



PS 2306: State Government Spring 2023-W01



Professor: Jessica Velasco, DPA
Office Hours: M 12-2 p.m., T/R 1-3 p.m., & by appointment
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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 political culture, 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.



Textbook & Course Materials:

We will be using an Open Educational Resource (OER) textbook for this class. It is *Texas Government* by Daniel M. Regalado, which was created this year. You can access this textbook here:

<https://www.oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/93113/student/>

There will be additional materials for you to read and review each week in Blackboard.

Course learning outcomes:

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

1. Explain how the history, geography, and political culture of Texas have affected and continue to affect various aspects of the structure and function of the Texas government

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. Explain how national, state, and local governments interact
4. Explain important state government concepts, vocabulary, and processes
5. Appropriately interpret information provided in various charts and graphs
6. Express your political opinions clearly and fairly.
7. List some of the many resources available to learn more about state and local government in Texas

Core Assessment

In addition to other outcomes listed above, I will also be promoting the following in this class:

Personal Responsibility

Students will develop principles of personal responsibility for living in a diverse world; to include intercultural competency, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national and global communities.

Social Responsibility

Students will develop principles of social responsibility for living in a diverse world, to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

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:

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

You can track your progress by clicking on the “My Grades” tab in Blackboard. You can also view grading rubrics for each assignment in the “My Grades” tab. If I leave you additional feedback outside of the rubric, you will see a message bubble in the grading center. PLEASE NOTE: As mentioned above, the grade for this class is based on POINTS, not the average that Blackboard gives you.

POINT DISTRIBUTION

Introduction Post	10 points
Syllabus Quiz	20 points
Pre-Test	50 points
Discussion Board (11 x 20)	220 points
Weekly Applied Assignments (50 x 10)	500 points
Mid-term Exam	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Total	1000 points
BONUS POINTS	TBA

INTRODUCTION POST: By Friday at 11:59 p.m. of the first week of class, you need to post an introduction to the discussion board. More information is on Blackboard. The introduction post is worth 10 points. To receive full points, you must follow the instructions.

SYLLABUS QUIZ: By Friday at 11:59 p.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.

PRE-TEST: By Friday at 11:59 p.m. of the first week, please take the pre-test on Blackboard. This will serve as a pre-test for the course and give me an idea of where everyone stands starting out. **YOU GET THE FULL 50 points** if you complete the pre-test by Friday at 11:59 p.m. There is no penalty for incorrect answers. Please do NOT use your books or any other resources for the pre-test.

3-2-1 POST/WEEKLY DISCUSSION BOARD: Even though we are on online class, I would like to have some sort of class interaction. Each week, starting with Week 2, **post the following related to the readings and materials for the topics we are covering by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m.:**

- THREE (3) items you learned (three complete sentences)
- TWO (2) items you want to learn more about or don't understand (two complete sentences)
- ONE (1) discussion question for your classmates (see guidance below on discussion questions)

All of these should be in ONE post. **Please use the following format:**

3 things I learned:

1. Complete sentence
2. Complete sentence
3. Complete sentence

2 things I want to learn more about/need clarification on:

1. Complete sentence
2. Complete sentence

Discussion Question (must be related to the readings and materials for the week we are in):

DQ: Your question

After you have made this post, you will need to respond to the discussion question of one other student by Thursday at 11:59 p.m. Each discussion board is worth 20 points. Please see the information at the end of the syllabus for more information about discussion board questions, responses, and expected behavior. **NOTE: All discussion boards are “post-first” boards, meaning you will not see the posts of your classmates until you post. In addition, since I can only attach one due date to each graded item in Blackboard, the due date you see is the date for the initial post, the 3-2-1 post.**

WEEKLY APPLIED ASSIGNMENTS: For most weeks, after you have completed reading and reviewing the materials on the folder for each chapter, you will complete an applied assignment. The instructions for each weekly assignment are in Blackboard in each week's folder. **The weekly assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday of each week and are each worth 50 points.**

CLASS MEETINGS/LECTURE: I will be having an optional, virtual class Q&A meeting during the first week of class to answer any questions you have about the course. I have also tried to have weekly virtual meeting times for asynchronous web courses before, and they are very poorly attended—usually, no students attend (it is hard to find a time that works for all/most students since y'all didn't sign up for it at a specific time). For this reason, I will NOT be doing a weekly virtual meeting time. Instead, lecture recordings are posted in your weekly folders for you to view at your convenience. I am also available

during office hours and for scheduled virtual meetings. Please just email me to set those up! In addition, if you are in Alpine, you are always welcome to attend my FTF section on Tuesdays/Thursdays, 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. (LH 309).

EXAMS: There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam in this class. Both will be available on Blackboard on the days and times specified below. PLEASE PUT THESE IN YOUR CALENDAR NOW. For each, you will have two hours from the time you start to finish the exam. Each is worth 100 points.

W	Dates	Topic	Reading	Due or To Do:
1	1/15-1/21	1/15, MLK, Jr. Holiday 1/18, SRSU Classes Start Introduction to the Course	Syllabus/Review Blackboard course materials	Introduction Post, Syllabus Quiz, and Pre-test due by Friday at 11:59 p.m.
2	1/22-1/28	Texas History, Culture, and Constitutions	OER-1, 1.1, 1.2, 2, and 2.2 & Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
3	1/29-2/4	Texas Legislature	OER 3 & Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
4	2/5-2/11	Legislative Organization & Process	OER 3.1 & Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
5	2/12-2/18	Texas Governors	OER 4 & Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
6	2/19-2/25	Plural Executive & Texas Bureaucracy	OER 4.1 & Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
7	2/26-3/4	Texas Judicial System	OER 5, 5.1 & Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
8	3/5-3/11	MID-TERM REVIEW & MID-TERM		Study & take your mid-term The mid-term will be available from 1 p.m. on March 7 through 11:59 p.m. on March 9.

9	3/12-3/18	SPRING BREAK		
10	3/19-3/25	Texas-Sized Justice	OER 5.2, 5.3 & Items on Blackboard	BONUS POINTS: Earn up to 10 bonus points for posting a question and response on the discussion board this week.
11	3/26-4/1	88 th Legislative Session (Updates) -MARCH 31-SRSU Women's Conference	Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., and response post due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
12	4/2-4/8	Campaigns & Elections	OER 6 and 6.1, & Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
13	4/9-4/15	Political Parties	OER 6.4 & Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
14	4/16-4/22	Organized Interests	OER 6.5 & Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
15	4/23-4/29	Local Government in Texas	OER 7.1 & Items on Blackboard	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
16	4/30-5/6	88 th Legislative Session		BONUS POINTS: Earn up to 15 bonus points for educating the class about a law that passed this session—and responding to the post of another student.
17	5/7-5/13	Final Exam Review & FINAL EXAM		Final Exam (Available on Blackboard from 8 a.m. on Friday, May 12 to 11:59 p.m. on Monday, May 15)
18	5/14-5/20	Finals Week Graduation (5/19, 5:30 p.m.)		

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 recorded lectures.
- 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 take the time to review feedback I provide to avoid repeating mistakes.
- 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.
- 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, quizzes, or exams.
- You will reach out to me immediately if you are having trouble in the class or with access to course materials. For general access issues or technical help, please call the Help Desk-- 888.837.6055.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

--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., Do you agree that meeting yearly is a bad idea?)
- Duplicate questions from other sources or assignments—create questions in your words

- Reword a quiz question
- Present inaccuracies (e.g., Why do we limit the number of terms the governor can serve?)

Responding to Discussion Questions

When you respond to discussion questions, you need to respond to questions that meet the criteria above. **Your responses should be at least 2-3 complete sentences.** No more than FOUR students should respond to the same question to avoid exhausting a topic. **Also, use the “Reply with Quote” option when responding to a question from your classmate.** Students must also adhere to the basic ground rules below.

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: Intellectual development requires hard work. Academic dishonesty severely interferes with this development and reduces the value of college degrees. Presenting the ideas or work of others as your own, submitting the same paper for multiple classes, doing someone else's work, using unauthorized sources, and/or failing to cite your sources when you utilize the ideas of others, are all examples of dishonest academic conduct. As an SRSU student, it is your responsibility to read and understand the university's expectations about academic integrity. All violations will be taken seriously and handled through the appropriate university process. The policy can be found at: <https://www.sulross.edu/about/administration/university-policies/>

In addition, please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments. Respondus Lockdown and Monitor will likely be used for the two exams as well.

If you have any questions about this, please ask!

LATE WORK: I have been very intentional about how I have designed this course and distributed the content to optimize your learning and comprehension. Trying to cram weeks of work into a few days or waiting until the end of the semester to do everything isn't conducive to learning. For this reason, you must have an extenuating circumstance and approval from me to submit late work. If you submit late work without an approved extension from me, I reserve the right not to grade it. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Since university-related travel (e.g., travel for athletics competition) is planned in advance (with a few exceptions), make sure to plan ahead and submit assignments before departure to avoid missing deadlines.

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.

SRSU LIBRARY SERVICES:

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine 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. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (rsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

The Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) Libraries at Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass offer additional access to library spaces and resources. Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde students may also use online resources available through SWTJC website, library.swtjc.edu. The SWTJC Libraries serve as pick-up locations for InterLibrary Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery from the Alpine campus.

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 Mary Schwartze Grisham, 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). The office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and their mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross

State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832. **Please note that instructors are not permitted to provide classroom accommodations to a student until the appropriate verification has been received.**

DISTANCE EDUCATION STATEMENT: Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as 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. 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. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

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

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

I will strive to create a learning environment that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and also one that honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, socioeconomic class, age, nationality, etc.). It is my expectation that we will be partners in this commitment so that, together, we can create a classroom community that feels welcoming to all.

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.

<p>Program Learning Outcomes (Political Science): The graduating student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.	<p>Marketable skills for Political Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
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FOR THOSE SEEKING A TEACHING CERTIFICATION:

Texas Domain III Competency 003 (Geography & Culture):

The teacher understands and applies knowledge of geographic relationships involving people, place, and environments in Texas, the United States, and the world: the teacher also understands and applies knowledge of cultural development, adaptation, diversity, and interactions among science, technology, and society.

Texas Domain III Competency 004 (Economics):

The teacher understands and applies knowledge of economic systems and how people organize economic systems to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services.

Texas Domain III Competency 005 (Government & Citizenship):

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.