

PSCI (GOVT) 2306: American State Government, Spring 2009

Section 202: TR 9:30–10:45 a.m., 101 Pellegrino Hall

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Office: 313 Lamar Bruni Vergara Science Center (LBVSC)

Hours: M 5:50–7:30 p.m., TuTh 10:50 a.m.–1:00 p.m., or by appointment

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This course has two primary objectives: to acquaint you with the study of political science, and to improve your understanding of the institutions and processes that govern Texas and other states, as well as the localities (such as cities and counties) within them.

Student Learning Objectives: Ideally, at the conclusion of this course, you will have a greater understanding of

- ▷ the interaction between politics and government.
- ▷ the structure and institutions of Texas government.
- ▷ the political process in the Texas and other states.
- ▷ the role of individuals and civil society groups (such as political parties and interest groups) in influencing government behavior.
- ▷ how social scientists study politics and government.

Required Materials: There are **two** books required for this course:

- ▷ Ken Collier, Steven Galatas, and Julie Harrelson-Stevens. 2008. *Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation*. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 978-0-87289-506-5.
- ▷ Kevin B. Smith, ed. 2008. *State and Local Government 2008–09* ed. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 978-0-87289-613-0.

These textbooks should be available, new and used, at the TAMIU Bookstore in the Student Center; you may also be able to order them on-line at a discount.

Additional readings may be assigned at the discretion of the professor and will be provided for you at the library reserve desk, on the course Angel site, or as handouts in class.

Also, you are required to provide your own standard green, blank Scantron form (“Form 882-ES”) for each examination, including the final exam, and should bring at least one #2 pencil to complete the exam. *Our Scantron machines do not read markings made with a pen.* Scantron forms are available at the bookstore in multi-packs and as individual sheets.

Assignments and Grading: Your grade in this course will be based on the following elements:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Term Exams (4) | 65% |
| Final Exam | 15% |
| Class Attendance and Participation | 5% |
| Reading/Lecture Quizzes | 15% |

Your final grade in the course will be assigned based on this scale:

| | | | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Final Average | ≥ 90.0 | ≥ 80.0 | ≥ 70.0 | ≥ 60.0 | < 60.0 |
| Grade | A | B | C | D | F |
| Grade Points | 4.0 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 |

Exams: There will be four closed-book, in-class examinations, along with the final examination, on the dates that are indicated on the syllabus, covering the assigned materials. The exams will

be drawn from the material covered in the most recent section of the course: for example, Exam 2 will mostly cover material studied after Exam 1. Per college policy, the final examination is *comprehensive* and will cover all of the course materials.

Your **highest** exam grade of Exams 1–4 will count for 20% of your final grade; the other three exams will account for 15% of your final grade each. The final examination will account for 15% of your final grade in the course, regardless of your score.

During exams, no discussion among students is permitted of any kind, and all electronic devices (cell phones, calculators, pagers, computers, etc.) must be **switched off**.

Online Quizzes: For each module of the course, there will be a quiz posted in Angel. The quiz will be available online at least 48 hours prior to the first class scheduled for that module, marked **(Q)** on the schedule below. *No quizzes will be accepted after the quiz deadline, which is 15 minutes prior to the start of class.*

The online quizzes are open-book. You may work with other students in the class on the online quizzes, although it is probably *not* in your best interest to simply copy someone else's answers without understanding *why* they chose those answers.

Your lowest two quiz grades will be dropped from your quiz average. Together, the quizzes will count as 15% of your final grade.

Attendance and Participation: The remaining 5% of your final grade will be based on your level of participation and attendance in class. Unannounced, in-class quizzes may also make up a portion of this grade.

Exam and Quiz Content: Questions on examinations and quizzes may be drawn from the Collier al. book, the Smith book, materials presented in lecture, and/or additional materials provided by the instructor as announced in class. Just reading the books, or just attending class, will likely be insufficient to earn a good grade in the course.

Class Policies: I make it a general policy to treat all students as adults. While this affords you, the student, greater freedom than you may have had in high school, it also means that you must take a greater personal responsibility for your performance in the course. I am always happy to meet with students to discuss their concerns about the course, but I will not necessarily assume that you are in difficulty simply because you perform poorly on a homework assignment or disappear from class for a few days.

Please provide a respectful learning environment for your fellow students. Repeated tardiness, cell phone disruptions, reading materials unrelated to the course (such as the student newspaper), and abuse of communication technologies (e.g., web browsing/IMing/texting during class) during class will adversely affect your grade; per university policy, repeated disruptive behavior may result in your involuntary withdrawal from the course.

Please arrive at class *on time* and mute (or switch off) all pagers, cell phones, and alarms during class.

Make-up examinations must be scheduled two weeks in advance in the case of an **unavoidable** planned or reasonably-foreseeable absence; otherwise, make-ups will be given only in the case of an illness or emergency that is properly **documented**. Please refer to the student absence policy posted on the TAMU website for examples of absences that will ordinarily be excused by the professor and specific documentation that is acceptable. Should you have three final exams scheduled for one day, please consult with me to arrange an alternative time to take your final.

Any extra-credit opportunities offered by the professor will be offered to **all** students on an equal basis. Please do not ask the professor for individualized extra credit opportunities.

I do not provide lecture notes for students under any circumstances. You will have to rely on the generosity of a classmate or make use of any materials provided on the textbook website or the textbook's study guide (if applicable).¹

This syllabus is subject to revision by the professor.

Grade Appeals: If you wish to dispute a grade on a particular assignment for any reason other than an obvious arithmetic error on my part, you will need to type a one-page explanation of your position and turn it in, along with the original graded assignment, *at least one week after* the assignment is returned to you. I will then consider your appeal and make a determination. Appeals must be submitted in hard copy format; no appeals submitted via email will be considered. Please refer to the Student Handbook for policies regarding appeals of *final letter grades*.

University and College Policies: The following policies of the TAMU College of Arts and Sciences and Texas A&M International University are reproduced here for your information; you may already be familiar with them from other courses, but please review them.

STUDENT EMAIL ADDRESS: All students must obtain a TAMU email address and have access to the Angel E-Learning system. Students should check their TAMU email on a regular basis.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR DROPPING A COURSE: It is the student's responsibility to drop the course before the designated drop date. Faculty are not responsible for dropping students who stop attending class.

OFFICE HOURS: Your professor will keep regular office hours, as posted above, and appointments can be made to accommodate students' schedules. The door will be open for all students on a "first-come, first-served" basis when no appointment has been previously scheduled.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Texas A&M International University seeks to promote reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Student Disability Services office and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodations.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR: The College of Arts and Sciences encourages classroom discussion and academic debate as an essential intellectual activity. It is essential that students learn to express and defend their beliefs, but it is also essential that they learn to listen and respond respectfully to others whose beliefs they may not share. The College will always tolerate diverse, unorthodox, and unpopular points of view, but it will not tolerate condescending or insulting remarks. When students verbally abuse or ridicule and intimidate others whose views they do not agree with, they subvert the free exchange of ideas that should characterize a university classroom. If their actions are deemed by the professor to be disruptive, they will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include being involuntarily withdrawn from the class.

COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS: The Copyright Act of 1976, as amended by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, grants to copyright owners the exclusive right to reproduce their works and distribute copies of their work. Works that receive copyright protection include published works such as a textbook. Copying a textbook without permission from the owner of the copyright may constitute a copyright infringement. Civil and criminal penalties may be assessed for copyright infringement. Civil penalties include damages up to \$100,000; criminal penalties include a fine up to \$250,000 and imprisonment.

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING: Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as one's own work. Recently the internet has complicated the issue. Taking from the internet and presenting it as one's own work is still plagiarism. Copying another student's paper or a portion of the paper is called "copying." Neither plagiarism nor copying will be tolerated. Should a faculty member discover that a

¹Students with disabilities who require notes or other learning environment accommodations should consult with the Student Disability Services office for assistance.

student committed plagiarism, the student will receive a grade of “F” in that course and the matter will be referred to the TAMU Honor Council for possible disciplinary action. Per university policy, you have the right to appeal any such penalty according to procedures published in the faculty and student handbooks.

INCOMPLETES: Incompletes are discouraged and are assigned only under extenuating circumstances.

College policy mandates 70% of course requirements must be met before an “I” can be considered. In fairness to those students who complete the course as scheduled, under no circumstances will an incomplete (“I”) be changed to an “A” unless the student has experienced a death in the immediate family or has a written medical excuse from a physician.

Course Outline: Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class and will be posted to the course calendar and in Angel. We will not necessarily read books in the order they appear on the syllabus; please be sure you read the correct chapters *in advance* of the designated class dates.

While the professor may periodically remind students of upcoming scheduled events, it is **your responsibility** to be familiar with this schedule and any changes to it.

Jan 13 Introduction to the course.

Jan 15, 20 A Brief Political History of Texas

Reading: *Lone Star Politics*, ch. 1.

Jan 22 (Q), 27, 29 The Texas Constitution; Federalism

Readings: *Lone Star Politics*, ch. 2; Smith, part I.

Feb 3 Exam 1

Feb 5 (Q), 10, 12 The Texas Legislature

Readings: *Lone Star Politics*, ch. 3; Smith, part IV.

Feb 17 (Q), 19, 24 The Governor & Executive Branch

Readings: *Lone Star Politics*, ch. 4; Smith, part V.

Feb 26 State Bureaucracies

Reading: Smith, part VII.

Mar 3 Exam 2

Mar 5 (Q), 10, 12 The Texas Judiciary

Readings: *Lone Star Politics*, ch. 5; Smith, part VI.

Mar 16–20 Spring Break: No Class

Mar 24 (Q), 26 Local Government

Readings: *Lone Star Politics*, ch. 6; Smith, part VIII.

Mar 31 Exam 3

Apr 2, (Q), 7, 9 Voting and Elections

Readings: *Lone Star Politics*, ch. 7; Smith, part II.

Apr 9 Drop Date

Apr 14 (Q), 16, 21 Parties and Interest Groups

Readings: *Lone Star Politics*, ch. 8; Smith, part III.

Apr 23 Exam 4

Apr 28 (Q), 30 Public Policy in the States

Readings: *Lone Star Politics*, ch. 9; Smith, part X.

Thursday, May 7, 8:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. Final Exam