GOV 312L: Politics and Government in Contemporary Texas

Texas Common Number: GOVT 2302

This course provides an in-depth orientation to the actors, processes, and institutions that make up the political system in Texas, with a strong emphasis on the development of applied knowledge. Instructional material in the course focuses on how politics in Texas shapes the operation of Texas political institutions, with particular attention to the interplay between public opinion, conflict among elites, and the policy environment in the state.

This course is required in all UT Austin degree plans. Fulfills the second half of the legislative requirement for American government. May be taken for credit only once.

Required Materials


All students are required to have access to an internet-enabled laptop or desktop computer. Tablets and smartphones are not supported. Computers should meet the following requirements:

- Operating System: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8.1, 10 (windows updates run); or Mac OS X 10.7.5, 10.8.5, 10.9.5, 10.10.4
- Browsers: Chrome, Safari, or Firefox (most recent two versions only)
- Adobe Flash: must be installed and updated
- JavaScript enabled

Course Organization

Assignments are designed to enable students to make the most of the self-paced format, and to effectively assimilate course material and acquire knowledge of Texas politics through very active engagement with the materials. Students will complete numerous short assignments aimed at reinforcing assimilation of knowledge via frequent quizzing and practical application of the course material. The course concludes with a comprehensive final exam, which must be taken in a proctored location with arrangements to be made by the student. Exam proctoring fees vary by site and are not included in the course fee.

This course provides students wide discretion in terms of when to complete the required work. Students may only submit one module of assignments at a time, and will not be able to move forward until assignments in that module have been graded. This structure allows for receipt of feedback on work that may be used in preparing for future assignments and exams.
Course topics include:

Module 1: The Political Culture & History of Texas
Module 2: Public Opinion
Module 3: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
Module 4: Political Parties
Module 5: Interest Groups
Module 6: Texas Constitution
Module 7: The Executive Branch
Module 8: The Governor
Module 9: The Justice System
Module 10: The Legislature – Actors and Organization
Module 11: The Legislature – Process and Politics
Module 12: Local Government
Module 13: The Policy Landscape

The overall course grade will be calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study questions</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video lecture quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Insiders video quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short answer exercises</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</tbody>
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An instructor is available via a message center to provide feedback on written work and respond to questions regarding course content. Students are required to complete all assignments and earn a score of at least 60% on the final exam in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

This course is independent study and is self-paced. Students have five months upon registration in which to complete all coursework, plus an additional thirty days in which to take the final.

University Extension

For more information about University Extension courses and policies, please visit http://extendedcampus.utexas.edu/uex. Questions may be directed to our office at (512) 471-2900 or uex@austin.utexas.edu. Office hours are M – F, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. CST.