Unclear  introduction,  body, and  conclusion;  frequent  grammar,  sentence  structure,  spelling, or  punctuation  errors | Appropriate  introduction,  body, and  conclusion;  frequent  grammar,  sentence  structure,  spelling, or  punctuation  errors | Appropriate  introduction,  body, and  conclusion;  few grammar,  sentence  structure,  spelling, or  punctuation  errors | Excellent  introduction,  body, and  conclusion;  no grammar,  sentence  structure, spelling,  or punctuation  errors |
| SCORE |  |  |  |  |  |