



**Government 2306- Spring 2015
Northwest College**

Introduction to Texas Government- CRN# 44182

Katy Campus – Room 217 8:00-9:30 Tuesday/Thursday
3 hour lecture course

Instructor: Gary LeBlanc

Instructor Contact Information:

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OFFICE HOURS: 7-8:00 and 1-2:00 Monday/Wednesday ...other times by appointment

7-8:00 and 11-12:00 Tuesday/Thursdayother times by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Government **2306** is one of two courses designed to introduce students to the politics of government at the national, state and local levels. This course is fully transferable to other colleges and universities. The course curriculum will address the six basic intellectual competencies including reading and writing at the college level, speaking and listening effectively, critical thinking and computer literacy. This course will also include the objectives for the social sciences core curriculum.

Government **2306** will focus on the constitutional structure of government, the political influences, as well as the corresponding policy outcomes at the state of Texas level. This course will also include the political, social and economic ideologies that influence our system. It will address the constitutional system of government and the three branches of government established by the state Constitution. It will include an analysis/evaluation of the election system as well as those political influences which impact this system including interest groups as well as, political parties. It will also examine the corresponding policy outcomes. The course will basically be divided into three components or modules each resulting in test to evaluate learning outcomes. We will certainly include high profile current events, including those associated with the recent statewide election.

Your participation and involvement in the learning process and class activities is highly encouraged. Not only is this part of the required curriculum competencies, but this will be an

essential ingredient in your enjoyment and success in this class. This course is designed to go far beyond the mere presentation, memorization and testing of data. It will promote each student's involvement in the learning process both in and out of class. I will encourage you to take an active role by listening, reading, completing assignments, independent learning exercise, as well as participation in classroom activities

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

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) mandates that the core curriculum must ensure that students will develop the essential knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college, in a career, in their communities, and in life. Through the Texas Core Curriculum, students will gain a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, develop principles of personal and social responsibility for living in a diverse world, and advance intellectual and practical skills that are essential for all learning.

Students enrolled in GOVT 2305/2306 core curriculum courses will complete assessments designed to measure the following core objectives:

- **Critical Thinking Skills**—to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- **Communication Skills**—to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- **Personal Responsibility**—to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making
- **Social Responsibility**—to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

Student assessment of proficiencies mandated by THECB may include testing, projects, or assignments.

Government Program Student Learning Outcomes

1. Identify and describe the institutions of American national government. GOVT 2302/2305
 2. Identify and describe the institutions of the State of Texas government. GOVT 2302/2306
 3. Identify and evaluate information sources for political news, data, and opinion. GOVT 2306
 4. Analyze the effects of the historical, social, political, economic, and cultural forces on politics and government. GOVT 2306
 5. Recognize and assume the responsibilities of citizenship by developing one's critical thinking skills, engaging in public discourse, and by obtaining information through the news media. GOVT 2305
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Government 2306- Course Outline- Tentative Schedule

The following is an outline of our course activities and a tentative schedule of those activities. Completion of this material will cover the educational objectives for the Social Sciences core curriculum identified earlier in the Syllabus.

January 20	First day of class Discussion of Syllabus
January 22	Political, social and economic ideologies Discussion
January 27	Introduction- Political culture and policy-making environment TP- Ch. 1
January 29	Texas Constitution TP- Ch. 2 pp. 38-54 Syllabus Quiz
February 3	Continue Texas Constitution TP-Ch. 2 pp. 54-66
February 5	Complete Texas Constitution Begin Interest Groups TP- Ch. 3 pp. 68-82
February 10	Complete Interest groups TP- Ch. 3 pp. 82-102

February 12	Political Parties TP -Ch. 4 pp. 104-119
February 16	President's Day- No class
February 17	In-class Activity
February 19	In-Class Essay
February 24	TP - Ch. 4 pp. 119-135 Begin voting, campaigns and elections <i>Discussion</i>
February 26	Continue voting, campaigns and elections Ch. 5 pp. 136-146 Review for Test
March 3	TEST 1 and due date for Assignment #1
March 5	Legislative Branch TP - Ch. 6 pp. 166-189
March 10	Legislative Branch TP - Ch. 6 pp. 189-221
March 12	Complete Legislative Branch Begin Executive Branch TP - Ch. 7
March 16-22	Spring Break- No Class
March 24	Complete Executive Branch
March 26	State Bureaucracy TP - Ch. 8
March 31	Judicial System TP - Ch.9 pp. 288-305
April 2	Complete Judicial System TP - Ch. 9 pp. 305-316 Review for Test
April 3-6	Easter Holiday-No Class

April 7	TEST 2 and due date for Assignment 2
April 9	Economic policy TP- Ch. 12 pp. 388-409
April 14	Impact of the federal government <i>Discussion</i>
April 16	Economic policy TP- Ch. 12 pp. 409-420
April 21	Local government TP- Ch. 11 pp. 348-361
April 23	Local government TP- Ch. 11 pp. 361-386 Due date for Class Project
April 28	Justice System TP - Ch. 10 pp. 318-330
April 30	Justice System TP- Ch. 10 pp. 330-347
May 5	Public Policy TP- Ch. 13 pp. 422-435
May 7	Last day of class Public Policy TP- Ch. 13-pp. 436-445
May 14	Final Exam (TEST 3) and due date for Assignment #3

TP- Texas Politics

Note: The last date for make-up exams is **Tuesday-May 5, 2015.**

Any student who has not taken a make-up by this date will receive a **ZERO** for the applicable exam(s).

Instructional Methods:

TESTING: The major test will comprise the largest percentage of your grade. Each test will consist of approximately **70%** objective involving multiple-choice questions. There will be no

True/False question. The remaining **30%** will consist of narrative questions such as short-answer, discussion or essay questions. Every test will have a significant narrative/writing component. Some class time will be devoted to review test expectations before the first exam. Test questions will come from lecture, independent reading assignments, class discussions and other classroom activities. At a minimum, ninety percent of the test will be based on materials covered in class. This means that you will have to take individual responsibility for individual and independent preparation for some portion of the test materials. I would suggest that you maintain your class preparation activities on a systematic and consistent basis in order to be more successful on the test. Most evidence indicates that "cramming" usually **not** result in success in your grade or the actual retention of information. Just as in the nature of the course, the test will **not** emphasize memorization but real understanding and critical thinking. You should be prepared to apply, evaluate, and analyze in the testing process. The three exams and the in-class essay will account for **66%** of your final grade.

It is expected that students take each test at the regularly scheduled time. If you do miss an exam, it is the responsibility of the student to contact the instructor to schedule a make-up exam. You should contact me as quickly as possible to facilitate the scheduling. This is particularly important since some make-ups may have to be scheduled in the testing and assessment center. You should be able to present a reasonable explanation for missing the exam. You may be asked to provide written documentation to support such reasoning. It will be your responsibility to set up an appointment in the Testing Center at **713.718.5906** in Room 140 at the Katy campus and provide e-mail confirmation of the scheduled appointment. **No student may take more than one make-up exam without the permission of the instructor!**

As noted, I will give make-up exams; however, you should **not** take this lightly. There are certainly valid reasons for make-up exams; however, it is certainly not a good idea to choose to take a make-up. You should also note that the structure and nature of this exam will be different than the original test and will become a predominately narrative test with a greater emphasis on short answers and essays.

CRITICAL THINKING ESSAY: Each student will be asked to write a critical thinking essay involving an analysis of an activity that effectively represents the political culture and political system in Texas. If you miss this activity, you will have the opportunity to make up the essay in the Testing Center.

PROJECT: You should note that my grading system is comprehensive and includes a method of evaluation of each identified competency area. If test taking is not one of your strengths, you have the opportunity to improve your status in class with the other graded activities. There will be one project worth 60 points. You will be given a choice of several question or topics related to the course material. You will have the opportunity to submit a paper or a PowerPoint presentation addressing your chosen topic. You will also have the opportunity to submit a "hybrid" that could include both a narrative and PowerPoint presentation. I will provide the topic options and additional instructions on my Learning Web page in the very near future. The due date for the **Project is due on Thursday- April 23, 2015. I will not accept projects after April 28, 2015 and there will be a 30% deduction if the project is submitted late.**

ASSIGNMENTS: You will be given an assignment related to each section of test materials that will count **24 points** each. These will self paced assignments and you will have more than ample time to complete them. They will be given to you at the beginning of each section of test materials and you will turn them in on the applicable test date. They will be based on class lecture and independent reading assignments. **Eleven points** will be deducted for each class session the assignments are turned in late. I will *not* accept assignments more than one class session after their original due date except in rare and unusual circumstances. Assignments are considered late if they are turned in after I request their submission. Their primary purpose will be to assist you in the study and preparation process. This is not just busy work. They can serve as a valuable tool to get you invested in the learning process. I would suggest that you work on these on a regular and consistent basis to obtain their maximum benefit.

QUIZZES: The purpose of the quizzes is to ensure that you come to class on time and prepared. This means that you should maintain your reading assignments according to the schedule. This is also intended to discourage the practice of "cramming" the night before the test. I want you to be a part of the class discussions and I want you to retain the material. These quizzes should facilitate this process. In the past, students have indicated that the quizzes have actually served as a helpful tool in their overall grade. They will be short and will take place at both the beginning, as well as the end of class. If you are absent or late, you will miss the quiz. If you miss the quiz for any reason, you miss the points. There will be no make-ups. In total, there will be **nine** quizzes that will count **four points** each. You will be allowed to drop **one** quiz. If you come to class and take the quiz and leave early without notification/approval, your quiz score will *not* count. You will receive a zero for that particular quiz. **All quizzes are unannounced and will focus on the reading assignments as opposed to the materials covered in class. Some quizzes may be interactive and there may also be bonus quizzes. Again, there are no make-ups for these quizzes.**

Instructional Materials

TEXTBOOK:

Newell, Charldean, Prindle, David F. and Riddlesperger, Jr, James W.: Texas Politics: 12th Edition (Wadsworth: Cengage, 2013).

On-line version:

<http://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/isbn/9781111833060>

Department website:

<http://northwest.hccs.edu/northwest/academic-programs/government-economics-criminal-justice>

Learning Web: <http://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/gary.leblanc>

HCC Policy Statement: ADA

Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations for the classroom and/or testing must contact the appropriate HCC Disability Support Service (DSS) Counselor at the beginning of each semester. Faculty is authorized to provide only the accommodations requested by the Disability Support Services Office. Students who are requesting classroom and/or testing accommodations must first contact the DSS office for assistance prior to the beginning of each semester: **Disability Support Services Offices: Northwest: 713.718.5422**

HCC Policy Statement: Academic Honesty

A student who is academically dishonest is, by definition, not showing that the coursework has been learned, and that student is claiming an advantage not available to other students. The instructor is responsible for measuring each student's individual achievements and also for ensuring that all students compete on a level playing field. Thus, in our system, the instructor has teaching, grading, and enforcement roles. You are expected to be familiar with college policy on Academic Honesty, found in the catalog. What that means is: If you are charged with an offense, pleading ignorance of the rules will not help you. Students are responsible for conducting themselves with honor and integrity in fulfilling course requirements. Penalties and/or disciplinary proceedings may be initiated by College System officials against a student accused of scholastic dishonesty. "Scholastic dishonesty": includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, and collusion. Please check with me if you do not understand these concepts.

Cheating on a test includes:

- Copying from another students' test paper;
- Using materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- Collaborating with another student during a test without authorization;
- Knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of a test that has not been administered;

Plagiarism means the appropriation of another's work and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own written work offered for credit.

Collusion mean the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work offered for credit. Possible punishments for academic dishonesty may include a grade of 0 or F in the particular assignment, failure in the course, and/or recommendation for probation or dismissal from the College System. (See the Student Handbook)

HCC Policy Statements

Attendance: It is important that you come to class. Regular attendance is an important factor in your success in this class. Research has shown that the single most important factor in student success is attendance. Simply put, going to class greatly increases your ability to succeed. You are expected to attend all lecture and labs regularly. You are responsible for materials covered

If you are not attending class, you are not learning the information. The information that is discussed in class is important in the learning process. Poor attendance records tend to correlate with poor grades. If you miss any class, **you are responsible for all material missed.** It is a good

idea to find a friend or a buddy in class who would be willing to share class notes or discussion or be able to hand in paper if you unavoidably miss a class. Also, you can always visit during office hours to “catch up” on the material you missed. Again, **class attendance is important to your success.**

HCC Course Withdrawal Policy: Each student should be aware that both state law and college policy has changed. The state legislature has recently passed a law limiting the number of withdrawals during a student’s academic career. The intent is crystal clear.... You must become more responsible for making academic decisions. You should indeed maintain contact with your instructor, be aware of your grade status, and seek out assistance regarding study habits, tutorials, etc... that might assist you. If you wish to withdraw from this course, contact me or a counselor before doing so

HCCS policy allows an instructor to drop or withdraw a student in they miss more than six hours of classroom instruction. I will indeed follow that policy. **You should note that you may be withdrawn from class if you miss more than those six hours of classroom instruction.** Under these circumstances, it is imperative that you maintain appropriate communication with your instructor.

HCCS policy allows an instructor to drop or withdraw a student in they miss more than six hours of classroom instruction. I will indeed follow that policy. **You should note that you may be withdrawn from class if you miss more than those six hours of classroom instruction.** Under these circumstances, it is imperative that you maintain appropriate communication with your instructor. If you choose to drop/withdraw from class on your own accord, you must be responsible for completing the process by the applicable date from this class. **The last scheduled drop/ withdrawal date this semester is Tuesday-March 24, 2015.** You should also note that instructors will no longer be able to assign a (W) after the designated drop date. Notice the policy states may be dropped. Do not take it for granted.

If you plan on withdrawing from class, you **should** discuss this with a HCC counselor or your professor prior to withdrawing (dropping) the class for approval and this must be done **PRIOR** to the withdrawal deadline to receive a “W” for the course. ***Remember to allow a 24-hour response time when communicating via email and/or telephone with a professor and/or counselor. Please note that you are the individual responsible for completing this process if you choose to drop/withdraw. Remember- please do not take my dropping you as a certainty. You should always know your status in class.***

Assessment: It is important that you understand your grades status at all times during the semester. I would certainly encourage you to contact or visit with me if you are not comfortable with the material being presented or you did not do well on the quizzes and/or test. This is particularly important to do early in the semester. I will also provide an opportunity for such a grade evaluation prior to the drop date.

Repeat Course Fee

Students who take a course for the third time or more must now pay significant tuition/fee increases at HCC and other Texas public colleges and universities. At HCC it is an additional \$50 per credit hour. If you are considering course withdrawal for any reason, confer with your instructor/counselor as early as possible. Both can provide assistance and advice.

Classroom Behavior

As your instructor and as a student in this class, it is our shared responsibility to develop and maintain a positive learning environment for everyone. Your instructor takes this responsibility very seriously and will inform members of the class if their behavior makes it difficult for him/her to carry out this task. As a fellow learner, you are asked to respect the learning needs of your classmates and assist your instructor achieve this critical goal.

Technology: I generally discourage laptops/I-pad's in class. However, I will not prohibit them and urge you to use them for classroom purposes only. I do the same for cell phones. Generally, I discourage them in the classroom. They will only present a problem if you are using them as a disruption to the learning process or they serve to diminish your engagement in the class. That means you should not be using them for Instagram, Facebook, on-line dating or posting pictures your lunch. If I determine that you are using them for non-class purposes using and other non-class related websites, I will ask that you discontinue usage in class. **The most important thing that you should avoid is "texting" in class.**

GRADING: You will have the opportunity to earn a maximum of **504 points**. Grades will be determined by the percentage of total points you earn based on the scale of 90-100%-A, 80-89%-B, 70-79%-C, 60-69%-D and 59% and below an F. The minimum number of points for each letter grade is as follows:

A-451 points... B-401 points... C-351 points... D- 300 points... F-299 points and below

The following is the distribution of the point system:

Test 1.....100 points	Assignment(s)72 points	(14%)
Test 2.....100 points	Project.....60 points	(12%)
Test 3*...100 points	Quizzes.....32 points	(6%)
*non-comprehensive	Syllabus Quiz.....10 points	(2%)
In-class essay 30 points		

The three test and the in-class essay will make up 66% of your final grade.

Formula for Success

- **Class attendance and punctuality**
- **Being attentive...** This first means you should be awake and alert. You should not be doing work for other classes and you should not be distracted by technological devices such as cell phones, blackberries etc...
- **Listen and take effective notes...** Go beyond "just" copying PowerPoints.

- **Engagement...** this means asking questions, answering questions and participating in class discussions/activities. Use class time effectively.
- **Maintain reading assignments**
- **Complete written assignments on a timely basis**
- **Do your work incrementally versus the “cramming approach”**
- **Ask for help...** There are a number of services such as the writing lab and individualized tutoring available.

Final Notes: I want to encourage you to keep an open line of communication with me relative to your academic success. Please let me know if you have obstacles to being successful. I would also encourage your seeking assistance when necessary. If I cannot help you, I might be able to refer you to someone who can. I want to encourage you to access the Writing Lab located on the third floor for assistance. I will also establish a schedule for tutoring and will post that schedule on my Learning Web. Finally, I would encourage you to become involved in various campus activities, particularly the Political Science Club and the Pandora’s Box Speaker and Film series. I will give you more information as the semester progresses. *I ask that you generally not use email as a form of submitting assignments and papers; however, there may some exceptions. In those cases, always follow-up the email with a presentation of a hard copy in person. I will only grade the hard copy version of any assignment or paper.*

At Houston Community College, professors believe that thoughtful feedback is necessary to improve teaching and learning. During a designated time, you will be asked to answer a short online survey of research-based questions related to instruction. The anonymous results of the survey will be made available to your professors and their division chair for continual improvement of instruction. Look for the survey as part of the Houston Community College System online near the end of the term.

Thanks and have a great semester. Gary LeBlanc



RECORD YOUR GRADES:

Test	_____	_____	_____		
Assignments	_____	_____	_____		
Project	_____		In-Class essay	_____	
Quizzes	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	
Syllabus Quiz	_____				