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|  | **GOVT 2306 Texas Government**  **Course Syllabus:** Spring 2021 | | | | | |
| “Northeast Texas Community College exists to provide responsible, exemplary learning opportunities.”  **Patrick Smith**  **Office:** N/A  **Phone:** 903-856-8255  **Email:** [PSmith@ntcc.edu](mailto:PSmith@ntcc.edu)  Twitter: @AmGovNTCC\_Smith | | | | | |
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| **Office Hours** | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** | **Online** |
| By Appointment | By Appointment | By Appointment | By Appointment |  | By Appointment |

*The information contained in this syllabus is subject to change without notice. Students are expected to be aware of any additional course policies presented by the instructor during the course.*

**Course Description:** 3 credit hours.

Lecture/Lab/Clinical: Three hours of class each week.

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.

**Prerequisite(s): none**

**Student 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.

**Required Instructional Materials:**

Open Source Material will be available within the course Blackboard site.

**Recommended Reading(s):** Dallas Morning News, Wall Street Journal, other newspapers, political magazines, view FOX, CNN, Texas Observer, Politico or other television news programs and the internet.

**Resource Material**

[**http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu**](http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu)

[**http://www.texaspolicy.com**](http://www.texaspolicy.com)

[**http://www.capitol.state.tx.us**](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us)

[**http://www.texasonline.com**](http://www.texasonline.com)

[**http://www.legis.state.tx.us/home.aspx**](http://www.legis.state.tx.us/home.aspx)

Twitter: @AmGovNTCC\_Smith

**Minimum Technology Requirements:** Your computer needs to have Windows XP SP3 or later or MAC OS X10.3 or higher. You will need Office 2003 or higher, and you will need broadband internet access. You can check your operating system by right clicking on the My Computer icon on the home screen. You can check your word processing program by going to Start and clicking on All Programs. You will find your Office program there. If you do not have access toa computer with the minimum computer requirements, I strongly suggest that you reconsider taking this online course.

**Required Computer Literacy Skills:** Ability to use Blackboard as well as Microsoft Office. Microsoft Office programs, including Word, are provided free to all enrolled students

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

The general objective of this course is to introduce Texas State and Local government issues and to teach basic tools of analysis. More specifically, the goals of the course are listed below:   
  
1. Analyze Texas State and Local government.  
2. Analyze the constitutional basis for Texas State and Local government.

3. Analyze and understand the processes of Texas State and Local politics and government, and the institutions of Texas State and Local politics and government.  
4. To help you develop good methods in thinking about Texas state public policy issues. This involves specific attention to the process of orderly problem solving by:   
  
a. Carefully defining the issue.  
b. Mapping out the main alternative ways of achieving the stated objectives.  
c. Carefully analyzing the alternative approaches, and using the appropriate analytical concepts and principles to decide which alternatives or combination of alternatives best "solves" the problem.  
d. Checking the "solution" reached, both for flaws in reasoning and, where feasible, against experience in comparable situations.  
  
5. To help you learn to evaluate and use both qualitative and quantitative evidence when conflicting viewpoints and approaches are encountered.

**Lessons, Lectures & Discussions:**

Topics of Discussion

Week of March 22 – 26 Intro & Expectations; Texas Political Culture

Week of March 29 – April 2 Texas Constitution

Week of April 5 – 9 Participation, Interest Groups and Iron Triangle

Week of April 12 – 16 Texas Legislature

**April 13, 2020 MID-TERM EXAM**

Week of April 19 – 23 Texas Executive

Week of April 26 – 30 Texas Judiciary

Week of May 3 – 7 Texas Local Government

Week of May 10 – 13 Closing of Class and Final Exam

**May 11, 2021 FINAL EXAM**

**Evaluation/Grading Policy:**

Three written public policy assignments (75 points each) 225 points

Mid-Term Exam 100 points

Final Exam 100 points

Local Government Meeting Attendance and Analysis Paper 125 points

Outside Reading in class Discussion Assignments and Quizzes 75 points

Total Points 625 points

**582 - 650 points = A**

**517 - 581 points = B**

**452 - 516 points = C**

**387 - 451 points = D**

**000 – 386 points = F**

**Late Assignment Penalties**

Past Due 5 Days: Deduct 50 points from assignment

More than 5 Days: Zero points for assignment

**Attendance**

You are urged to attend class each day. A significant portion of each examination is drawn from the classroom material. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain the information missed and see that your assignments are submitted by due dates. If you decide to attend class you must attend the entire class period, unless other arrangements are made prior to class with the instructor. Students who simply arrive in class to hand in an assignment and then leave class will receive a zero on the assignment. Attendance is part of the participation grade.

Missing more than two class meetings will reduce your grade in the course by a full letter grade (i.e. A to B, B to C, C to D, and D to F).

**Assignments:**

**Course Requirements**

A. **Class Discussion and Participation** – Each student has the responsibility to prepare for each class by reading the assigned material and completing all assignments. All students should be prepared to participate in class discussions of the assigned material. You will be exposed to a variety of opinions that may differ from your own. Respect those opinions and use them to help you reflect on why people hold different views. Class attendance is a part of class participation (if you do not attend you cannot participate). Outside reading assignments are assigned with in class discussion taking place with regards to the assigned outside reading.

FYI: Attendance is noted without a required roll call.

B. **Texas State and Local Public Policy Research Assignments** – The assignment involves researching an assigned topic and preparing a Policy Paper presentation.

**PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT AND PRESENTATION:**

Purpose: The purpose of the research project is threefold: to give the student an opportunity to explore an issue in Texas state or local government, to give the student experience in preparing an annotated bibliography and writing a position paper, and to assist the student in developing his or her research, analytical, and presentation skills.

**Topics:**

**Policy Paper Issue 1: Texas public school funding (Do public school districts need more or less funding?) Due Date Week 3**

**Policy Paper Issue 2: Water supply resources (How will the state meet the need for the projected doubling in population growth by 2050?) Due Date Week 6**

**Policy Paper Issue 3: State transportation funding (How will the state meet the need for the projected doubling in population growth by 2050?) Due Date Week 8**

Annotated Bibliography Format: In preparing to write the position paper, the student will prepare an annotated bibliography that contains a variety of sources, including, for example, journals, magazines, newspapers, and the Internet. Sources in the annotated bibliography must conform to the Modern Language Association (MLA), APA, etc. The annotated bibliography will include eight sources that support the student’s position on the issue of public policy selected and provide counter arguments to the student’s position. **The paper should be no longer than two pages with a 10-pt. font.**

C. **Quizzes and Discussion Assignments**

D. **Local Government Meeting and Analysis Report** – The assignment is a written review of a local government meeting. You will attend the meeting of a local governmental body — city council, school board, state legislature, special district, hospital district, community college district, etc. (Meeting times and locations are posted on governmental entities websites.) You are to write a paper at least two pages in length on your observations. What is the authority of the body you observed? Who is on this body and how is it organized? What issues or cases did the organization address at the meeting you attended? Who attended the meeting and who participated in the meeting? How did the deliberations go (that is, who spoke about what)? What decisions were made and how? Did a member of the public speak? If so, what topic did they address? Finally, offer observations about what you learned about decision-making within this body (even if obvious). The analysis and report will include your views of the major issues faced by the local government organization. Students will include their opinions on possible solutions to issues. A copy of the Meeting Agenda must be included and attached to your presentation. Format: Typed with a 12-pt. font and double spaced.

E. **Exams: Mid-Term and Final Exam**

**Student Responsibilities/Expectations:**

**Class Attendance**

You are urged to attend class each day. A significant portion of each examination is drawn from the classroom material. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain the information missed and see that your assignments are submitted by due dates. If you decide to attend class you must attend the entire class period, unless other arrangements are made prior to class with the instructor. Students who simply arrive in class to hand in an assignment and then leave class will receive a zero on the assignment. Attendance is part of the participation grade.

Since the lecture-discussion method will be employed in this class, regular attendance is highly encouraged. Students who discontinue attending class will be given an “F” unless they officially withdraw from the course.

Missing more than three class meetings will reduce your grade in the course by a full letter grade (i.e. A to B, B to C, C to D, and D to F).

**TWO KEYS**

1. **Completing the assigned readings, problems and turning in the assignments in a professional manner on time.**
2. **"Believing in yourself and never entertaining the thought of giving up or being unsuccessful."  The ability to stick with it, to persevere, to never quit will put you in a position to be successful.**

**Cell Phones**

All phones should be OFF/Vibrate while classroom instruction is taking place. If a phone rings while attending class an automatic 10 points will be deducted from the overall final grade total. If the same student phone rings twice during the term there will be a 50-point deduction from the overall final grade total. Each additional time will be a 100-point deduction from the overall final grade total. The same applies to text messaging. BOTTOM LINE – PHONES OFF. TEXTING IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.

**Alternate Operations During Campus Closure and/or Alternate Course Delivery Requirements**

In the event of an emergency or announced campus closure due to a natural disaster or pandemic, it may be necessary for Northeast Texas Community College to move to altered operations. During this time, Northeast Texas Community College may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include, but are not limited to, online through the Blackboard Learning Management System, online conferencing, email messaging, and/or an alternate schedule. It is the responsibility of the student to monitor NTCC’s website (http://www.ntcc.edu/) for instructions about continuing courses remotely, Blackboard for each class for course-specific communication, and NTCC email for important general information.

Additionally, there may be instances where a course may not be able to be continued in the same delivery format as it originates (face-to-face, fully online, live remote, or hybrid).Should this be the case, every effort will be made to continue instruction in an alternative delivery format. Students will be informed of any changes of this nature through email messaging and/or the Blackboard course site.

**NTCC Academic Honesty Statement:**

"Students are expected to complete course work in an honest manner, using their intellects and resources designated as allowable by the course instructor. Students are responsible for addressing questions about allowable resources with the course instructor. NTCC upholds the highest standards of academic integrity. This course will follow the NTCC Academic Honesty policy stated in the Student Handbook."

**Academic Ethics:**

The college expects all students to engage in academic pursuits in a manner that is beyond reproach.  Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuit.  Academic dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism, and collusion is unacceptable and may result in disciplinary action.  Refer to the student handbook for more information on this subject.

**ADA Statement:**

It is the policy of NTCC to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals who are students with disabilities. This College will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required affording equal educational opportunity. It is the student’s responsibility to request accommodations. An appointment can be made with Katherine Belew, Academic Advisor/Coordinator of Special Populations located in the Student Services. She can be reached at 903-434-8218. For more information and to obtain a copy of the Request for Accommodations, please refer to the [NTCC website - Special Populations](http://www.ntcc.edu/index.php?module=Pagesetter&func=viewpub&tid=111&pid=1).

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act** (**FERPA**):  
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children’s educational records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are considered “eligible students.” A parent has no legal right to obtain information concerning the child’s college records without the written consent of the student. In compliance with FERPA, information classified as “directory information” may be released to the public without the written consent of the student unless the student makes a request in writing. Directory information is defined as: the student’s name, permanent address and/or local address, telephone listing, dates of attendance, most recent previous educational institution attended, other information including major, the field of study, degrees, awards received, and participation in officially recognized activities/sports.

**PET PEEVES**

Everyone has one or two pet peeves, and instructors are no exception. Author Marjorie Hansen Shaevitz lists these annoyances specific to dealing with students - avoid doing them, not just because it's the right thing to do but because you don't want to be that guy or girl. Pet Peeves include:

1) Not having read the assigned reading prior to class and, therefore, not being able to respond appropriately when called upon by an instructor.

2) Talking in class or being otherwise interruptive.

3) Playing games or surfing the Web on any electronic device.

4) A cell phone ringing.

5) Asking inappropriate or self-serving questions. Examples: "What do I need to know to get an A on this test?" or "Is this going to be on the exam?" Or even worse, earning poor grades and then saying, "I really need to have a good grade in this class; would you change it?"

**Tentative Course Timeline**

Instructor reserves the right to adjust the course timeline at any point during the term.