



**PS 2306-Wo1  
State Government  
Fall 2023**

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**Professor:** Jessica Velasco, DPA  
**Office Hours:** MW 2-5 p.m. & by appointment  
**Office Location:** LH 210  
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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 a free, open educational resource (OER) textbook for this class. You can access this textbook here: <https://shorturl.at/xzUW9>

There will be additional materials for you to read and review each week. All of these items are provided on Blackboard.

**Course learning outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

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 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. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues, policies and political culture of Texas
9. 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

10. 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
11. Illustrate and explain important state government concepts, vocabulary, and processes
12. Appropriately interpret information provided in various charts and graphs
13. 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:

Critical Thinking. Students will develop critical thinking skills to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.

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

### **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
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000 points</b>
<b>CITIZENSHIP POINTS</b>	<b>Up to 50 points</b>

**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.

**CITIZENSHIP POINTS:** Throughout the semester, I will provide opportunities to earn extra points by engaging with the various communities you are a part of (class, campus, city, etc.). You may earn up to 50 citizenship points that will be added to your point total for the class. NOTE: Citizenship points are not available after the last class day.

W	Dates	Topic	Reading	Assignments and Important Dates*
1	8/28-9/3	Introduction to the course and Texas History	Chapter 1 & materials on Blackboard	Syllabus quiz, introduction post, and pre-test due by Friday at 11:59 p.m. <b>*8/31 Last day for registration changes</b>
2	9/4-9/10	Texas Constitutions & Federalism	Chapter 2 & materials 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. <b>*9/4 Labor Day Holiday</b>
3	9/11-9/17	Texas Legislative Branch	Chapter 3 & materials 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. <b>*9/13 Last day to drop with no record</b>
4	9/18-9/24	Legislative Process in Texas	Materials on Blackboard	Bill look-up post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m., response post and weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m. <b>*9/19-Constitution Day Celebration and National Voter Registration Day</b>

5	9/25-10/1	Texas Governor	Chapter 4 & materials 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. <b>*9/27 Meal on the Mall</b>
6	10/2-10/8	Plural Executive & Texas Bureaucracy	Materials on Blackboard	Weekly applied assignment due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
7	10/9-10/15	Texas Judicial Branch	Chapter 5 & materials 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. <b>*10/10—Last day to register to vote in November</b>
8	10/16-10/22	Criminal Justice in Texas	Chapter 11 & materials on Blackboard	3-2-1 due by the start of class on Tuesday
9	10/23-10/29	<b>EXAM WEEK</b>		<b>MID-TERM (available 8 a.m. on Tuesday, 10/24, through 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, 10/26.</b> <b>*10/23 Early voting starts</b>
10	10/30-11/5	Voting and Elections	Chapter 7	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. <b>*11/3-Last day of early voting</b>
11	11/6-11/12	Political Parties	Chapter 8	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. <b>*11/7-Election Day</b>
12	11/13-11/19	Interest Groups	Chapter 9	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. <b>*11/14 Last day to apply for Fall 2023 graduation</b>

				<b>*11/17 Last day to drop with a “W”</b>
13	11/20-11/26	Local Government	Chapter 6	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.  *11/22-24 Thanksgiving Holiday
14	11/27-12/3	Local Government (cont’d) & Financing Government	Chapter 12	3-2-1 post due by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m. and response post due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
15	12/4-12/10	Final Exam Review		<b>*12/6 Last day of Fall 2023 classes</b>
16	12/11-12/15	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>		<b>Final Exam (Available on Blackboard from 8 a.m. on Friday, December 8, through 11:59 p.m. on Monday, December 11)</b> <b>*12/15 Graduation</b>

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME:**

- 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 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 paper, writing utensils, 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?)

### **OTHER COURSE POLICIES & RESOURCES**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person’s work as one’s own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Students should also avoid using open AI sources **unless permission is expressly given** for an assignment or course. Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall.

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.

### **ADA STATEMENT**

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. Alpine Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartze Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director at 432-837-8203 or email [mschwartz@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartz@sulross.edu). Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

### **SRSU 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.

### **ALPINE LIBRARY INFORMATION**



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/](http://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 ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or phone (432-837-8123).

No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting [library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/](http://library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/) or ask a librarian by emailing [srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu).

New for Fall 2023: Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty and staff. Utilize free services such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL) and ScanIt to get materials delivered to you at home or via email.

**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)

**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><b>Program Learning Outcomes (Political Science):</b> The graduating student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate knowledge of significant theoretical approaches of political science through written work and oral communication.</li> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to analyze domestic and international political processes in written work and oral communication.</li> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to develop arguments about global equity and equality issues in politics through written work and oral communication.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Marketable skills for Political Science:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can effectively communicate ideas and information verbally, visually, and in writing</li> <li>• Students can distinguish between credible/relevant information and information lacking credibility/relevance</li> <li>• Students can identify critical and common institutions of political decision-making and policymaking across different nation-state settings</li> <li>• Students can engage with social and political problems and use critical thinking to develop logical solutions</li> </ul>
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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.