



**Government 2306- Texas Government**

CRN: 88250

Fall 2015 Mini-Mester

Distance Education: 4 weeks (48 total contact hours)

**Instructor Contact Information:**

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**Departmental Contact Information:**

Chair: Evelyn Ballard

Email: [evelyn.ballard@hccs.edu](mailto:evelyn.ballard@hccs.edu)

Phone: 713-718-2490

Office Hours: **Please utilize email for all communication.**

Please Note: The BEST way to reach me is by sending an email to [n.boutteheiniluoma@hccs.edu](mailto:n.boutteheiniluoma@hccs.edu). You MUST include your name and your course information in the subject line (ex. Nichole Boutte-Heiniluoma-Govt 2306) or your email may not get immediate attention. I do my best to respond to all emails addressed correctly within 24 hours if emailed during the week.

Emails mailed after 4pm on Fridays will NOT be responded to until after 10:00am on Monday mornings.

**Required Text:** Brown, Lyle; Langenegger, Garcia, Lewis and Biles, Rynbrandt, Reyna *Practicing Texas Politics* 2015-2016 Edition

**Course Description:**

Government 2306 is a course designed to introduce students to the politics of state, and local government. This course is fully transferable to other colleges and universities. The course will provide an overview of 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.

The course will encourage both critical and analytical thinking about state government and the major challenges facing contemporary Texas. The course will analyze Texas politics, institutions, population, current issues and culture that define Texas life today.

**Core Curriculum Statement:** This is a core curriculum course. GOVT 2306 (state and local government) is one of two courses required by the state of Texas designed to introduce students to the politics of national, state, and local government. GOVT 2305 and GOVT 2306 are fully transferable to other public colleges and universities in Texas.

**Core Curriculum Objectives:** Given the rapid evolution of necessary knowledge and skills and the need to take into account global, national, state, and local cultures, 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 this core curriculum course will complete several assignments designed to cultivate 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 intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities

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

**Academic Program 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.

**Prerequisites:** Must have passed ENGL 1301 (Composition I) or co-enrolled in ENGL 1301 as a co-requisite.

**Course Dates:** Monday, December 14, 2015- Friday, January 8, 2016.

**Meeting Days:** Completely Online

**Course Requirements/Grading Criteria**

1. Complete all required reading/video assignments prior to each assignment
2. Two short papers (each paper is worth 75 points)
3. Class Activities/Discussions (200 points total)
4. Complete one major paper writing assignment (100 points)
5. Complete one presentation over final paper assignment (100 points)

This tallies up to a total of 550 possible points during our 4- week course.

Note: Extra Credit is given at the discretion of the instructor. It is not mandatory and not doing extra credit assignments will not negatively affect your grade. It can only enhance it.

The final letter grade for the course will be calculated using the HCCS grading scale.

90-100= A, 80-89= B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D and below 60=F.

A = 100 – 90;.....4 points per semester hour

B = 89 – 80: .....3 points per semester hour

C = 79 – 70: .....2 points per semester hour  
 D = 69 – 60: .....1 point per semester hour  
 59 and below = F.....0 points per semester hour  
 IP (In Progress) .....0 points per semester hour  
 W(Withdrawn).....0 points per semester hour  
 I (Incomplete)..... 0 points per semester hour  
 AUD (Audit) ..... 0 points per semester hour

IP (In Progress) is given only in certain developmental courses. The student must re-enroll to receive credit. COM (Completed) is given in non-credit and continuing education courses. To compute grade point average (GPA), divide the total grade points by the total number of semester hours attempted. The grades “IP,” “COM” and “I” do not affect GPA.

**Instructional Method:** This is a completely online (DE) class utilizing the Learning Management System-**Eagle Online (EO2)**. I recommend that you check daily your HCC student /EO e-mail so that you can keep up with any new information as soon as it becomes available. **Your User Name is your Student ID, your “W” number; the default Password is “distance.”**

All of the handouts, videos, and other resources will be available on Eagle Online. All of your written assignments will be submitted on Eagle Online. Please check the online calendar for due dates. Eagle Online will also include links to writing resources, recommended materials, and library links. Sign in daily for new information.

**Important Information**

Students should check their course schedule in the syllabus for keeping up with the reading assignments in the text. A course calendar with reading, tests, and assignments has been provided on Eagle Online and in class.

In compliance with the HCC system requirements, the course is designed to fulfill six S.C.A.N.S student competencies. Successful completion of the course work relies very much on the cooperation of both the instructor and the student. Students should complete all reading and written assignment by the stated deadlines (Reading). Reading assignments are given at the end of this syllabus. The nature of the discipline of sociology is such that sensitive and controversial topics will occasionally surface in your reading material. Please bear in mind that the ideas

presented in this course do not necessarily reflect the views of your instructor or the institution.

**Attendance:** Log In to Eagle Online daily.

**Weekly Activities/Discussions:** This class will have at least 2-4 assignments each week to determine your knowledge of topic matter at hand. It is vitally important that you stay on top of the readings so that you will be able to complete each assignment. Some of these assignments will be simple quizzes while others may be a short writing over a special topic from that week. Each assignment is worth 10-50 points apiece.

Most weeks, we will have a peer discussion where I post a video and/or a question related to that week's readings. It will be your responsibility to post your initial posting as well as to meaningfully respond to at least 2 of your peers in order to receive access to the maximum points possible for each discussion. Assignments and discussion prompts will be posted on Sunday evenings and the corresponding due dates will be noted on the assignment in Eagle Online. Please be mindful of those as assignments in the same week can (and usually will) have different due dates

***\*\*\*Please note-if you are not completing the weekly assignments you can be dropped from the course. You must complete the first week's course assignments (getting to know you and unit one paper assignment) if you want to stay enrolled in the class. You must complete the first writing assignment on time if you do not want to be dropped from the course. Failure to complete these assignments will result in you being dropped from the class. \*\*\****

### **Paper Assignments/Presentations (No Plagiarism, No Extensions, and No Makeups)**

Each student is to write major one writing assignment. Each student will also complete a presentation over that writing assignment. For this paper, you are going to choose a topic based on what you believe to be the most important/pressing issue facing Texas today. In essence, you are going to do a research paper on what you believe is the most important problem facing Texas today. This can be anything from our education system, our political process, the lack of resources for our underserved populations just to name a few issues. Your topic will have to be approved by the instructor by December 24<sup>th</sup> (an assignment submission area will be open for you to submit your chosen topic in). Your final paper should follow the following guidelines:

This paper should have a title page, be typed, double-spaced with normal margins and 12-point font (Arial or Times New Roman). Papers will be graded on the following standards:

- Use of language and writing;
- Organization of paper and format of essay;
- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation;
- Consistency and use of logic;
- Use of literature;
- Originality of research.

The text portion of the papers should be exactly 6-7 pages in length. Please remember to cite sources for statements of fact or any statement not attributable to you, wherever necessary. APA is the accepted citation and formatting method.

This assignment is due on **January 8th**.

Your presentation should be a powerpoint or prezi which will cover your final paper topic. This presentation should present the arguments posed in the paper and display evidence to support them. The presentations should be at most 4 minutes in length. You are allowed to add arguments and facts not found in your paper to your presentation. The presentations will be graded based on the following standards for evaluation:

- Reasoning, analysis, logic;
- Innovative, effective arguments;
- Organization/Refutation of opposition arguments;
- Overall persuasiveness;
- Assertions supported and documented.

This assignment is due **January 8<sup>th</sup>**.

## Expectations

Additionally, it is your responsibility to *actively engage* in the process of learning and thinking. Learning is not a passive process whereby experts impart knowledge upon you; rather, learning is an active process that requires extensive effort and involvement from both the teacher and the student. **I expect you to focus on truly learning and understanding the material, not simply committing it to memory.** Please note that your education is not simply a means to an end (such as a better career or higher income), but is also an end in and of itself – try to slow down and enjoy the learning process!

Understand that I truly care about your performance in this class. I will always be available to speak with you about your progress in the course as well as how to move forward successfully in this class. However, you will need to be proactive and reach out to me when you believe that there is an issue/concern you would like to address. Please do not wait until the end of the course to address grade concerns etc. as usually that is too late to do anything about it.

## Instructor Requirements

As your Instructor, it is **the professor's** 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 lectures
- Describe and direct any special projects or assignments
- Inform students of policies such as attendance, withdrawal, tardiness and policies on make-up work.
- Provide the course outline and class calendar. There will also be separate handouts and occasional verbal instructions for assignments not included in the course calendar.  
Be available at mutually convenient times of professor and student to meet either before or after class as needed, or at another scheduled time a

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

- Attend class and participate in class discussions and activities, both inside and outside of class
- Read and comprehend the textbook
- Take good written notes
- Constantly look for ways to apply the course concepts to specific experiences in your own life. Make connections between what you read or hear in class and your life outside of class.
- Talk about the course material. Weave it into discussions outside of class. Teach some of the concepts and theories to your friends and family. It will

give you something new and interesting to talk about! (Much more interesting than the weather!)

- Complete the required assignments and exams:
- Meet all course requirements and assignments
- Ask for help when there is a question or problem
- Keep copies of all paperwork, including this syllabus, handouts and all assignments
- Make a commitment to do your very best work in the class. Be consistent. Follow instructions very carefully.

### **Academic Honesty/Integrity**

All students enrolled in any HCCS class are expected to be academically honest at all times. Academic dishonesty includes, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating and colluding without permission. If there are any questions, please see the instructor on record, or the HCCS student handbook section on this subject.

### **Make-up Policy.**

Makeups are done at the discretion of the instructor. Please email me as soon as you see an issue/concern about a deadline and we can see what (if anything) can be worked out. Good time management skills are a must in an online class. Again, if an issue arises, please notify me sooner rather than later. Each case will be evaluated on its merit. **Do not wait until the end of the semester to notify the instructor. As soon as an issue arises is best.\***



## Course Calendar

*\*\*Please note that the instructor reserves the right to modify the course calendar and/or syllabus at any point during the course. It is your responsibility to stay up to date on changes within the syllabus. Note: This is where reading the announcements will become essential. \*\**

### UNIT ONE (Week One)

#### Unit One Readings:

Chapter 1 (Environment of Texas Politics)  
Chapter 2 (Federalism and the Texas Constitution)  
Chapter 3 (Local Governments)  
Chapter 12 (Criminal Justice System)

#### Unit Assignments:

Getting to Know You Discussion (Due Saturday December 19th)  
What Do You Know About Texas? (Due Saturday December 19th)  
Lessons Learned from Chapters 1-3 and 12 (Due Sunday December 20th)  
Unit One Paper (Due Monday December 21st)

### UNIT TWO (Week Two)

#### Unit Two Readings:

Chapter 4 (Political Parties)  
Chapter 5 (Campaigns and Elections)  
Chapter 6 (Media and Politics)  
Chapter 7 (Politics and Interest Groups)

#### Unit Two Assignments:

Political Parties In Texas (Due Wednesday December 23rd)  
Interest Groups in Texas (Due Thursday December 24th)  
Lessons Learned in Unit Two (Due Saturday December 26th)  
Unit Two Paper (Due Monday December 28th)

### UNIT THREE (Week Three)

#### **Unit Three Readings:**

Chapter 8 (Legislative Branch)

Chapter 9 (Executive Branch)

Chapter 11 (Judicial Branch)

Chapter 13 (Finance and Fiscal Policy)

#### **Unit Three Assignments:**

Diversity In Texas Assignment (Due Wednesday December 30<sup>th</sup>)

Bureaucracy In Action Assignment (Due Thursday December 31<sup>st</sup>)

Texas Justice: Is It Fair Assignment (Due Saturday January 2<sup>nd</sup>)

Unit Three Lessons Learned (Due Sunday January 3<sup>rd</sup>)

### **UNIT FOUR: Week Four**

#### **Unit Four Readings:**

Chapter 10 (Public Policy and Administration)

#### **Unit Four Assignments:**

Unit Four Lessons Learned (Due Tuesday January 5<sup>th</sup>)

Final Paper (Due January 8<sup>th</sup>)

Final Presentation (Due January 8<sup>th</sup>)

**EGLS3:** The EGLS3 (Evaluation for Greater Learning Student Survey System) is available for most courses near the end of the term before finals start. (Not all courses are available for this survey.) This brief survey will give invaluable information to your faculty about their teaching. Results are anonymous and will be available to faculty and division chairs a month after the end of the term. Website: <http://www.hccs.edu/district/students/egls3/>

## **HCCS POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

### **HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT**

*The Houston Community College is an open admission, public institution of higher education offering associate degrees, certificates, academic preparation, workforce training, and lifelong learning opportunities that prepare individuals in our diverse communities for life and work in an increasingly international and technological society.*

### **HCC ADA Policy**

Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the Disability Services Office at the respective college at the beginning of each semester. Faculty are authorized to provide only the accommodations requested by the Disability Support Services Office. For more information, go to the HCC ADA Website or call Dr. Becky Hauri at (713) 718-7910.

Students who are requesting special testing accommodations must first contact the appropriate (most convenient) DSS office for assistance:

#### **Disability Support Services Offices:**

Northeast: 713.718.8420

After student accommodation letters have been approved by the DSS office and submitted to DE Counseling for processing, students will receive an email confirmation informing them of the Instructional Support Specialist assigned to their professor.

### **HCC Distance Education Policy Statement**

*All students are responsible for reading and understanding the DE Student Handbook, which contains policies, information about conduct, and other important information. For the DE Student Handbook click on the link below or go to the DE page on the HCC website.*

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>.

### **HCC Policy Statement: Meningitis Immunization**

Texas Senate Bill 1107 passed in May 2011, requires that new HCC students and former HCC students returning after an absence of at least one fall or spring semester who are under the age of 30 are required to present a physician-signed certificate showing they have been vaccinated against bacterial meningitis. Students must satisfy this requirement prior to enrollment. For more information and a list of exemptions please go to <http://www.hccs.edu/hccs/admissions-registration-center/new-student-general-admissions-steps/submit-meningitis-documentation>.

### **HCC Policy Statement: Attendance**

Students are expected to login to Eagle Online regularly. Students who do not login to Eagle Online by the day of record will be dropped from the course. Instructors also have the authority to drop a student for not logging in regularly and participating.

### **HCC Policy Statement: Repeating Courses**

The State of Texas encourages students to complete college without having to repeat failed classes. To increase student success, students who repeat the same course more than twice, are required to pay extra tuition. The purpose of this extra tuition fee is to encourage students to pass their courses and to graduate. Effective fall 2006, HCC will charge a higher tuition rate to students registering the third or subsequent time for a course. 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.

### **HCC Policy Statement: Withdrawal**

If you feel that you cannot complete this course, you will need to withdraw from the course prior to the final date of withdrawal. Before, you withdraw from your course; please take the time to meet with the instructor to discuss why you feel it is necessary to do so. The instructor may be able to provide you with suggestions that would enable you to complete the course. Your success is very important. Beginning in Fall 2007, the Texas Legislature passed a law limiting first time entering freshmen to no more than SIX total course withdrawals throughout their educational career in obtaining a certificate and/or degree. If you plan on withdrawing from your class, you MUST contact 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” on your transcript. Final withdrawal deadlines vary each semester and/or depending on class length, please visit the online registration calendars, HCC schedule of classes and catalog, any HCC Registration Office, or any HCC counselor to determine class withdrawal deadlines. Remember to allow a 24-hour response time when communicating via email and/or telephone with a professor and/or counselor. Do not submit a request to discuss withdrawal options less than a day before the deadline. If you do not withdraw before the deadline, you will receive the grade that you are making in the class as your final grade.

**Fall 2015 Final Withdrawal deadlines:**

**\*\*\*12/30/2015 is the last day to drop the mini course\*\*\*.**

Classes of other duration (mini-term, flex-entry, 8-weeks, etc.) may have different final withdrawal deadlines. Please contact the HCC Registrar’s Office at 713.718.8500 to determine mini-term class withdrawal deadlines.

**Student Course Reinstatement Policy:**

Students have a responsibility to arrange payment for their classes when they register, either through cash, credit card, financial aid, or the installment plan. Faculty members have a responsibility to check their class rolls regularly, especially during the early weeks of a term, and reconcile the official class roll to ensure that no one is attending class whose name does not appear on it. Students who are dropped from their courses for nonpayment of tuition and fees who request reinstatement after the official date of record payment of tuition and fees who request reinstatement after the official date of record (OE Date) can be reinstated by making payment in full and paying an additional \$75 per course reinstatement fee. A student requesting reinstatement should present the registrar with a completed Enrollment Authorization Form with the signature of the instructor, department chair, or dean who should verify that the student has been regularly attending class. Students who are reinstated are responsible for all course policies and procedures, including attendance requirements. A dean may waive the reinstatement fee upon determination that the student was dropped because of a college error. The dean should note the nature of the error in a memo to the registrar with appropriate documentation.

**\*\*Instructor reserves the right to modify the course syllabus during the semester.\*\***

**Good luck in the coming weeks!!!**