

# Political Science 2306-17: Texas Government

Spring 2023

Online

CRN: 202320

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Patane (he/him)

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**Office Hours:** Every MWF, 12:00pm- 1:00pm. Or by appointment, in person and/or Zoom.

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**Note on political events/changes or personal crises:** With events over the last few months, such as the attacks against the rights of LGBT people and pregnant individuals, and the increasingly public and violent expressions of racism and bigotry by individuals and governments, I understand that many of you may be under significantly higher amounts of stress/fear than during a normal semester. I also understand that you might need breaks from class to take care of your own mental health, family members, friends, or community.

Students are always welcome to get in touch with me if they want to talk or want assistance accessing support resources. I promise a safe, judgement free, and confidential environment. I am also happy to provide personal contact mechanisms if students want further privacy or the situation warrants that level of privacy. This extends to adjustments. I will work with anyone as much as I can to make sure you have a safe semester, feel heard, and be able to succeed during the semester.

Please note that as faculty, I am a mandatory Title IX reporter so if you reach out to me with experiences of harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc) I will need to give your name and student email address to the Title IX office. They are also bound by confidentiality, and simply reach out to ask whether they can provide additional support.

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## Course Description

This course provides a survey of the institutional and behavioral foundations of Texas government and its role in the US federal system. We will cover the ideational foundations and political culture of Texas, both at its founding and now. Later, we will cover political behavior of various groups in Texas, from political parties to lobbyists. Finally, we will cover the institutional structure of Texas's government branches and how all these factors affect the policy outputs of the Texas government. This class is entirely online.

## **Learning Objectives**

Course expectations can always be vague. Since you will use these scores at the end of the semester to evaluate this course, looking at the learning objectives from the IDEA evaluations will give you a better picture of what this class will be like. The most important skills you will learn follow:

1. Gaining a basic understanding of the subject (factual knowledge, principles, theories)
2. Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual activity
3. Learning to apply course material to improve thinking and problem solving

## **Course Material**

**There are no required textbooks for this course.** Instead, readings for each week will be posted as PDFs to the course Blackboard page. Students are responsible for reading the assigned articles during the week they are assigned.

## **Blackboard**

All communication for this course will be conducted via the course's Blackboard site and University email. Any supplementary material, assignments, or changes to the course structure will be made available on this site. Each student should ensure that they have access to these materials and are able to receive emails through their student account. Please note that I cannot accept or respond to student emails that come from a non-university address.

## **Assignments**

Discussion Question Posts: 5 points each (15 total)

Exam 1: 50 points

Exam 2: 50 points

Each week, a folder will appear on the course Blackboard. It will have a checklist of the reading assignments and guiding questions for the week.

## **Discussion Question Posts:**

This class is entirely online, it relies on both reading the assigned readings each week and discussing them as a group. Each week students will be asked to answer several guiding questions posted by me that will ask you to apply what you learned to some real world situations or propose solutions to problems in Texas politics.

## **Exams:**

To prepare for each exam, I will make a review sheet available. Exams will be taken entirely online. Exams will contain 25 multiple choice or true/false questions, worth two points each.

They will be available from midnight on Monday until 11:59pm that Friday. Because I am not sure what resources people will have available at home or in their dorms, and to reduce stresses because of COVID, exams **will be open book/note**. You will not need to use any special software such as Respondus. You can work together to figure out the answers to questions and to ask me for help.

Keep in mind that this means exam questions will be a little more difficult than you may be used to. Rather than asking basic definitions or checking to see whether you've memorized a fact, these questions will ask you to look at an event or idea that we've studied and determine which term, theory, or process best fits that example. I am more interested in teaching you how to apply the knowledge you'll gain in this class, so questions on exams will ask you to do that.

## **Grading Scale**

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: 59 or lower

## **Information and University Policies**

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

[http://www.shsu.edu/~slo\\_www/](http://www.shsu.edu/~slo_www/)

### **Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy:**

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf>

### **Students with Disabilities Policy:**

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail [disability@shsu.edu](mailto:disability@shsu.edu)). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

### **Copyright on Lecture and Course Materials**

Copyright 2023 (Christopher Patane) as to this syllabus and all lectures. During this course, students are prohibited from selling notes or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the express written permission of the instructor teaching this course.

### **Emergencies, Crises, and Mental Health**

Sometimes the study of Political Science involves dealing with difficult material. In some cases, these may reflect or reference your own personal, family, or group experiences. Other times, life events may interfere with your ability to succeed in class. We do not want to neglect our own health or well-being. If you need support, the Counseling Center can be reached at 936-294-1720. The [website](#) also contains self-help resources, and those services available in the Huntsville community.

As with all other parts of the course, students are welcome and encouraged to come talk to me to voice their concerns, seek support, or discuss accommodation for coursework after a crisis.

## **Class Outline, Schedule**

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. Changes will be announced in class, through email, and on the course Blackboard site. It is the responsibility of the student to take note of any changes.

### **Week 1: 1/17-1/20**

Course Introduction

### **Week 2: 1/23-1/27**

The 2023 Legislative Session

### **Week 3: 1/30-2/3**

Basic Structure of Modern Texas Government

### **Week 4: 2/6-2/10**

Texas History: Before Colonization

### **Week 5: 2/13-2/17**

Texas History: Genocide and Enslavement

### **Week 6: 2/20-2/24**

Texas History: Independence and Secession

### **Week 7: 2/27-3/3**

Texan Institutions: Building a Jim Crow State

**Exam 1 due at 11:59pm on Sunday, March 5**

### **Week 8: 3/6-3/10**

Texan Institutions: How the Past Built Today

### **Week 9: 3/13-3/17**

**No Class, Spring Break**

### **Week 10: 3/20-3/24**

Civil Rights and Liberties in Texas: Race and Ethnicity

### **Week 11: 3/27-3/31**

Civil Rights and Liberties in Texas: LGBTQI Communities

**Week 12: 4/3-4/7**

Civil Rights and Liberties in Texas: Sex and Gender

**Week 13: 4/10-4/14**

Civil Rights and Liberties in Texas: Criminal Justice

**Week 14: 4/17-4/21**

Changing Texas: Voting and Protesting

**Week 15: 4/24-4/28**

Climate Change and Texas Politics

**Week 16: 5/1-5/5**

The Future?: Christian Nationalism and Fascism in Texas

**Friday, May 5, Study Day**

**Week 17: 5/8-5/11**

**Finals Week**

All missing assignments and Exam 2 due at 11:59pm on Thursday, May 11