



**Government Department
Southeast College – Distance Education**

GOVT 2306 – Texas Government
CRN 55842, 55843, 55844
Online / June 8 – July 12, 2015
3 hour course / 48 hours per term/ (S1) 5 weeks

Instructor

Dr. Cammy Shay

Instructor Contact Information

Office (713) 718-7141, email in Eagle Online, email drcammy@hotmail.com in case of emergency with your name and class number in the subject line.

Office location and hours

Please feel free to contact me concerning any problems that you are experiencing in this course. You do not need to wait until you have received a poor grade before asking for my assistance. Your performance in my class is very important to me. I am available to hear your concerns and to discuss course topics. Feel free to come by my office during these hours:

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays from 10:00 am until noon at the Eastside Campus, Angela Morales building, room 101.10.
Please call ahead to arrange a specific meeting time.

Purpose of the Course

The study of government helps us grapple with the enduring question “How do we want to live together?” It helps us understand the rules we live by and the processes by which rules are made, changed, or dissolved. Government 2306 is one of two courses designed to introduce students to the study of the origin and development of the Texas constitution, structures and powers of state and local governments, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas. Additionally, this particular survey of the Texas system of government includes the fundamental principles of political science and analysis of contemporary policies. This course is fully transferable to all public Texas colleges and universities.

Prerequisites

Students must be enrolled concurrently in ENGL 1301 or have already successfully completed ENGL 1301.

Course Goals

To engage students in a real-world understanding of the role of government in their lives and the nature of politics that occur around us at the state and local levels of society. Successful students will complete the course with the ability to think critically about government theories, history, and policies and will develop a genuine interest to continue future learning. Successful students will leave the course with greater confidence in their understanding of several contemporary political issues and an ability to express their knowledge civilly and constructively.

The teaching and learning philosophy I bring to this course emphasizes student independence and responsibility in furthering knowledge, skills, and abilities that are relevant to twenty-first century living. I value critical and reflective thinking and analysis of important political concepts. It is more important to read and write for understanding than to try to memorize a lot of information. Specific course and module Learning Objectives are provided online. The course format requires different forms of interaction and active learning. Students will participate with me, with each other, and with the course material primarily through asynchronous discussions about relevant topics. Students are expected to take an active interest in their own learning this term.

Course Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

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

Core Objectives

Students in this Core Curriculum course are assessed on their ability to demonstrate all or most of the following core objective proficiencies as mandated by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, which are as follows:

- Critical thinking skills, Communication skills, Empirical and Quantitative skills, Teamwork, Social Responsibility, Personal Responsibility

5-WEEK CALENDAR

Course Modules: This course is organized into four Modules, each of which contains the information you must learn in order to be successful. From the homepage in Eagle Online 2.0, you may access the four Course Modules as well as an array of supplemental information you are obligated to familiarize yourself with this term. You will need to plan ahead and review material well in advance of tests and assignments.

Module 1: Ideology, Hot Topics of the Day, Introduction to Texas Government & Politics, Texas Constitution, Public Opinion, Fiscal Policies & Issues

Module 2: Separation of Powers, Hot Topics of the Day, Legislative Branch, Executive Branch, Judicial Branch

Module 3: Federalism, Hot Topics of the Day, Local Governments, Interest Groups, Political Parties

Module 4: Citizenship, Hot Topics of the Day, Civil Liberties & Rights, Voting Issues, Elections

MODULE	WHAT TO DO	WHAT IS DUE
<u>1</u> 6/8 – 6/14	Class begins - Start Module 1 by 6/8 Use Learning Objectives, read Module 1 content Finish Module 1 by 6/14	6/11: Practice Bonus Test, Practice Bonus Assignment 6/13: FFW 1 6/14: Test 1
<u>2</u> 6/15 – 6/21	Start Module 2 by 6/15 Use Learning Objectives, read Module 2 content Finish Module 2 by 6/21	6/20: FFW 2 6/21: Test 2
<u>3</u> 6/22 – 6/28	Start Module 3 by 6/22 Use Learning Objectives, read Module 3 content Finish Module 3 by 6/28	6/27: FFW 3 6/28: Test 3
<u>4</u> 6/29 – 7/8	Start Module 4 by 6/29 Use Learning Objectives, read Module 4 content Finish Module 4 by 7/8	7/3: Essay Due 7/4 & 7/5: 4 th of July Holiday! 7/7: FFW 4 7/8: Test 4
FINALS 7/9-7/10	Begin Final 7/9 & Submit Final by 7/10 Review course scores after 7/12	7/9 and 7/10: Final Exam

Instructional Methods

You have enrolled in a **non-traditional and intensive class**, one that incorporates 21st century technology in the learning process. The World Wide Web has an abundance of resource material to assist in learning about government and politics, including articles, websites, podcasts, webcasts, images, music, and more. We will use these resources in addition to the course textbook.

You must be highly disciplined and focused to succeed in this intensive 5-week course. Many due dates fall close together. This online class offers you an opportunity to engage in learning using different instructional techniques. We will discuss topics and issues relevant to the assigned resource material. It is important to finish readings and explorations of resource materials in a timely manner. Students are expected to log in regularly (at least 5 times a week) and actively participate in discussions. When you are online you will be expected to read all posted information, email, and announcements.

Student Assignments & Assessments

This section of the syllabus provides you with a brief explanation of how your learning will be assessed this term. Please review it carefully.

Course Module Tests (T): All tests are taken online in Eagle Online. You may use your notes or books, but each 25-question test will have a 30-minute time limit (delivering one question at a time). You can take each test up to three times within the specified timeframe for each test, but each time you take the same test you could receive different questions. Eagle Online will record the highest score. You will take a test upon completion of each of four Course Modules. There will be no make-ups for missed tests. You have three opportunities to take each test and ample time in which to complete the task. There are no exceptions to this rule; plan ahead to avoid problems. Test due dates are listed in the Calendar section of this syllabus.

Theory behind multiple test opportunities: I am providing three opportunities to take each test, including the final exam, in order to:

- 1) Encourage student engagement with the material. The best way to approach multiple test opportunities is to take the first test attempt early in the course module to see what you already know (benchmark), take the second attempt after you have returned to the course material to learn the content you did not understand on the first attempt (assess), and finally, take the third attempt after you have returned again to the course material to complete your learning (mastery).
- 2) Obviate any technology issues that cause you to miss a test attempt. You do not have a right to three separate and complete attempts. If you or your computer errs during a test attempt and it is not completed, determine the problem, fix it, and take the next attempt when you are sure your system is fully operational. Be sure you are using Firefox as your browser. I do not reset test attempts.

Final Exam (F): The 100 point final exam is comprehensive and will be made up of questions from or similar to those in the Course Module Tests. The Final Exam will have an 80-minute time limit (delivering one question at a time). You may take the final exam three times prior to the due date/time, with Eagle Online recording your highest score. There will be no make-ups for missing the final exam.

Focused Free Writes (FFW): There are four Focused Free Write discussions. In Eagle Online I've posted a rubric, instructions and due dates. You will respond to and engage in respectful conversations with each other about your postings. Postings must be composed of **a minimum of 400 relevant, responsive, and complete words (12 point font) written in academic English** in order to receive full points. Each Focused Free Writing response can earn 25 points for a total of 100 points. I do not accept late submissions. Due dates are posted in the Syllabus and on the Homepage in EO.

You can earn up to one (1) bonus point for each Focused Free Write (for a total of 4 bonus points during the term) by contributing to a meaningful discussion about the assignment topic. To do this, **after posting your initial response**, ask a respectful question or comment about student Focused Free Write responses and/or reply to questions or comments made about your response. The purpose of the bonus points is to encourage you to spend extra time participating in conversations with your classmates about each Focused Free Write topic. These brief discussions allow students a chance to explore their own thinking about issues raised in the course curriculum. Of course, feel free to discuss the topic beyond the bonus point opportunity. I do not accept late submissions.

Course Feedback & Evaluation (CFB): You will receive up to 25 points for submitting a one page essay (12 point font, one inch margins, double spaced) describing in detail your learning experience in this course. Feedback: Your focus will be on how you learned the course content by revealing your learning approaches, material that assisted you, activities, assignments or assessments that engaged you, or other pertinent information reflecting meta-cognition (defined as awareness or analysis of one's own learning

or thinking processes). Evaluation: You will describe in detail the single most important outcome from the course you will take with you upon course completion. You must address why this outcome is important to you and explain how it will likely influence you after course completion. I do not accept late submissions.

Bonus Opportunities: There are three separate bonus opportunities available in this course. Two of them, the Practice Bonus Test (8 points) and Practice Bonus Assignment (3 points), occur in the first few days of class. The third, the FFW bonus, takes place during the timeframe of each FFW (4 points). The total number of bonus points available is 15, or 3.75% of your final grade. It is a good idea to take advantage of the bonus opportunities. No other extra credit work will be provided.

Instructional Materials

There is one textbook used in this class. Lyle C. Brown, Joyce A. Langenegger, Sonia R. Garcia, Ted A. Lewis, Robert E. Biles. 2014. *Practicing Texas Politics, 15th Edition*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning. Loose Leaf Edition (HCC Bookstore)

Recommended

Study Guides are available online to accompany the required texts. Students are encouraged to follow current political events and issues.

Expectations of Civil Conduct

Students are expected to conduct themselves professionally in their communication with the instructor, their classmates, and college staff and administration. Behavior inappropriate to the collegiate setting (including but not limited to abusive/derogatory/threatening/harassing language directed at the instructor or towards other students, staff or administrators) will not be tolerated, and may result in removal from the course if severe and/or repeated.

HCC Policy Statement - Students' Responsibility to Read the HCC DE Student Handbook/Student Services

The Distance Education Student Handbook contains policies and procedures unique to the DE student. Students should have reviewed the handbook as part of the mandatory orientation. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the handbook's contents. The handbook contains valuable information, answers, and resources, such as DE contacts, policies and procedures (how to drop, attendance requirements, etc.), student services (ADA, financial aid, degree planning, etc.), course information, testing procedures, technical support, and academic calendars. Refer to the DE Student Handbook by visiting this link:

<http://de.hccs.edu/de/de-student-handbook>

Technical Compliance Notice and How to Handle Technology Problems

This class is a distance-education class using Eagle Online for notes, linked slides, and assignments and assessments. Each student must maintain Internet access throughout this course -- from start to finish. Additionally, students are expected to maintain a state of technical compliance, including (but not limited to): up-to-date software as required by the instructor; a stable Internet connection; and use of the Firefox browser when using Eagle Online. The instructor will not give consideration for lost/missing/unacceptable work stemming from technical non-compliance and/or end-user technical issues, including loss of computer or battery failure. Any student who cannot keep up with the coursework owing to a lack of computer or Internet access must drop the course. Any student found to have quit logging in (1 week) and whom the instructor is unable to contact is subject to being dropped without further warning, resulting in either a "W" or a "FX" grade, depending upon the time of the term at which the behavior is noted. **You must contact the distance education technicians**

(<http://d2.parature.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=8081>) and the Eagle Online Help Desk (713 718-2000 option 4 - option 2 - option 3) when you have technology problems.

HCC Student Course Grade Appeal Procedure

Any student who takes issue with the course or how it is taught should first express his or her specific concerns to the instructor. The HCC Student Course Grade Appeal Procedure governs any challenge to the final course grade. The following statements are excerpts from the Procedure: (<http://www.hccs.edu/hccs/current-students/student-rights-policies-procedures>)

- “A student has a right to appeal a grade that the student believes was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was based on bias, caprice, or computational or clerical error.”
- “Faculty members have a right to have the grades they assign upheld unless it is clearly demonstrated that a grade was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was based on bias, caprice, or computational or clerical error.”
- “The student has the burden of proof. The student must present clear evidence that a grade was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was based on bias, caprice, or computational or clerical error.”

Instructor Requirements

As your Instructor, it is my responsibility to:

- Provide the grading scale and detailed grading formula explaining how student grades are to be derived
- Facilitate an effective learning environment through class activities, discussions, and content
- Provide a detailed description of assignments and assessments
- Inform students of policies such as attendance, withdrawal, and make up
- Provide the course outline and class calendar which will include a description of assignments and assessments
- Arrange to meet with individual students as requested

Student Requirements

To be successful in this class, it is the student's responsibility to:

- Log into class regularly and participate in discussions and activities
- Read and comprehend the course content material
- Complete the required assignments and assessments and submit on time
- Ask for help when there is a question or problem
- Complete the course with a 70% passing score or higher

Grading

I will provide assignments and assessments that you can use to determine how successful you are at achieving the course learning outcomes (mastery of course content and skills) outlined in the syllabus. If you find you are not mastering the material and skills, you are encouraged to reflect on how you study and prepare for class. I welcome a dialogue on what you discover and may be able to assist you in finding resources that will improve your performance.

Assignments & Assessments

4 Focused Free Writes (100 points)	30.3% of your final grade
4 Tests (100 points)	30.3% of your final grade
Final Exam (100 points)	30.3% of your final grade
Course Feedback (30 points)	9.1% of your final grade
330 Points	100%

Grading Scale

90 - 100 = (297-330), 80 - 89 = B (264-297), 70 - 79 = C (231-264), 60 - 69 = D (198-231), Below 60 = F (<198)

An Incomplete is given only in a case of documented emergency that prevents you from taking the Final Exam.

Modification of Syllabus: This syllabus acts as a contract between students and professor. I will make every effort to fulfill the requirements of this syllabus during this term. However, in the unlikely event that changes must be made, I reserve the right to make such changes and to notify students in a timely manner of any such changes.