



**PS 2306
State Government
Summer I 2026**

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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. This and other materials are available 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

IMPORTANT NOTE:

This course is only 5.5 weeks long. However, I must cover the same amount of material that I cover in 16-week courses. This means you will be doing and reading about 3 times more each week than you would typically do and read in one week for a 16-week course. If you do not think you have the time, resources, and/or discipline to complete this course in this format, I recommend that you sign up for this course in the fall or spring, when I will be teaching it in the full 16-week format, both face-to-face and online.

You can track your progress by clicking on the “Gradebook” tab in Blackboard. You can also view grading rubrics for each assignment in the “Gradebook” 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	10 points
Discussion Board (4 x 50)	200 points
Weekly Applied Assignments (105 x 6)	630 points
Final Exam	150 points
Total	1000 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 11:59 p.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. 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 10 points. NOTE: You will need to download the Respondus Lockdown browser to complete the quiz (and the final exam).

WEEKLY APPLIED ASSIGNMENTS: Each week, 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. **For Week 1, the applied assignment is due by Friday, 5/29, at 11:59 p.m.** For Weeks 2-5, the assignments are due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m. **For Week 6, the assignment is due by June 30 at 11:59 p.m.** Each applied assignment is worth 105 points. NOTE: I am using a new tool for these assignments, Process Feedback. Please follow the instructions, and please let me know if you have any questions.

3-2-1-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 (but not including the final week of class), **post the following related to the readings and materials for ALL OF THE chapters we are covering that week by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m.:**

- THREE (3) items you learned (three **complete** sentences)
- TWO (2) **discussion** questions related to the readings for the week (see the guidelines for good discussion questions below)
- ONE (1) response to ONE of your discussion questions

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

Subject line for your post: 3-2-1 Your name

3 things I learned:

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

2 discussion questions:

1. Question
2. Question

1 Answer

1. Your answer to one of your discussion questions (complete sentence)

After you have made this post, you will need to respond to the discussion question posted by another student by Thursday at 11:59 p.m. Each discussion board is worth 50 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.**

INTERACTION WITH ME: I will be having a virtual class meeting on Wednesday, May 27, at 7 pm, to answer any questions you have about the course. In addition, I will be interacting with you over the weekly discussion boards. Because this is an asynchronous online class, I will not have scheduled lecture times. Instead, you have recorded lectures posted in each module.

EXAM: The final exam will be available 8 a.m. on June 28 through July 1 at 11:59 p.m. You will have two hours from the time you start to finish. It is worth 150 points.

W	Dates	Topics & Readings	Due or To Do:
1	*Week 1: May 27-30	Syllabus, Texas History & Constitutions Read Chapters 1 & 2	Due by Friday at 11:59 p.m. -Introduction Post -Syllabus Quiz -Applied assignment OPTIONAL: Virtual class meeting/question time—7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 27
2	Week 2: May 31- June 6	Texas Legislature & Legislative Process Read Chapter 3	3-2-1 posts due by Tuesday at 11: 59 p.m.; Response posts and applied assignments due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
3	Week 3: June 7-13	Texas Executive Read Chapter 4	3-2-1 posts due by Tuesday at 11: 59 p.m.; Response posts and applied assignments due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
4	Week 4: June 14-20	Texas Judicial Branch & Criminal Justice in Texas Read Chapters 5 & 11	3-2-1 posts due by Tuesday at 11: 59 p.m.; Response posts and applied assignments due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
5	Week 5: June 21-27	Voting & Elections, Political Parties Read Chapters 7 & 8	3-2-1 posts due by Tuesday at 11: 59 p.m.; Response posts and applied assignments due by Thursday at 11:59 p.m.
6	*Week 6: June 28- July 1	Interest Groups, Local Government Chapters 6 & 9 FINAL EXAM	Applied assignment due by June 30 at 11:59 p.m. Available 8 a.m. on June 28 through July 1 at 11:59 p.m.

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 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 avoid the use of generative AI for completing assignments. I want YOUR thoughts and YOUR words.
- 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 engaging 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. **Use of generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) is not permitted in this course.** Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing the 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 & Monitor will be used for syllabus quiz and final exam as well.

If you have any questions about this, please ask!

LATE WORK: In a summer course, there is no time to get behind. The whole course (except for the final exam) is open and available for you to work on as soon as the course opens. Make sure you commit the time and energy necessary to complete the work in this condensed class. Please reach out to me immediately if you have an extenuating circumstance preventing you from completing the work so we can discuss whether you should drop the class. For summer classes, it is best to hit the ground running and to stay ahead. PLAN AHEAD. There will be no extensions given for vacations.

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 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 SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (leave a message if there isn't an answer). 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.**

COUNSELING SERVICES

Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare where all SR students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/365 support by visiting [Timelycare/SRSU](https://www.timelycare.com/). The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus), and telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students and RGC students.

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/. 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), or by 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/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

TUTORING:

- a) Tutoring and Learning Center located in the library (call 432-837-8982 for a reservation with a tutor)
- b) Tutor.com (online tutoring services available—access via BlackBoard Tools) – be sure to allow 48 hours turnaround time for a writing assignment

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 a 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.

CLASSROOM DEMEANOR

Political issues can be emotionally charged. It is highly unlikely in a class this size that everyone will share your personal values, beliefs, and opinions. Believe it or not, this is a good thing! The presentation of varying perspectives will help all of us to learn. This can be accomplished if ideas, beliefs, and opinions are presented in a respectful way. I will be expecting all students to follow these basic ground rules for our interactions, whether they are face-to-face or virtual.

GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION (VIRTUAL/IN-PERSON)

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

BLACKBOARD TECHNICAL SUPPORT: SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support Online Support Desk Contact Info: Toll Free: 888.837.6055. Email: 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 style="text-align: center;">Program Learning Outcomes (Political Science):</p> <p style="text-align: center;">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 	<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 policymaking across different nation-state settings
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<p>politics through written work and oral communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.