



Course Syllabus
TEXAS GOVERNMENT
GOVT 2306

Spring 2018, 16-Week Regular Start Term
January 18, 2018 to May 13, 2018

GOVT 2306
TEXAS GOVERNMENT
Spring 2018, Regular Term
Eagle Online via Canvas
<https://eagleonline.hccs.edu>

3 Semester Credit Hours
48 Contact Hours
Regular Term, 16 Weeks
HCC Online (formerly known as "Distance Education")

Instructor's Name

Professor Jaye Ramsey Sutter, J.D.
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Government Department Chair

Evelyn Ballard
evelyn.ballard@hccs.edu
713-718-2490

Note: if you have a problem with your Government course, please contact your instructor before contacting Professor Ballard.

Office and Phone

Stafford Learning Hub
303/FWS 3.13
713.718.5561

Office Hours

Tuesday, 1:00-5:00 p.m.

GOVT 2306 Course Description

The origin and development of the Texas constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.

Course Calendar

Reading Assignments and Exam Dates

Unit 1: Texas Politics, Constitutionalism, Federalism and Local Government

UNIT 1 EXAM AVAILABLE: February 16-18, Friday-Sunday

Textbook Reading Assignment:

- Chapter 1: The Environment of Texas Politics
- Chapter 2: Federalism and the Texas Constitution
- Chapter 3: Local Government

Unit 2: Political Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Interest Groups

UNIT 2 EXAM AVAILABLE: March 18-20, Sunday-Tuesday

Textbook Reading Assignment:

- Chapter 4: Political Parties
- Chapter 5: Campaigns and Elections
- Chapter 6: The Media and Politics
- Chapter 7: The Politics of Interest Groups

Unit 3: The Legislative and Executive Branches of Texas Government

UNIT 3 EXAM AVAILABLE: April 14-16, Friday-Sunday

Textbook Reading Assignment:

- Chapter 8: The Legislative Branch
- Chapter 9: The Executive Branch
- Chapter 10: Public Policy and Administration
- Chapter 13: Finance and Fiscal Policy

Unit 4: The Texas Judicial System

UNIT 4 EXAM AVAILABLE: May 6-8, Sunday-Tuesday

Textbook Reading Assignment:

- Chapter 11: The Judicial Branch
- Chapter 12: The Criminal Justice System

Unit 5: MANDATORY WRITING ASSIGNMENT

DUE DATE: April 30, Monday, before 11:59 p.m., submitted via Canvas

- Topic and instructions to be announced at this location by mid-semester

Additional Important Dates

January 16 (Tuesday)—Classes Begin

January 31 (Wednesday)—Official Day of Record*

March 12-16 (Monday-Friday)—Spring Break

March 30 (Friday)—HCC Spring Holiday

April 3 (Tuesday)—Last Day to Withdraw

May 6 (Sunday)—Last Day of Instruction

May 13 (Sunday)—Semester Ends

*Any student who has not logged-into the class ***and*** participated in an assignment by this date will be dropped from the class for non-attendance by the college.

Instructional Materials

The required textbook for your GOVT2306 Texas government class is ***Practicing Texas Politics, 16th Edition (2015-2016 Edition)***, Cengage Learning (publisher). This is the *required textbook*. It is from *this textbook* that your reading assignments and exams are derived. I use this book (along with additional lecture and review notes I have written) to write your exams.

You are also provided lecture notes, handouts, and other materials in each unit corresponding to the subject matter in the textbook readings for that unit. You are responsible for all the information on the additional material under each unit for that unit exam. You will also have for each unit a **“Worksheet of Terms and Concepts”** that you must use to make notes from all your reading and lecture materials. This completed document will serve as your principal study guide and can be used while taking your exam online. It is strongly urged that you transfer the Worksheet of Terms and Concepts to your word processor and type out the answers for each of the terms so that during the exam you can use your computer’s search function to help you find answers in your completed Worksheet. The completion of the “Worksheet of Terms and Concepts” will be *your primary homework assignment for each of the four units* in preparation for the exam. It will take a commitment of time and effort to complete successfully but the resultant value of the document in your study for the exam will be evident in your success on the exam if you do the requisite work on the preparing your “Worksheet.”

All Exams Are Online

All exams are administered on Canvas anywhere a student has access to the Internet. If an internet service provider kicks a student off, there is nothing the Instructor can do to reopen the exam. If a computer “freezes” the instructor will not open an exam. If a student has technical problems while taking an exam, they must contact HCC Tech Support and provide the instructor with the documentation or ticket. Then and only then can an exam be reopened if indeed HCC tech support reporters that the problem is the college system. No exams will be reopened over computer or ISP problems.

Assignments & Exams

Your reading, writing and exams are your assignments. “Mindtap” software (which is usually sold along with a new copy of the textbook) is *not* used by this instructor for any graded activities. Purchase of “Mindtap” is not required for the class. Do not purchase “Mindtap” software is not used in the class for any purpose. The study materials I provide are sufficient, if used properly, to enable you to succeed in the class

All exams are objective: Multiple choice and a few true/false questions. The exams are strictly timed and offered over a three-day period as scheduled on the course reading assignment and testing calendar. Each exam will have from 50 to 100 questions.

Grading Scale

90-100%= A
80-89% = B
70-79% = C
60-69% = D
less than 60% = F

There are four exams, the lowest or missed grade is dropped. There is one graded mandatory writing assignment. After the lowest test grade is dropped, the three remaining test grades are added to the writing assignment grade, and the average of those four grades is the final course grades. Hence, the three remaining test grades (after the lowest test grade is dropped) along with the writing assignment grade each constitutes 25% of your final course grade. Any final grade average which reflects a .5 will be rounded to the next whole number. An 89.5, therefore, would be a 90 and an "A." an 89.4, however, would still be a grade of 89 and, thus, a "B." You must take all four exams.

Worksheet of Terms and Concepts for Each Unit Examination

A "work sheet of terms and concepts" will be posted on our Eagle Online Canvas course-site well prior to each of the unit examinations. You can prepare your review for the exam using your textbook and with materials I provide you on the course-site, providing definitions, explanations, analysis of the terms on the work sheet. I will take your questions via email about the material up until the night before the exam period. Writing (typing) out the terms and studying your completed work sheet of terms is crucial to your success in the class. Read your assignments from the textbook carefully. Read and study any addition lecture notes or similar material that I post for you. You will be responsible for that posted material as well as the textbook material.

I recommend you preview the material (read through the material quickly, looking for headings and subheadings in the chapter, notes in the margins, etc.); then read the material again, slowly and closely, making notes, looking up material whenever needed (e.g., if do you know what a word means in a sentence, you MUST look it up in a dictionary or you may not understanding what your reading about in the entire paragraph), and filling out your work sheet of terms; then, finally, review the material in its entirety, reading through it quickly to see if you missed anything.

Fully and comprehensively working up your work sheet of terms for each unit is the major portion of your work in the course. You have four tests and a writing assignment. Those are the only graded assignments in the course. To effectively prepare for those exams you need to focus heavily on preparing the work sheet of terms completely and carefully. It will take a lot of time and effort. This is why I don't give you a bunch of "make-work" little assignments like you had in high school. Focus on your reading, making your notes, and studying those completed notes.

Make-up Policy

Make-up exams are allowed *only for verifiable emergencies*. You must take the exams when they are available and they are not available whenever you want. No student is given an exam early or late under any circumstances. Work, vacations, and other personal business are not excuses for retakes or make-ups. If a student misses an exam, the grade is a zero and is dropped. Verifiable emergencies (that which can be documented and proven) such as a death in the immediate family emergency, surgery, death in immediate family, will be considered for a make-up. A written request must be submitted to professor with documents. Documentation such as a funeral contract or medical discharge papers **MUST** be provided by the student in order to be considered for a make-up exam.

Extra Credit

There is absolutely **no** extra credit. Do not ask. There is nothing a student can do to improve their grade except do passing work on their exams. The time to worry about grades is not at the end of the semester, but beginning the semester with good study habits. Students who earn failing grades will fail the course.

Do **NOT** ask your professor to “curve” your grade, to “give” you extra points at the end of the semester because you “need” an “A” in order to become an astronaut or to transfer to Harvard, or whatever. You get what you earn. If your final grade is an 89.4 you have a “B.” If you have an 89.5 you have an “A” in the course. You should not ask because you will not be “given” any additional points. Your grade reflects what you have earned by the final grade calculation.

The grade you get is the grade you *earn* in this class. And I am more than willing to assist any student with his/her studies and preparations for class, exams and preparation so that he/she can earn the grade desired. But the essential burden rests with you.

Participation

You should check your Eagle Online Canvas site at least every other day for postings and other new material. You should check the ANNOUNCEMENTS section on Canvas and your HCC Student Email Inbox every day for important messages and announcements about this class, and, in the case of HCC Email, other classes, and from HCC administration.

You may be asked to participate in class discussions based on topics I assign related to the unit we are studying at the time, or related to a significant current event at the time. Participation in class discussion is an essential element of a college class and you will be able to be involved in virtual discussions via our course-site discussion page. I will take note of any student’s complete lack of involvement in class discussions throughout the semester. Consistent and obvious lack of preparation as evidenced by lack of or poor participation in class virtual discussion may lead to a penalty of up to five (5) points on your final grade.

I will *not* penalize anyone for stating his or her opinions. If the professor states a political opinion in on-line discussion, it is only to spur discussion, not to proselytize or criticize.

Your opinions are your own, are valuable and are not subject to grading by the professor. Your grasp and knowledge of the material presented, however, is graded (i.e., I don't care, particularly, what you think as long as you do think!). I do demand, however, proper decorum from my students. No "flaming," "name-calling" or other breaches of behavior. One can disagree, but do so agreeably. Respect one another and respect yourself by recognizing a need to behave in an adult, responsible fashion.

I will check email and general discussion postings daily and respond within 24-36 hours or sooner to questions or problems. Feel free to ask questions about the material. I encourage you to post on the main discussion page topics and questions for fellow students and, if you wish, set up study chat rooms or meetings in person to review. It is your class and you may work together on your preparations. Study groups prove effective for many people. I leave it up to you to establish them if you wish.

Preparation

This course is reading intensive and requires a great deal of self-discipline and pacing on the part of the student to succeed. I provide you with terms and review material to work with as you study and prepare for your examination. If you use that material and spend a significant amount of time with your textbooks in preparation, you should do well. *But it is up to you.*

This course is for college credit. It will be taught, tested and graded on a college level. A great deal of reading is required for this exam and self-discipline is a must. It is incumbent upon you to wisely monitor your time and schedule.

Preparation is important. Read your assignments in a timely fashion. Follow the news each day. I recommend you check www.nytimes.com (The *New York Times*), www.washingtonpost.com (The *Washington Post*), www.texastribune.org (The *Texas Tribune*), and www.chron.com (The *Houston Chronicle*).

HCC Policies

ADA Policy: HCC strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please meet with a campus Abilities Counselor as soon as possible in order to establish reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and Ability Services. It is the policy and practice of HCC to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. For more information, please go <http://www.hccs.edu/district/students/disability-services/>

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972: Houston Community College is committed to cultivating an environment free from inappropriate conduct of a sexual or gender-based nature including sex discrimination, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and

sexual violence. Sex discrimination includes all forms of sexual and gender-based misconduct and violates an individual's fundamental rights and personal dignity. **Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex-including pregnancy and parental status-in educational programs and activities. If you require an accommodation due to pregnancy please contact an Abilities Services Counselor.** The Director of EEO/Compliance is designated as the Title IX Coordinator and Section 504 Coordinator. All inquiries concerning HCC policies, compliance with applicable laws, statutes, and regulations (such as Title VI, Title IX, and Section 504), and complaints may be directed to:

David Cross

Director EEO/Compliance

Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity

3100 Main

(713) 718-8271 Houston, TX 77266-7517 or Houston, TX 77266-

7517 or Institutional.Equity@hccs.edu

Scholastic Dishonesty: HCCS students are responsible for conducting themselves with honor and integrity in fulfilling course requirements. Penalties and/or disciplinary proceedings may be initiated by HCC System officials against a student accused of scholastic dishonesty.

"Scholastic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating on a test includes but is not limited to: Copying from another student's test paper; using unauthorized materials during a test, unauthorized collaboration with another student during a test; knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of a test; and bribing another person to obtain a copy of a test. Plagiarism includes the appropriation of another's work and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own written work. Collusion includes the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work. Collusion also refers to students taking online tests together. Any student who is involved in a group taking an online exam together is guilty of scholastic dishonesty and can be flunked from the class and possibly expelled.

Any suspected cheating will be reported to the Academic Dean for a full investigation. If students work on line on their exams as co-conspirators, both students will receive a zero and it will not be dropped. Computer software will detect students working from the same ISP at the same time and unusually short log in durations during exams will be suspect and students will be interviewed as to why it took them such a short time to complete a complex exam. They will be reported to the Academic Dean. Papers will be submitted to turnitin.com to check for plagiarism. Any plagiarism is cheating and students will be reported to the academic dean. Plagiarized papers will be given a zero and that zero is not dropped. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Withdrawals: 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

because you are not earning passing grades, confer with your instructor/ counselor as early as possible about your study habits, reading and writing homework, test-taking skills, attendance, course participation, and opportunities for tutoring or other assistance that might be available. Also, the state of Texas has passed a new law limiting new students (as of Fall 2007) to no more than six withdrawals throughout their academic career in obtaining a baccalaureate degree.

The drop/withdrawal deadline this semester is Tuesday, April 3, 2018.

Repeating Courses: As a result of recent Texas legislative changes, please be advised that HCC is charging additional tuition for students who enroll in the same class three or more times at HCC. While it is the hope of HCC that students will be successful in their first attempt at classes, we realize that life demands, academic struggles, and other issues may result in students needing to take the same class more than once. Speaking with an advisor will help you develop student success skills, improving your overall academic performance. If a student repeats a course in which a grade (A-F) has been received, the highest grade received at HCC is the permanent grade for the course and will be used in computing the GPA. All grades earned in a given course will be reflected on the transcript. Other colleges may compute the GPA differently than HCC.

HCC Student Handbook: Please note that it is *each student's responsibility* to read *and be familiar with* the HCC Student Handbook. Please see:

<http://central.hccs.edu/students/student-handbook/>

HCC Online (formerly known as “Distance Education”): The HCC Online Student Handbook contains policies and procedures unique to the online 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 HCC Online 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 HCC Online Student Handbook by visiting this link:

<http://www.hccs.edu/media/houston-community-college/distance-education/student-services/HCC-Online-Student-Handbook.pdf>

Campus Carry: At HCC the safety of our students, staff, and faculty is our first priority. As of August 1, 2017, Houston Community College was subject to the Texas Campus Carry Law (SB11 2015). For more information, visit the HCC Campus Carry web page:

<http://www.hccs.edu/district/departments/police/campus-carry/>

Prerequisite, Co-requisite for GOVT 2306

Must have passed or co-enrolled in English 1301 (Composition I) as a co-requisite.

Academic Program Learning Outcomes for GOVT 2306

- Identify the structure, functions and nature of the institutions of government in Texas.
- Understand and describe the development, purpose and attributes of the Texas Constitution
- Identify the policy making process and comprehend the outcomes of state and local policy in Texas.
- Understand how political values and ideas are developed and expressed and the means through which one may engage in the political system.
- Comprehend how interest groups, parties and the structure of the political system influence political participation.

Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) for GOVT 2306

1. Identify and describe the institutions of Texas state government.
2. Identify and evaluate information sources for political news, data, and opinion.
3. Analyze the effects of the historical, constitutional, social, political, economic, and cultural forces on politics and government.
4. 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.

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.



Hurricane Harvey's Impact on the HCC Student Community

Hurricane Harvey and its aftermath has affected community deeply. It is a disaster that will live with all of us for the rest of our lives. If you are still experiencing hardships due to the hurricane, this class and your overall HCC experience is a great way to try to get some normalcy back in your life. Although I am sympathetic to those affected most by the storm, and will try to make accommodations the best that I can, I am still required to adhere to the policies and procedures set forth by both Houston Community College and the state of Texas in relations to this class. Whether you have been affected minimally or greatly, please view me as a resource. Although I may not be able to answer your questions, I can help you find out who can.

Linked below is a list of resources on the Houston Community College website:

www.hccs.edu/harveytips

www.hccs.edu/harveystudentresources

www.hccs.edu/harveystudentsurvey

Essential Needs Statement: Any student who may be facing challenges in affording or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is encouraged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Additionally, please notify your professor (me) if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide you with guidance on resources that I am aware of relating to essential needs.

Please note, if you have experienced any similar problems with regard to the ice storm of January 16-18, 2018, please reach out for assistance.

THIS SYLLABUS AND ITS CONTENTS, DATES, AND REQUIREMENTS ARE
SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETIONS OF THE PROFESSOR
ANYTIME DURING THE SEMESTER.

PLEASE REPORT ANY ERROR, CONTRADICTION, OR
OTHER PROBLEMS FOUND IN THIS SYLLABUS TO YOUR PROFESSOR SO
THEY CAN BE CORRECTED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CLASS.