

COURSE SYLLABUS: Texas Government
GOVT 2306 – Section 23203
Brookhaven College – DCCCD
Spring 2019
Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.
Room Q201

Instructor Information
Name: Jennifer LaPrade
E-mail: jlaprade@dcccd.edu (Primary method of contact)
Social Sciences Office: (972) 860–4130 (don’t leave voicemail, send an e-mail instead)
Tech Support Office: (972) 669-6402

Required Textbooks/Reading materials


  Note: Special pricing of 30% discount available through the Brookhaven College bookstore only.

- Dallas Morning News, New York Times or access to any other major newspaper (knowledge of current events will be essential to course activities).

Technology Requirements

- Internet access (free access available in campus computer labs)
- USB flash drive for back-up storage of electronic files
- Active E-mail account (check at least three times per week)
- Basic use of a personal computer (word processing and internet browsing).
- Access to the DCCCD e-campus system: http://ecampus.dcccd.edu
- All materials for the class are online in four units that we move through during the semester. You must contact technical support FIRST if you are having computer or technology issues.

Technical Support:

- Everything you need to know about accessing e-campus, using the tools and contacting tech support is located at this link: http://ecampus.support.dcccd.edu/v91/studenttutorials/studentIndexv91.html

Software Requirements (free versions of these programs are available for download on e-campus and inside the course):

- Microsoft Office or Open Office (word processor and presentation viewer)
- Windows Media Player
- Adobe Acrobat Reader
Course Grading System

Grading Scale (point system)
A = 900 – 1000
B = 800 – 899
C = 700 – 799
D = 600 – 699
F = 0 – 599

Activity Grade Values (*required activity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Grade Values</th>
<th>Grade Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TX Govt in the News</td>
<td>1 for 100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Govt Activity</td>
<td>1 for 100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion Essays</td>
<td>8 at 25 points each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*TX Policy Report</td>
<td>50 for proposal and 150 for report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>200 points</td>
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*TX Policy Report |

Totals: 100% = 1000 points

GOVT 2306 – Spring 2019 -- Course Calendar—All Subject to Change

Week 1—January 28
Syllabus
Ch. 1 Pol. Culture, People, & Economy of Texas

Week 2—February 4
Ch. 1 Pol. Culture, People, & Economy of Texas

Week 3—February 11
Ch. 4 Political Parties in Texas

Week 4—February 18
Ch. 5 Elections in Texas
TERM PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE: Friday, February 15

Week 5—February 25
Ch. 3 Texas in the Federal System

Week 6—March 4
Ch. 2 The Texas Constitution
MID-TERM EXAM—WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

Week 7—March 11
SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS
Week 8—March 18
Texas Elections

Week 9—March 25
Ch. 6 Interest Groups & Lobbying

Week 10—April 1
Ch. 7 Texas Legislature

Week 11—April 8
Ch. 7 Texas Legislature
TERM PAPER PROJECT DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 12

Week 12—April 15
Ch. 9 Texas Executive
(Last Day to Drop Course with “W” is April 17, 2019)

Week 13—April 22
Texas Judiciary

Week 14—April 29
Ch. 10 Local Government in Texas

Week 15—May 6
FINAL EXAM—Monday, May 6, 2019

Addendum I - General Course Information

Introduction to the Instructor

Welcome to Texas Government! My name is Jennifer LaPrade. I received my BA and MA in Political Science from The University of Texas at Dallas and I’m currently working on my PhD. I have worked as an Editor and Reporter of several Texas newspapers covering all aspects of Texas and local government. I’ve also worked with the Innocence Project of Texas, as well as served as an organizer on a Texas gubernatorial campaign and a local DFW-area mayoral campaign. I have a lifelong passion for federal and state government.

I started my academic life at a Texas community college years ago and it was a wonderful experience, therefore, I very much believe in the community college system. I am here not only to help you learn about Texas government, but also to help you as you pursue your academic goals. It can be challenging, but it is worth it for so many reasons. Please feel free to talk to me at any time. Communication between students and professors is the most important thing, and my door is always open. I will help you succeed and meet your goals in whatever way I can.
Course Content

GOVT 2306 is designed to introduce students to the organization, the principles and the various functions of the Texas State Government. Together we will analyze the history, structure, changes, and continued evolution of politics in the state of Texas. In addition, we will explore a variety of contemporary political issues as they relate to the course material. This course does cover some historical information, but is primarily a study of modern Texas politics (not history).

This is one of the rare collegiate courses where watching television (the news) will greatly benefit you. In addition, I highly encourage you to stay informed about current events issues that are related to the course via print, televised and electronic media. These additional resources will be of great assistance in your efforts to understand the content covered in this course.

The larger effort in this course is to understand how and why Texas has created a vast, dynamic and complex governmental system on the state and local levels. Upon completion of this course, you will have the knowledge and analytical skills necessary to better understand the philosophy, structure and logical processes which govern the world we live in. More importantly, this course will provide you with the resources necessary to participate in politics and make informed decisions in the future.

Course Information

GOVT 2306 – Texas Government. This is a Texas Common Course Number.

Prerequisite: The following must be met: (1) DREA 0093 or English as a Second Language (ESOL) 0044 or have met the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Reading Standard AND (2) DWRI in 0093, or English as a Second Language (ESOL) 0054 or have met the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Writing Standard.

Course Description: 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. Coordinating Board Academic Approval Number 4510025125.

Student Learning Outcomes for GOVT 2306

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 for GOVT 2306

1. **Critical Thinking Skills**: to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information

2. **Communication Skills**: to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication

3. **Social Responsibility**: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

4. **Personal Responsibility**: to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Addendum II - Course Policies and Performance Guidelines

General Guidelines for all Coursework

All course assignments must comply with the following requirements to be considered a completed work (incomplete items will receive a zero). Please read these requirements carefully:

- Each "required" activity must be submitted to earn credit for the course. There are two categories of activities identified with an asterisks (*) in the syllabus (The Term Project).

- The Term Project are to have a cover page with the following information: Your name, course and section number, semester of enrollment, a word count and a title indicating the topic of your essay. The word count should reflect your own work (do not include citations, paraphrased information, quotes, the cover page, or the works cited page).

- Each student is expected to utilize 2-3 scholarly sources (peer-reviewed articles from academic journals) for the writing assignments. There is a tool built into the course to help you obtain quality sources for your writing assignment, it is labeled “research center” on the main menu of the course. For current events related information, use a newspaper, news magazine, news website, a court case or an actual law. The course textbook, Wikipedia, internet search engines, blogs and similar items are examples of unacceptable research sources on the collegiate level.
• All assignments are expected to meet college level writing requirements: all answers are to be in essay format and the expectation is for each student to engage the topics using critical analysis. Please do not attempt to provide simplified or elementary answers if you wish to earn credit for your work. Take the time to fully explain your ideas and demonstrate the depth of your understanding to earn the grade you want.

• Failure to identify sources is plagiarism. Provide the full MLA or APA citation for all outside sources. All references are to be documented within the body of the assignment and on a works cited page.

• The formatting requirements for all assignments are: typed / word processed, double-spaced, size 12 font, Arial or Times New Roman script, 1 inch margins (default setting), and a limited number of grammatical errors.

• All assignments are to be submitted as one electronic file to the appropriately titled online dropbox. Again, all pages of an assignment (cover page, body text, and works cited) are to be submitted together. Assignments will not be accepted via any other delivery method, unless prior approval was obtained.

• Assignments submitted online must be in one of the following file formats: doc, rtf or txt. Other document formats are unacceptable and will be rejected by the dropbox.

• There is no credit for partial work. The minimum writing expectation for each assignment or activity must be satisfied to earn a grade. Incomplete assignments will receive a zero.

Course Etiquette

• E-mail – Please allow 48 hours for a reply via e-mail. There may be periods where it may take longer to get a reply (such as weekends and holidays). Again, be patient and allow me time to get back to you. For any technical issues with e-campus or your computer, please contact the technical support team.

• Communication Dialogue – Personal attacks, racial or ethnic slurs, outbursts or other inappropriate forms of communication will result in immediate removal from the class and possibly from the college (see academic freedom statement). Think about what you are saying, before you hit the send or submit button.

• Personal Requests – I am happy to assist you with any questions you may have about the course, about the news, or even college life in general. However, personal requests for exemptions to course policies will not be granted unless there is a legitimate reason. It is a form of discrimination by the instructor to grant exceptions without basis. Any exceptions made may require documentation and will only be considered in advance of a deadline. Please refrain from asking the instructor to engage in unprofessional or unethical behavior, such requests will be not receive an audience. Assignments cannot be turned in after the course has ended.

Technology Policy
Modern technology enables us to access a wealth of information but can also present a detriment to the learning environment. The following policies relating to technology are in place for the duration of this course:

- Any student observed accessing their cell phone in class, for any reason, will be asked to leave classroom. If you have an emergency and expect a call, inform the instructor of the situation prior to the start of class. Subsequent instances will result in a letter grade penalty to the final course grade for each violation.
- Students wishing to use laptops, tablets, or other devices must receive express permission from the instructor and are required to sit in the front and/or center of the classroom for the duration of the semester. Any student observed accessing non-course related content (e.g. email, Instagram, Facebook) will be asked to leave class and will receive an automatic zero on any in-class assignment for that day. Such students will not be allowed to access any electronic device for the remainder of the semester.
- The audio or video recording of any part of this course is expressly prohibited without written authorization from the instructor.

**Late Work Policy**

All assignments are expected on or before the deadline indicated in the syllabus. I am certainly willing to work with you through extenuating personal circumstances should the need arise to submit a late essay. **Any student that needs to submit a late paper must contact me in advance of the deadline for approval and to make alternative arrangements.** You may be required to provide some form of written documentation in order to substantiate a request to submit a late assignment.

If approved, late work will be considered for up to 50% of the original value of an assignment. Late work must be submitted within two calendar days (48 hours) of the original deadline (including weekends and holidays). If the assignment has not been submitted within the time allotted after the original deadline, it will receive a zero. Due to time constraints, late work will not be accepted in the final week of the course.

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance and participation are essential to your success. Therefore, the college requires each faculty member to create an attendance policy and maintain accurate records for each class meeting. At the start of each class, an attendance sheet will be circulated. It is each student’s responsibility to ensure that they are present and accounted for when attending class. **Again, be sure that you sign the attendance sheet each and every class.** On several occasions during the semester an assignment, quiz or test may substitute for the roll sheet. Only in the case of a disability may one student sign the roll for a peer. Dishonesty will be considered an act of collusion and will be dealt with as a disciplinary issue (as stated in the student code of conduct).
Anytime you miss class, it is your responsibility to stay current with all assignments. I highly suggest that each student seek out a study partner and form a support group that you can rely on throughout the semester. If you plan to miss class, use your absences wisely. **There will not be an opportunity to make up in-class activities, or quizzes once the item has been delivered to the class.** If you are affected by a medical or legal situation and can provide proof (documentation) to substantiate your claim, your absence(s) may be excused.

The following course attendance policy is in effect immediately:

- Each late arrival or early departure (1 – 15 minutes) will count as a half absence.
- Two tardy entries or early departures will count as a full absence.
- Anyone arriving beyond 15 minutes from the start time or departing 15 minutes early will be marked absent.
- Each student will have 3 absences to use at their discretion.

As of the fourth absence, the student will receive a letter grade of N and will be reported as (non-attending) in the course. If you do not properly elect to withdraw by the deadline, this will appear as an F on your permanent transcript. Simply not attending class does not constitute a withdrawal. If it is your intention to withdraw from the course, you must follow the appropriate administrative process.

**Special Note**: As an added bonus, excellent attendance will be awarded 25 extra credit points. I understand that issues arise through the course of the semester and there is a built in a system of flexibility. This incentive will only be given to those who make no excuses and attend nearly every class. Excellent attendance is defined as 1 or less absences during the semester (including tardiness). Your consistent attendance will be of tremendous benefit to you at the end of the semester; you will be well prepared for the course activities and can push up a borderline grade in your favor.

**Course E-mail / Announcements**

There are frequent updates posted in the course announcements area and sent out via e-mail. This is the primary avenue of communication for this course. Each student is expected to read the information and keep current with the course. Many frequently asked questions are addressed via announcements and some may contain vital course information. These are official course communications, so bear in mind that you will be held accountable for the information provided via electronic communications.

**Course Honor Code**

Scholastic dishonesty is a violation of the DCCCD Student Code of Student Conduct. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, and collusion. Students are expected to complete all course work by their own efforts and in their own words.
When you cite or paraphrase another author, you are required to properly acknowledge all sources with a parenthetical citation in the body text and provide a bibliographic listing on a works cited page. If you have any questions about citations, contact me immediately. Any attempt to submit work that is not a product of your own efforts will result in an automatic “F” for the assignment and the course. In addition, you may face disciplinary action by the college administration leading up to expulsion from the college.

The college uses a premier plagiarism detection program known as “SafeAssign.” Since all papers will be electronically submitted for review, I implore you to avoid procrastinating and begin your work as soon as possible. Time seems to be the largest factor in a student’s decision to plagiarize. Details on how to submit your work to the dropbox will be posted in the course announcement area.

Statement of Academic Freedom

The collegiate environment is one that promotes tolerance, understanding, communication and equality. Use the guidelines below in your interactions with the instructor and your peers:

Students are provided with the opportunity to demonstrate their comprehension of political issues and express their understanding of key points in this course. The discussion format in particular is an opportunity for students to enjoy their constitutional right to free speech and expression. This is not intended to serve as a platform for one to express their political ideology or personal feelings about a given issue. It is a forum for an intellectual dialogue and an exchange of ideas. Again, the expectation is that you will conduct yourself to the standards befitting a college student engaged in an intellectual dialogue (both inside and outside the classroom).

Academic freedom will be protected and respected by all students and the instructor. However, there are some limitations on free speech. Hateful, sexist, racist, hurtful, or otherwise obscene comments that are intended as a personal attack will not be tolerated. Additionally, any dialogue that does not specifically pertain to the topic at hand will not receive an audience. At the instructor’s discretion, a student that violates these guidelines may be removed from the course and possibly from the college.

Addendum III - Course Activities, Assignments, and Exams

* Indicates a mandatory course requirement. Failure to submit a compulsory assignment will result in a failing grade (F/N) for the course.

Course Readings, Lectures and Presentations

Each student is expected to read the assigned material as detailed in the course calendar. Please read the chapters before class. Students will be held accountable for assigned materials via the chapter quizzes, in-class quizzes, and the final exam. The textbook
readings create the core of the course experience. The supplemental materials and my lectures are there to reinforce key points and help you succeed. Making appropriate use of the materials will have a significant impact on your grades.

It is vital that you manage your time and maintain a high degree of self-discipline to ensure your success in any college course. The course schedule has been designed to spread apart the major course topics so that you are able to comprehend the material. If you fall behind, it is difficult to adequately address the topics and this often creates a snowball effect leading to failure. Again, I implore you to keep pace with the class and not fall behind. The pace of the course is 3-4 chapters per week.

**Government in the News (1 required at 100 points)**

Current government actions are in the news every day in multiple ways. In order to be more aware of current government topics, students are required to locate, print, and turn in two articles of government in the news from a credible news source. Credible news sources include:

- Dallas Morning News
- New York Times
- CNN.com

Students are required to find relevant articles related to American government, print out the articles, place your name and date on the article, and briefly talk about the article in class and give your general thoughts on the article, as well as relate the article to our reading and lecture material. This will take place at the beginning of class on the dates you are assigned. If articles are not ready when the instructor calls for them at the beginning of class, the student will receive a zero for that assignment. **Each student will be responsible for presenting their articles on date assigned to them during the first week of class. If a student is absent on their assigned date, the news item will be due at the next class the student attends.**

**Outside Government Activity (1 for 100 points)**

You will be required to attend an outside government activity at some point during the course that works with your schedule. There are many opportunities to attend city council meetings and other government meetings within 5 miles of Brookhaven, as well as all across the DFW Metroplex. You will take a selfie to prove you went to the meeting in person, as well as turn in a paper describing your experience at the meeting, what was discussed, and your overall thoughts. Minimum 600 words, along with the selfie. Turn in the paper within 1 week of the event. Deadline to turn in this activity is Monday, May 6, 2019.

**Opinion Essays (8 for 25 points each)**
There will be 8 opinion essays assigned throughout this semester. I do not want this course to only be repeating what you read in a book or what I said in a lecture. Government affects all of you and I want you to find your own voice and really think about government issues. You will have 6 opinion essay prompts and there is no right or wrong answers, as long as you write your own original thoughts regarding the topic. Each topic will be related to government in some way. Each essay must be hand-written, be a minimum full page, single-spaced, on lined notebook paper. These essays will be written in class most of the time and due before you leave class. If you are absent when we do any in-class assignments, you must have an excused absence with proper documentation (doctor’s note or away on college activities) to make up the assignment. Otherwise, you will receive a zero for that assignment.

**Mid-Term and Final Exams (200 points each for a total of 400 points)**

Mid-Term and Final Exams will be given on the dates indicated on the syllabus calendar. There will be a short answer and an essay portion to each exam. The final exam will not be cumulative. We will have a review the day before the exams begin. Please stay ahead on the reading and take good notes during the lectures to be well prepared for the exams.

*Formal Assessment Guidelines – GOVT 2306 Term Project (200 total points)*

**Introduction**

This activity is an opportunity for you to closely examine a contemporary policy issue between the state of Texas and the United States federal government. Over its history, the Texas government has had many conflicts with the national government as part of the dynamics under a federal system of governance (federalism). Completing this activity is a mandatory component of this course. It serves as the standard course assessment for all GOVT 2306 students. Failure to submit and complete this project in its entirety will result in a failing grade for the course.

There are three steps to completing this project.

**Step 1 – Identifying the Issue**

Identify an issue that involves federalism, then conduct research on how both the US federal government and Texas state government addressing it (this requires examining the history, application and effectiveness of laws at both levels). Pick one of the following topics:
· Public education policy and funding
· Public education policy and Common Core
· Environmental policy and air pollution
· Environmental policy and hydraulic fracking
· Affordable Care Act and Medicaid funding
· Joint law enforcement efforts to combat drug trafficking
· Joint law enforcement efforts to combat human trafficking
Joint law enforcement efforts to combat illegal immigration
Or choose a topic that fits the criteria on your own, but must be approved by the professor.

Step 2 - Gathering Sources
Conduct research to locate three peer-reviewed academic journal articles (aka: scholarly sources) that specifically address the policy issue that you selected and meet the following criteria:
· The articles must be no more than ten (10) years old.
· The article must have more than five (5) pages of actual content (without graphs, charts, footnotes, citations, etc.).
· Books will not count toward the minimum research requirements.
· Carefully choose those sources that provide a variety of perspectives on your selected topic.
· In addition to the minimum research requirements, you should offer “supplemental sources” for essential current events information relevant to your topic. These may include academic sources that are not peer-reviewed (position papers), newspaper articles, magazine articles, and other quality or reputable sources.
· Textbooks, Dictionaries, Encyclopedias (including Wikipedia), Almanacs, or an Atlas are reference materials and are not to be listed as sources on the collegiate level.
· Provide the formal MLA citation for each source, both in the essay and on the works cited page.

Step 3 – The Proposal
Submit a one-page proposal to the appropriate dropbox by the date specified in the course calendar. The proposal is to contain the following:
· Identify the topic in a single paragraph by:
  o Summarize the policy topic you will be addressing.
  o Describe the current status of the policy or topic.
  o Describe why the policy is important.
· Include a bibliography listing the three primary sources. The citations are to be formatted using MLA citation style.
· A model proposal has been provided in eCampus.

Revise and Resubmit Policy: The purpose of the proposal process is for your instructor to confirm that 1) you have selected three appropriate peer-reviewed journal articles and 2) that you have selected an appropriate topic. Additionally, it allows your instructor to give you feedback on your writing (grammar, sentence composition, punctuation, and spelling) as well as your use of proper MLA citation formatting.
Should you submit a proposal that does not address a topic that meet the criteria, or does not have three peer-reviewed journal articles, you will be asked to “revise and resubmit” the assignment. In such cases, each revision will be deducted 10 points and after 4 attempts the assignment will earn a zero and will be considered incomplete. The instructor will inform you of the due date and conditions of resubmission. Failure to resubmit the revision before the provided due date, or failure to correct the identified issues in need of revision, will result in a zero for the proposal grade.
Failure to complete the proposal or a requested revision will result in the entire assignment being incomplete.

Step 4 – The Policy Paper
Your task will be to prepare a formal research paper regarding the selected policy. The assignment is to be around 5-6 pages with in-text citations for your research. The minimum writing requirement is a 1000 of your own words or around 3 pages of a word document (excluding the cited information). The essay is to discuss each of the following prompts:
· An introduction and brief overview of the policy relationship.
· What are the major issues facing each level of government?
· What are the reasons for initiating changes to the policy?
· What are the options to be considered (discuss several)?
· What are the pros and cons of each potential reform (costs v. benefits)?
· Which is the best option moving forward (pick one)?
· A summary and conclusion

Special Notes:
The grading standards used to assess the quality of your work for this project will be detailed in a grading rubric, which will be provided during the semester. It is strongly suggested that every student read ahead and use the library database during the first week of the course to begin researching a topic. This project requires carefully planning throughout the semester. Refer to the course calendar for the specific due date. The final product is to be submitted as a single file via the submission guidelines identified by the instructor. Procrastination on this project has resulted in some students, who were otherwise passing, having to fail and repeat the course.

Extra Credit Opportunities
At various points in the course, extra credit may be available in several forms. It may be part of an assignment, a separate assignment or simply a reply to an e-mail. If it is part of an assignment, be sure to include the extra credit on a separate page that appears after the works cited page. Again, extra credit that is part of an assignment should be submitted along with the primary assignment (combine all files into one for submission).

If the extra credit is to reply to an e-mail based activity, be sure to reply by the deadline. Again, make sure that you submit any extra credit via the appropriate avenue to receive credit for the work.

Addendum IV - DCCCD Institutional Policies
Institutional Policies:
Please click on the following link to be aware of institutional policies at Brookhaven that may impact you as a student: https://www.brookhavencollege.edu/syllabusaddendum
Instructor’s Rights:
The instructor reserves the right to modify any course requirements and calendar due dates as necessary to manage and conduct this course. Students are responsible for contacting the instructor and seeking clarification of any requirement that is not understood.

Withdrawal Policy – Last day for a ‘W’ is April 17, 2019:
If you are unable to complete this course, it is your responsibility to withdraw formally. Do not simply stop attending the course. The withdrawal request must be received in the Registrar’s Office by (April 17, 2019). Failure to do so will result in your receiving a performance grade, usually an “F.” If you drop a class or withdraw from the college before the official drop/withdrawal deadline, you will receive a “W” (Withdraw) in each class dropped. Again, the last opportunity to withdraw from the course with a grade of “W” is April 17, 2019.