

PSCI (GOVT) 2306: American State Government, Spring 2011

Section 201: MWF 10:30–11:20 a.m., 236 Student Center (S.C. Auditorium)

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Office: 313 Lamar Bruni Vergara Science Center (LBVSC)

Hours: MWF 11:30–12:50 p.m.; Tu 1:00–3:00 p.m.; or by appointment.

This course has two primary objectives: to acquaint you with the study of politics and political science, and to improve your understanding of the institutions and processes that govern Texas and other states, as well as the localities (such as cities and counties) within them.

Although PSCI/GOVT 2305 is not a *prerequisite* for this course, the professor will assume that you at least have some basic understanding of the structure of the American national government.

Student Learning Objectives: Ideally, at the conclusion of this course, you will have a greater understanding of

- ▷ the interaction between politics and government.
- ▷ the structure and institutions of Texas government.
- ▷ the political process in the Texas and other states.
- ▷ the role of individuals and civil society groups (such as political parties and interest groups) in influencing government behavior.
- ▷ how social scientists study politics and government.

Required Materials: There is one book required for this course:

- ▷ L. Tucker Gibson, Jr. and Clay Robison. 2011. *Government and Politics in the Lone Star State: Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. New York: Pearson Longman. ISBN 978-0-205-77902-4.

The previous (6th) edition (ISBN 978-0-13-615555-3), which was in use until the Fall 2010 term, is also suitable for this course; however, please note that the page numbering in that edition may be somewhat different.

This textbook should be available, new and used, at the TAMIU Bookstore in the Student Center; you may also be able to order it on-line at a discount. Additional readings may be assigned at the discretion of the professor and will be provided for you at the library reserve desk, on the course Angel site, or as handouts in class.

You also need to obtain an eInstruction Clicker and register it for this class. Instructions for registering the clicker with this course will be provided in ANGEL and in-class.

Finally, you are required to provide your own standard green, blank Scantron form (“Form 882-ES”) for each examination, including the final exam, and should bring at least one #2 pencil to complete the exam. *Our Scantron machines do not read markings made with a pen.* Scantron forms are available at the bookstore in multi-packs and as individual sheets.

Grades: Your final grade in this course will be based on the following elements, weighted as specified below:

Term Exams (4) and Final	60%	Assessments (2)	10%
Reading/Lecture Quizzes	15%	Class Participation	5%
Clicker Quizzes	10%	Attendance Bonus	4%

The final grade in the course reported to the registrar will be converted based on this scale:

Weighted Average	≥ 90.0	≥ 80.0	≥ 70.0	≥ 60.0	< 60.0
Grade	A	B	C	D	F

The grade posted in the Angel grade book is the definitive, up-to-date estimate of your current grade in the course. If you are unsure how to check your current grade in Angel, please see the online training video or contact the OIT Helpdesk for instructions. If you believe there is a mistake in your posted grade(s), please let me know.

Exams: There will be four closed-book, in-class examinations, along with the final examination, on the dates that are indicated on the syllabus, covering the assigned materials. The exams will be drawn from the material covered in the most

recent section of the course: for example, Exam 2 will mostly cover material studied after Exam 1. Per college policy, the final examination is *comprehensive* and will cover all of the course materials.

The exams will, together, account for 60% of your final course grade; your lowest exam grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

During exams, no discussion among students is permitted of any kind, and all electronic devices (cell phones, calculators, pagers, computers, etc.) must be **switched off**.

Online Quizzes: For each module of the course, there will be a quiz posted in Angel. The quiz will be available online at least 48 hours prior to the first class scheduled for that module, marked **(Q)** on the schedule below. *No quizzes will be accepted after the quiz deadline, which is at the start of class.* Unannounced, in-class quizzes may also make up a portion of this grade.

The online quizzes are open-book. You may work with other students in the class on the online quizzes, although it is probably *not* in your best interest to simply copy someone else's answers without understanding *why* they chose those answers. Your lowest two quiz grades will be dropped from your quiz average. Together, the quizzes will count as 15% of your final grade.

Assessments: In addition to the exams and quizzes, there will be two assessments required as part of the course, which are used by the university to help demonstrate student learning outcomes. The assessments consist of multiple-choice questions, will be administered through the Angel course management system, and will be timed. Your actual score on each assessment will *not* negatively affect your grade; however, you *must* complete each assessment to receive credit for this part of your final grade (5% per assessment; 10% total).

The pre-test assessment will be made available as of the end of class today (Wednesday, January 19th) and will be due on **Wednesday, February 2nd at 5 p.m.** The post-test assessment will be made available on Monday, May 2nd and will be due on **Wednesday, May 11th at 5 p.m.**

Clicker Quizzes: 10% of your grade will be based on clicker quizzes. You should expect that most classes will start with a brief clicker quiz based on the readings, other assigned materials, or previous lecture. Quizzes may also appear at other points in class.

Participation: 5% of your grade will be based on your level of participation in class. This will be evaluated holistically by the professor.

In addition, you will receive points toward a daily attendance bonus awarded at the end of the semester. The maximum bonus is 4 percentage points (4/10 of a letter grade), and will be awarded on a *sliding scale* based on the number of classes you attend. Attendance records may be based on taking roll, responses to clicker quizzes, sign-in sheets, or other means.

Students who have four (4) or more unexcused absences—the equivalent of *two weeks of class*—should expect to receive a substantial reduction in their participation grade and *no* daily attendance bonus. The full definition of an excused absence, and acceptable documentation thereof, is below.

Exam and Quiz Content: Questions on examinations and quizzes may be drawn from the textbook, materials presented in lecture, and/or additional materials provided by the instructor as announced in class. Just reading the books, or just attending class, will likely be insufficient to earn an "A" or "B."

Class Policies: I make it a general policy to treat all students as adults. While this affords you, the student, greater freedom than you may have had in high school, it also means that you must take a greater personal responsibility for your performance in the course. I am always happy to meet with students to discuss their concerns about the course, but I will not necessarily assume that you are in difficulty simply because you perform poorly on a homework assignment or disappear from class for a few days.

Please provide a respectful learning environment for your fellow students. Repeated tardiness, cell phone disruptions, reading materials unrelated to the course (such as the student newspaper), and abuse of communication technologies (e.g., web browsing/IMing/texting during class) during class will adversely affect your grade; per university policy, repeated disruptive behavior may result in your involuntary withdrawal from the course.

Please arrive at class *on time* and mute (or switch off) all pagers, cell phones, and alarms during

class.

Any extra-credit opportunities offered by the professor will be offered to **all** students on an equal basis. Please do not ask the professor for individualized extra credit opportunities.

I do not provide lecture notes for students under any circumstances. You will have to rely on the generosity of a classmate or make use of any materials provided on the textbook website.¹

This syllabus is subject to revision by the professor.

Absence policy: Make-up examinations must be scheduled **in advance** in the case of an **unavoidable** planned or reasonably-foreseeable absence; otherwise, make-ups will be given only in the case of an illness or emergency that is properly **documented**. Please refer to the **student absence policy** posted on the TAMIU website for examples of absences that will ordinarily be excused by the professor and specific documentation that is acceptable; examples of acceptable documentation may include a doctor's note, accident report (from a federal, state, or local law enforcement agency), notification of travel dates from an athletics coach, or summons from a court. As one term examination will be dropped—with or without excuse—your professor will only arrange make-ups for students who are absent due to *university-sponsored activities* (including, but not limited to, intercollegiate varsity athletics); this make-up will take place during the final exam period.

Make-up quizzes (online or clicker-quizzes) will not be arranged under any circumstances; missing quiz grades will be dropped for excused absences. Similarly there are no make-ups for missed classes; however, students with an excused absence will receive credit for attending any classes missed with a valid excuse, such as student illness or participation in university-sponsored activities.

Grade Appeals: If you wish to dispute a grade on a particular assignment for any reason other than an obvious arithmetic error on my part, you will need to type a one-page explanation of your position and turn it in, along with the original graded assignment, *at least one week after* the assignment is returned to you. I will then consider your appeal and make a determination. Appeals must be submitted in hard copy format; no appeals submitted via email will be considered. Please refer to the Student Handbook for policies regarding appeals of *final letter grades*.

University and College Policies: The following policies of the TAMIU College of Arts and Sciences and Texas A&M International University are reproduced here for your information; you may already be familiar with them from other courses, but please review them.

Classroom Behavior The College of Arts and Sciences encourages classroom discussion and academic debate as an essential intellectual activity. It is essential that students learn to express and defend their beliefs, but it is also essential that they learn to listen and respond respectfully to others whose beliefs they may not share. The College will always tolerate diverse, unorthodox, and unpopular points of view, but it will not tolerate condescending or insulting remarks. When students verbally abuse or ridicule and intimidate others whose views they do not agree with, they subvert the free exchange of ideas that should characterize a university classroom. If their actions are deemed by the professor to be disruptive, they will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include being involuntarily withdrawn from the class.

Plagiarism and Cheating Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as your own. 1) When you borrow someone else's facts, ideas, or opinions and put them entirely in your own words, you must acknowledge that these thoughts are not your own by immediately citing the source in your paper. Failure to do this is plagiarism. 2) When you also borrow someone else's words (short phrases, clauses, or sentences), you must enclose the copied words in quotation marks as well as citing the source. Failure to do this is plagiarism. 3) When you present someone else's paper or exam (stolen, borrowed, or bought) as your own, you have committed a clearly intentional form of intellectual theft and have put your academic future in jeopardy. This is the worst form of plagiarism.

Here is another explanation from the 2010, sixth edition of the Manual of The American Psychological Association (APA):

Plagiarism: Researchers do not claim the words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due. Quotations marks should be used to indicate the exact words of another. Each time you paraphrase another author (i.e., summarize a passage or rearrange the order of a sentence and change some of the words), you need to credit the source in the text.

The key element of this principle is that authors do not present the work of another as if it were their own words. This

¹Students with disabilities who require notes or other learning environment accommodations who have not already done so should consult with the Student Disability Services office for assistance.

can extend to ideas as well as written words. If authors model a study after one done by someone else, the originating author should be given credit. If the rationale for a study was suggested in the Discussion section of someone else's article, the person should be given credit. Given the free exchange of ideas, which is very important for the health of intellectual discourse, authors may not know where an idea for a study originated. If authors do know, however, they should acknowledge the source; this includes personal communications. (pp. 15–16)

Consult the Writing Center or a recommended guide to documentation and research such as the Manual of the APA or the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers for guidance on proper documentation. If you still have doubts concerning proper documentation, seek advice from your instructor prior to submitting a final draft.

Penalties for Plagiarism: Should a faculty member discover that a student has committed plagiarism, the student will receive a grade of “F” in that course and the matter will be referred to the Honor Council for possible disciplinary action. The faculty member, however, has the right to give freshmen and sophomore students a “zero” for the assignment and to allow them to revise the assignment up to a grade of “F” (50%) if they believe that the student plagiarized out of ignorance or carelessness and not out of an attempt to deceive in order to earn an unmerited grade. This option is not available to juniors, seniors, or graduate students, who cannot reasonably claim ignorance of documentation rules as an excuse.

Penalties for Cheating: Should a faculty member discover a student cheating on an exam or quiz or other class project, the student will receive a “zero” for the assignment and not be allowed to make the assignment up. The incident must be reported to the chair of the department and to the Honor Council. If the cheating is extensive, however, or if the assignment constitutes a major grade for the course (e.g., a final exam), or if the student has cheated in the past, the student should receive an “F” in the course, and the matter should be referred to the Honor Council. Under no circumstances should a student who deserves an “F” in the course be allowed to withdraw from the course with a “W.”

Student Right of Appeal: Faculty will notify students immediately via the student's TAMIU e-mail account that they have submitted plagiarized work. Students have the right to appeal a faculty member's charge of academic dishonesty by notifying the TAMIU Honor Council of their intent to appeal as long as the notification of appeal comes within 3 business days of the faculty member's e-mail message to the student. The Student Handbook provides details.

UConnect, TAMIU E-Mail, and Dusty Alert Personal Announcements sent to students through TAMIU's UConnect Portal and TAMIU E-mail are the official means of communicating course and university business with students and faculty—not the U.S. Mail and not other e-mail addresses. Students and faculty must check UConnect and their TAMIU e-mail accounts regularly, if not daily. Not having seen an important TAMIU e-mail or UConnect message from a faculty member, chair, or dean is not accepted as an excuse for failure to take important action. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to sign-up for Dusty Alert (see <http://www.tamtu.edu/>). Dusty Alert is an instant cell phone text-messaging system allowing the university to communicate immediately with you if there is an on-campus emergency, something of immediate danger to you, or a campus closing.

Copyright Restrictions The Copyright Act of 1976 grants to copyright owners the exclusive right to reproduce their works and distribute copies of their work. Works that receive copyright protection include published works such as a textbook. Copying a textbook without permission from the owner of the copyright may constitute copyright infringement. Civil and criminal penalties may be assessed for copyright infringement. Civil penalties include damages up to \$100,000; criminal penalties include a fine up to \$250,000 and imprisonment.

Students with Disabilities Texas A&M International University seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal education opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Director of Student Counseling and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodations.

Incompletes Students who are unable to complete a course should withdraw from the course before the final date for withdrawal and receive a “W.” To qualify for an “incomplete” and thus have the opportunity to complete the course at a later date, a student must meet the following criteria:

1. The student must have completed 90% of the course work assigned before the final date for withdrawing from a course with a “W”, and the student must be passing the course;
2. The student cannot complete the course because an accident, an illness, or a traumatic personal or family event occurred after the final date for withdrawal from a course;
3. The student must sign an “Incomplete Grade Contract” and secure signatures of approval from the professor and the college dean.
4. The student must agree to complete the missing course work before the end of the next long semester; failure to meet this deadline will cause the “I” to automatically be converted to a “F”; extensions to this deadline may be granted by the dean of the college.

Student Responsibility for Dropping a Course It is the responsibility of the **student** to drop the course before the final date for

withdrawal from a course. Faculty members, in fact, may not drop a student from a course.

Independent Study Course Independent Study (IS) courses are offered only under exceptional circumstances. Required courses intended to build academic skills may not be taken as IS (e.g., clinical supervision and internships). No student will take more than one IS course per semester. Moreover, IS courses are limited to seniors and graduate students. Summer IS courses must continue through both summer sessions.

Final Examination The final examination must be comprehensive and must contain a written component. The written component should comprise 20% of the final exam grade. Exceptions to this policy must receive the approval of the department chair and the dean at the beginning of the semester. Students with more than two final exams scheduled for the same day may make arrangements with their instructors to take excess finals at an alternative time.

Grade Changes & Appeals Faculty are authorized to change final grades only when they have committed a computational error, and they must receive the approval of their department chairs and the dean to change the grade. As part of that approval, they must attach a detailed explanation of the reason for the mistake. Only in rare cases would another reason be entertained as legitimate for a grade change. A student who is unhappy with his or her grade on an assignment must discuss the situation with the faculty member teaching the course. If students believe that they have been graded unfairly, they have the right to appeal the grade using a grade appeal process in the Student Handbook and the Faculty Handbook.

Withdrawal Deadlines: The last day to drop the course without it appearing on your transcript is Wednesday, February 2. The withdrawal deadline (last day for a “W”) is Friday, April 15.

Course Outline: Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class and will be posted to the course calendar and in Angel. We will not necessarily read books in the order they appear on the syllabus; please be sure you read the correct chapters *in advance of* the designated class dates.

While the professor may periodically remind students of upcoming scheduled events, it is **your responsibility** to be familiar with this schedule and any changes to it.

Date(s)	Topic	Reading(s)
Jan 19	Introduction to the course	
Jan 21, 24	A Brief Political History of Texas	Chapter 1
Jan 26 (Q), 28	The Texas Constitution	Chapter 2
Jan 31	No Class	
Feb 2	The Texas Constitution (cont'd)	Chapter 2
Wednesday, February 2nd	Online Pre-Test Assessment Due, 5 p.m.	
Feb 4 (Q), 7, 9	Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations	Chapter 3
Feb 11	Exam 1	
Feb 14 (Q), 16, 18	Interest Groups	Chapter 4
Feb 21 (Q); 23	Political Parties in Texas	Chapter 6
Feb 25 (Q); Mar 2, 4	Elections, Campaigns, and Political Behavior	Chapter 7
Mar 7, 9	Redistricting in Texas	
Mar 11	Exam 2	
Mar 14, 16, 18	No Class — Spring Break	
Mar 21 (Q), 23, 25	The Texas Legislature	Chapter 8
Mar 28 (Q), 30	The Governor & Executive Branch	Chapter 9
Apr 1 (Q), 4, 6	The Bureaucracy and Policy Implementation	Chapter 10
Apr 8	Exam 3	
Apr 11 (Q), 13, 15	The Texas Judicial System	Chapter 11
Apr 18 (Q), 20, 22	Local Government in Texas	Chapter 12
Apr 25 (Q), 27, 29	Public Policy	Chapter 13
May 2	Exam 4	
May 4	Review for Final Exam	
Wednesday, May 11	Final Examination, 8 a.m.	
	Online Post-Test Assessment Due, 5 p.m.	