



# State Government

## PS 2306-Z01/Z02

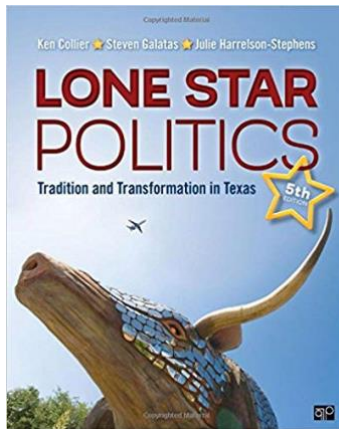
### Fall 2020



**Professor:** Dr. Jessica Velasco

**Office Hours:** By appointment

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#### **Required Text:**

Ken Collier, Steven Galatas, and Julie Harrelson-Stephens, *Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas* (CQ Press, 5th edition, 2016). Companion site: <https://edge.sagepub.com/collier5e/student-resources>

#### **Course description**

This course will cover the state government of one of the most unique states in the country, Texas. You will learn about the historical foundation of Texas politics, the structure of the Texas government, and the interaction between the state, local, and national governments. You will also learn about the way Texas approaches all sorts of governmental functions in a way that is distinctly...Texas.

#### **Course learning outcomes:**

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Explain how the history, geography, and political structure of Texas have affected and continue to affect governance and policy implementation in the state
2. Describe the distinctive features of each of the three branches of Texas government compared to other states and how each feature impacts outcomes for the state and its citizens
3. Discuss how national, state, and local governments interact
4. Critically analyze information to discern its meaning and validity
5. Express your political opinions in ways that enhance understanding, while also learning to listen and understand different viewpoints

#### **2020-2021 Core Assessment:**

In addition to promoting outcomes in the areas related specifically to political science, I will also be promoting the following in this class:

**Communication:** Students will develop communication skills to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.

**Teamwork:** Students will develop teamwork skills to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

**Program Learning Outcomes (Political Science):**

The graduating student will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of significant theoretical approaches of political science through written work and oral communication.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze domestic and international political processes in written work and oral communication.
- Demonstrate the ability to develop arguments about global equity and equality issues in politics through written work and oral communication.

**Marketable skills for Political Science:**

- Students can effectively communicate ideas and information verbally, visually, and in writing
- Students can distinguish between credible/relevant information and information lacking credibility/relevance
- Students can identify critical and common institutions of political decision-making and policy-making across different nation-state settings
- Students can engage with social and political problems and use critical thinking to develop logical solutions

**Texas Domain III Competency 19:**

The teacher understands and applies social science knowledge and skills to plan, organize, and implement instruction and assess learning.

**Texas Domain III Competency 23:**

The teacher understands and applies knowledge of concepts of government, democracy, and citizenship, including ways that individuals and groups achieve their goals through political systems.

**GRADING**

Grades in this class will be determined **by the number of points you earn by the end of the course.** The point distribution is listed below:

Introduction Post	10 points
Syllabus Quiz	20 points
Mid-term Exam	100 points
Chapter Quizzes (15 x 10)	150 points
Attendance & Discussion Groups	500 points
Discussion Questions (10 x 10)	100 points
Final Exam	120 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000 points</b>
<b>BONUS POINT OPPORTUNITIES (see course calendar for more information)</b>	20 points

A	895-1000 points
B	795-894 POINTS
C	695-794 POINTS
D	595-694 POINTS
F	BELOW 595 POINTS

**INTRODUCTION POST:** By Friday at 9 a.m. of the first week, you need to post an introduction to the discussion board. More information is on Blackboard. The introduction post is worth 10 points.

**SYLLABUS QUIZ:** By Friday at 9 a.m. of the first week, you need to complete the syllabus quiz on Blackboard in the Week 1 folder. You will have ONE attempt. The quiz is worth 20 points.

**CHAPTER QUIZZES:** There will be 10 online reading quizzes this semester to assess your understanding of the reading material. All quizzes are located in the folder for each appropriate chapter. Each quiz is 10 multiple-choice questions and is worth 15 points. Quizzes are due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m. each week. NOTE: You can attempt the quizzes as many times as you want, and the top score will be used.

**ATTENDANCE & DISCUSSION GROUPS:** The weekly schedule is below. You will receive points for attending lectures via Blackboard Collaborate on Mondays and participating in discussion groups via Blackboard Collaborate on Fridays. The lectures and discussion groups will take place at our scheduled class time. Attendance will be taken via roll call as well as through Blackboard Collaborate session tracking tools. You must attend the full session and participate to receive full points. Please refer to the course calendar below and course announcements for exceptions to this schedule.

Mondays: Lecture (meet at scheduled time on Collaborate)

Wednesdays: Video Days (review posted materials in Blackboard)

Fridays: Discussion Groups (meet at scheduled time on Collaborate)

On Fridays, you will be randomly assigned to discussion groups to ensure interaction with different students (and viewpoints) throughout the semester. It is expected that you are prepared to participate and that you contribute to the discussion. I will periodically ask for peer evaluations to be submitted. These will be used in the determination of your grade for this area of the course, which is 50% of your grade.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** Each week, starting with Week 2, you will need to post two discussion questions related to the readings and materials by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m. Each question is worth 5 points, and some of the best questions will be selected each week for the discussion groups. Please see the information at the end of the syllabus for more information about discussion board questions and expected behavior. NOTE: The discussion board is a post-first discussion board, meaning you will not see the posts of others until you post first.

**EXAMS:** There will be two exams, a mid-term and a final. Both will be taken on Blackboard, and you will be required to download Respondus lockdown browser and Respondus Monitor to take the exams. See the schedule for exam date and availability.

**LATE WORK:** Given that all assignments are accessible from the beginning of the term, the occurrence of late work should be rare, except in cases of emergencies. Prompt and clear communication will assist with any accommodations and exceptions.

### **WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME:**

- I will provide weekly communication with the class through announcements (email and posted on Blackboard), email notifications, virtual office hours, and virtual class meetings.
- I will provide email responses within 24 hours of receipt during the hours of 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Friday.
- I will provide grades and feedback for assignments within one week of the submission due date.
- I will provide clear and concise instructions on how to complete the online course requirements.
- I will provide a range of opportunities to engage in the course content in a meaningful way.
- I will stay abreast of the current research in the field to help you get the best possible experience in the course.

**WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU:**

- You will familiarize yourself with the course syllabus, policies, assessments, evaluation, grading criteria, and course design.
- You will acquire the tools necessary to be successful in this class. This includes the book, reliable Internet access, and a device other than your phone for completing assignments.
- You will complete all assigned readings and coursework by assigned due dates.
- You will engage in the course, with your peers, and with me, using open and appropriate communication.
- You will be diligent about using communication in a way that shows respect to me and your classmates. This is especially important in our online meetings. Failure to meet this expectation could result in your removal from the course.
- You will submit college-level work that has been checked carefully for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation (using a free extension like Grammarly is recommended).
- You will respond to communication from me and your classmates in a timely manner (within 24 hours).
- You will not plagiarize the work of others or yourself, and you will also not collaborate with others on class assignments (unless clearly authorized to do so)
- You will reach out to me immediately if you are having trouble in the class or with access to course materials (although please call the Help Desk--888.837.6055 for general access issues).

Course Calendar (Subject to Change)

<b>W</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Due or To Do:</b>
1	8/24 week	Introduction & Texas History/Beginnings	Syllabus & Chapter 1	<b>Introduction Post &amp; Syllabus Quiz due by Friday at 9 a.m.</b>
2	8/31 Week	Texas Constitutions	Chapter 2	<b>Discussion board questions &amp; chapter quiz due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.</b>
3	9/7 Week	Texas Legislature *No class on 9/7--Lecture will be pre-recorded and posted due to Labor Day	Chapter 3	<b>Discussion board questions &amp; chapter quiz due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m. BONUS POINT OPPORTUNITY ON WED, 9/9, from 10:10-11:05 a.m., Zoom session with President Gallego, Former Texas Legislator</b>
4	9/14 Week	Legislative Organization & Process	Chapter 4	<b>Discussion board questions &amp; chapter quiz due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.</b>
5	9/21 Week	Texas Governors	Chapter 5	<b>Discussion board questions &amp; chapter quiz due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.</b>
6	9/28 Week	Plural Executive & Texas Bureaucracy	Chapter 6	<b>Discussion board questions &amp; chapter quiz due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.</b>

7	10/5 Week	Texas Judicial System	Chapter 7	Discussion board questions & chapter quiz due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.
8	10/12 Week	Mid-Term Review 10/12 & Mid-Term Exam 10/16		Exam will be available from 8 a.m.-11:59 p.m. on Fri, 10/16
9	10/19 Week	Texas-Sized Justice *No discussion groups or class on Friday, October 23	Chapter 8	**BONUS Discussion—Post a question by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m. and a response by Friday at 9 a.m. to get up to 10 bonus points.
10	10/26 Week	Campaigns & Elections	Chapter 9	Discussion board questions & chapter quiz due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.
11	11/2 Week	Political Parties VOTE: November 3 <sup>rd</sup> is ELECTION DAY!	Chapter 10	Discussion board questions & chapter quiz due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.
12	11/9 Week	Organized Interests	Chapter 11	Discussion board questions & chapter quiz due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.
13	11/16 Week	Local Government in Texas	Chapter 12	Discussion board questions & chapter quiz due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.
14	11/23 Week	Thanksgiving Week		No assignments
15	11/30 Week	Final Exam Review 11/30		Study
16	12/7	FINAL EXAM		Final Exam will be available on Blackboard from 8 a.m.-11:59 p.m. on Mon, 12/7

## GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Asking good questions is an important skill. Each week, you will be asked to create a discussion question for your classmates.

--A good discussion question meets the following criteria:

- Is clear and easy to understand
- Has appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Allows your classmates the opportunity to apply or critically think about a concept from the readings or to discuss an issue that is relevant to the topics for the week
- Is open-ended, allowing for a 2-3 sentence response. Adding a “why or why not” follow up question is appropriate
- Encourages deeper exploration of course topics
- Helps bring in new knowledge to the learning environment

--A good discussion question DOES NOT

- Ask for specific answers that can be easily found in the book or online (you’re not testing your classmates)
- Promote a certain opinion (e.g. Why should we do away with the electoral college?)
- Duplicate questions from other sources
- Reword a quiz question
- Present inaccuracies (e.g. Why does the President get to serve six terms?)

### Grading for Discussion Questions

To receive full points for your discussion questions, you must adhere to the guidelines above. I will provide feedback for each question. Please pay attention to the feedback I give you to avoid losing points for the same mistake each week.

## GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION BOARDS

SOURCE: Center for Teaching and Learning. (2020). Sample discussion board ground rules. Retrieved from <https://ctl.wiley.com/sample-discussion-board-ground-rules/>

- **Ask questions.**  
If you find something confusing or want to know more, do not hesitate to ask questions. Make sure to post your questions in the appropriate thread.
- **Participate.**  
Do not hide in the background; it is not fair to lurk and let others do all the work. Contribute to discussions to get as much as possible from the course and to maintain your participation grade.
- **Do not dominate a discussion.**  
Share your knowledge, but not to the point of excluding others. If you have something to offer, please share it, but allow everyone to contribute equally to a discussion.
- **Be intellectually rigorous.**  
Do not excuse sloppy or illogical thinking. Challenge yourself and one another.
- **Be tactful.**  
Be critical of ideas, but remember there are other people involved. Be tactful and kind. You can hurt the feelings of a person reading your post.
- **Forgive other students’ mistakes.**

Do not correct others, even if you follow the rules of netiquette and use good manners. Just because you do not agree with a student's post does not mean that he or she is wrong. Instead, offer a different perspective to encourage further discussion.

- **Read the whole thread before posting.**  
Read all the posts in a thread before responding so you don't repeat what others have already said. Try to contribute clarifying information or a new idea to a discussion.
- **Be concise.**  
Do not waste people's time by posting basic, repetitive information. Make your point clearly and quickly.
- **Reread and check your posts.**  
Practice professionalism. Be mindful of how you look online; others will likely judge the tone and quality of your writing. Reread your posts and edit for clarity and mechanics.
- **Cite your sources.**  
If you use a source, cite it properly. Give credit where credit is due. Include links where appropriate.
- **Maintain confidentiality.**  
Respect your classmates' privacy. Do not repeat the personal information that others share.
- **Report technical problems.** If the platform is not working properly, please let me know as soon as possible

## **OTHER COURSE POLICIES & RESOURCES**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Academic dishonesty hurts everyone and reduces the value of college degrees. Doing someone else's work, presenting the ideas and work of others as your own, submitting the same paper for multiple classes, and/or failing to cite your sources when you utilize the ideas of others, are all examples of academic dishonesty. It is your responsibility to read and understand the university's policy on academic dishonesty in the SRSU Student Handbook, as all violations will be taken seriously and handled through the appropriate university process. The Student Handbook can be found at: <https://www.sulross.edu/page/2454/student-handbook> (page 80).

In addition, please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments, as well as monitoring software for course exams.

If you have any questions about this, please ask!

**COURSE BLACKBOARD RESOURCES:** There are several resources on the course Blackboard page. You are expected to review and familiarize yourself with the items in Blackboard in the first week of class. NOTE: Please post general, course-related questions to the discussion board forum I have set up for this. Typically, if one student in the class has the question, others do as well. Please allow 24 hours for a response, and then feel free to email me or call me directly with your question.

**BLACKBOARD TECHNICAL SUPPORT:** SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support  
Online Support Desk Contact Info: Toll Free: 888.837.6055. Email:  
[blackboardsupport@sulross.edu](mailto:blackboardsupport@sulross.edu)

**SRSU LIBRARY SERVICES:** The Sul Ross Library offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, [library.sulross.edu](http://library.sulross.edu). Off-campus access requires your LoboID and password. Check out materials using your photo ID. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your



coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

**SRSU DISABILITY SERVICES:** Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Rebecca Greathouse Wren, LPC-S, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (please leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as we can during working hours), or email rebecca.wren@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

**DISTANCE EDUCATION STATEMENT:** Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as Smarthinking, library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

**UNDECIDED or UNSURE about YOUR MAJOR?**

Political Science may be for you! Hopefully this class and the assignments will help open you up to the various career possibilities in political science, and I would be happy to discuss this with any interested students.

**“We are what we repeatedly do.  
Excellence is not an act, but a habit.”  
-Aristotle**