



## **Course Syllabus**

### **GOVT 2306 – TEXAS GOVERNMENT**

**Catalog 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.

**Prerequisites:** None

**Semester Credit Hours:** 3

**Lecture Hours per Week:** 3

**Lab Hours per Week:** 0

**Extended hours:** 0

**Contact Hours per Semester:** 48

**State Approval Code:** 45.1002.51 25

**Class section meeting time:**

**Alternate Operations During Campus Closure:** In the event of an emergency or announced campus closure due to a natural disaster or pandemic, it may be necessary for Panola College to move to altered operations. During this time, Panola College may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include, but are not limited to: online learning management system (CANVAS), online conferencing, email messaging, and/or an alternate schedule. It is the responsibility of the student to monitor Panola College's website ([www.panola.edu](http://www.panola.edu)) for instructions about continuing courses remotely, CANVAS for each class for course-specific communication, and Panola College email for important general information.

#### **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Course Policy:**

AI is a helpful tool for research; therefore, it may be used by students for research purposes. However, the goal of this course is for students to gain a particular set of skills and knowledge, as stated in the instructional goals, learning outcomes, and course content of this syllabi. Students who use AI for an easy/quick grade (regardless of the assignment type) rather than the acquisition of skill and knowledge are hindering their academic growth. Consequently, the instructor, whose expertise is the basis for assessing student development, reserves the right to change a student's grade on any work, provably or suspiciously related to AI, which is inconsistent with these goals. In cases of disputed grades, an instructor may require students to repeat their performance on a course assignment in a controlled environment and without the use of AI to demonstrate their true acquisition of course skills and knowledge. The refusal or failure to repeat the performance shall be considered the acceptance of the originally assessed grade.

#### **Core Components and Related College Student Learning Outcomes**

This course counts as part of the academic requirements of the Panola College Core Curriculum and an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree.  Yes  No: If no, skip to Instructional Goals.

The items below marked with an X reflect the state-mandated outcomes for this course **IF this is a CORE course:**

- Critical Thinking Skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry and analysis, evaluation and syntheses of information
  - CT1: Generate and communicate ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information
  - CT2: Gather and assess information relevant to a question
  - CT3: Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information
- Communication Skills – to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
  - CS1: Develop, interpret, and express ideas through written communication
  - CS2: Develop, interpret, and express ideas through oral communication
  - CS3: Develop, interpret, and express ideas through visual communication
- Empirical and Quantitative Skills – to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions
  - EQS1: Manipulate and analyze numerical data and arrive at an informed conclusion
  - EQS2: Manipulate and analyze observable facts and arrive at an informed conclusion
- Teamwork – to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
  - TW1: Integrate different viewpoints as a member of a team
  - TW2: Work with others to support and accomplish a shared goal
- Personal Responsibility – to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making
  - PR1: Evaluate choices and actions and relate consequences to decision-making
- Social Responsibility – to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
  - SR1: Demonstrate intercultural competence
  - SR2: Identify civic responsibility
  - SR3: Engage in regional, national, and global communities

**Instructional Goals and Purposes:**

The purpose of this course is to serve as an introduction into the American political system.

**Learning Outcomes: [from the ACGM catalog]**

After studying all materials and resources presented in the course, the student will be able to:

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 the 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 the 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.

**Course Content:**

A general description of lecture/discussion topics included in this course are listed in the Learning Outcomes section of this syllabus.

Students in all sections of this course will learn the following content:

1. Texas Geography, Demographics, and Public Opinion
2. Foundations of Texas Government
3. Federalism and State Governance
4. The Texas Constitution
5. The Texas State Legislature
6. Texas Governors and Executive Branch
7. The Texas Court System
8. Local Government in Texas
9. The Criminal Justice System in Texas
10. Public Policy in Texas
11. The Texas Economy and Fiscal Policy
12. Elections and Campaigns in Texas
13. Political Parties in Texas
14. Voting and Political Participation in Texas
15. Interest Groups and the Media in Texas

### **Methods of Instruction/Course Format/Delivery:**

This class will convey the course material through lectures, discussions, primary/secondary documents, guest speakers, instructional videos, and PowerPoint presentations. Reciprocally, students are expected to take notes, listen proactively, ask questions, conduct research, and read the textbook.

Video and Audio Recordings: At the instructor's discretion, students are welcome to make audio recordings of the class lectures for their personal study use. They are invited to place their cell phones or other devices on the podium for the recordings at the start of class. The instructor reserves the right to make audio and video recordings of all classes and any personal encounters with students. Class recordings may be used on Canvas or other internet platforms for educational purposes. Personal recordings will be kept private per FERPA and only be used in cases of an appeal/legal defense.

### **Major Assignments / Assessments:**

The following items will be assigned and assessed during the semester and used to calculate the student's final grade.

#### **Assignments**

1. Exams: Exams will be administered over assigned readings and lecture material. The number and style of the exams may vary based on the instructor and the length of the course. The exams will measure a student's comprehension of the course material.
2. Civic Exercises: Civics exercises, which are a form of service learning, will constitute a portion of the class grade. The purpose of civic exercises is to bring a practical application of the course material into daily life. The full extent of service-learning assignments may be determined by the instructor and vary based on the length of the course.
3. Assignments: Routine work assignments will be administered during the semester. The assignments will cover the course materials, such as readings, lectures, videos, etc. The number and style of assignments will vary based on the length of the semester and the individual instructor. Collectively, the assignments make up a main portion of the final grade as they ensure students are engaged in the course.
4. Attendance: This course adheres to the college attendance policy found in the student handbook. Excessive absences "invalidate the learning experience" and may result in a student being withdrawn from the college course and given a failing grade.
5. Make-up Work: The instructor has full discretion on the allowance of make-up work for missed assignments, including exams. Make-up work will only be given for serious causes, such as medical emergencies or family death. The instructor may require documentation as proof of the cause and has full discretion on when to schedule make-up work. Students should be aware that internet/power outages typically do not count as a "serious cause" since most work is available for completion for several days.

6. Extra Credit: The instructor reserves the right to extend extra credit assignments to the class. Extra credit is not a part of the regular class grade. It is offered solely at the discretion and goodwill of the instructor.

### **Assessment(s):**

1. Students must demonstrate their dedication to being responsible citizens by passing a quiz on the essentials of Texas government.
2. Students must demonstrate their ability to think critically about government by participating in a class discussion on a modern political issue.
3. Students must demonstrate their ability to reasonably communicate ideas about current political issues by writing a letter to an elected official.
4. Students must demonstrate their personal responsibility by regularly attending class throughout the semester.

### **Academics**

1. Instructor Academic Discretion: The government department recognizes the necessity of academic freedom. As such, each instructor maintains the right to stipulate rules in addition to this syllabus concerning assignments, make-up work, grading rubrics, classroom recordings, excused absences, extra credit, and any other matters within the individual course offerings. All of the supplemental rules will be made available to the students at the start of the semester or in advance of the completion dates for individual assignments.
2. Academic Freedom: The government department recognizes the right of the instructor and the students to address controversial subjects. Academic freedom is in essence the freedom of speech in the classroom through which ideas may be challenged and truth may be pursued. Consequently, the department firmly upholds the right of instructors and students to express in writing, speech, or symbolism their understanding, opinions, and knowledge on controversial subjects. The US Supreme Court has consistently upheld that the freedom of speech "concerning public affairs is more than self-expression; it is the essence of self-government." ([Garrison v. Louisiana](#)): that "speech on public issues occupies the highest rung of the hierarchy of First Amendment values and is entitled to special protection" ([Connick v. Myers](#)): and "that Government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable" ([Texas v. Johnson](#)). Therefore, academic freedom in this public, government-funded course protects the instructor and students who express opinions on public issues that some may deem offensive.

Academic freedom does not protect the libel or slander of *private persons*. Libel and slander consist of written and verbal defamation of a person's character through the *intentional* disbursement of *patently false* information. ([New York Times v. Sullivan](#) and [Gertz v. Robert Welch](#)). Furthermore, academic freedom does not protect against obscenity as it is possible to freely discuss controversial issues without being obscene. Obscenity follows three basic guidelines: (a) whether "the average person, applying contemporary community standards" would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest, (b) whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and (c) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. ([Miller v. California](#)). In an appeal to the "community standards" of the classroom, students are required to wear modest clothing and maintain a standard of behavior consistent with the college code of conduct so as not to disrupt the learning environment. The instructor and the college reserve the right to remove students from the class, fail students and hold disciplinary actions in accordance with college policy for issues of libel, slander, and obscenity.

Finally, academic freedom and free speech are not excusatory protections for the violation of the student code of conduct, for poor performance on graded materials, or for failure to submit graded materials.

3. **Academic Honesty:** The central theme of education is the enlightenment of the mind. This can only be achieved by hard, honest work. Consequently, cheating and plagiarism are strictly prohibited in the course. A student must not receive from or give another student information, answers, or help during an exam. A student must not "steal" the answers from an unsuspecting student during an exam. A student must not use any sources for answers during an exam (including, but not limited to notes, books, or electronic devices) without prior authorization from the professor. A student must not obtain exam questions illegally, tamper with the exam questions, or change the results of an exam after it has been graded.

Students are prohibited from plagiarizing any assignments. Plagiarism consists of the taking of another person's ideas, words, or information and claiming those properties as one's own. Properly quoting and citing borrowed information is NOT plagiarism. However, since academic integrity is based on the originality of a student's work, no student may submit an assignment that contains an excessive amount of properly cited material. The standards and violations of academic honesty shall be further defined by the individual instructor (in accordance with college policy). Individual instructors reserve the right to employ any means of proving academic dishonesty. Students have the right to contest a plagiarism or cheating claim through the college appeals process.

4. Course participation is tantamount to successful learning. Quiz and exam grades are not always indicative of a student's actual performance in a class. Consequently, the instructor reserves the right to adjust a student's grade for better or worse based on class performance. Consistent engagement, excellent conduct, and a clear thirst for knowledge may be rewarded with a higher grade. Conversely, poor conduct, such as inappropriate behavior or derogatory language may result in a lowered grade or complete dismissal from the class. The final decision falls on the instructor's discretion.

**Course Grade:**

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

- Exams: 50%
- Civics Exercises: 25%
- Weekly Assignments: 25%
- Attendance: Students must attend/complete 80% of the course to receive a passing grade.

**Grade Distribution**

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- D = 60-69
- F = 59 or below

**Texts, Materials, and Supplies:**

- All the required materials for this course are provided to the students in Canvas at no cost.

**Recommended Readings:**

- All recommended readings are provided in Canvas at no cost to the students.

**Other:**

- Courses conducted via video conferencing may be recorded and shared for instructional purposes by the instructor.
- For current texts and materials, use the following link to access bookstore listings: <https://www.panolacollegestore.com>
- For testing services, use the following link: <https://www.panola.edu/student-services/student-support/academic-testing-center>
- If any student in this class has special classroom or testing needs because of a physical learning or emotional condition, please contact the ADA Student Coordinator in Support Services located

in the Charles C. Matthews Student Center or go to <https://www.panola.edu/student-services/student-support/disability-support-services> for more information.

- Panola College welcomes pregnant and parenting students as a part of the student body. This institution is committed to providing support and adaptations for a successful educational experience for pregnant and parenting students. Students experiencing a need for accommodations related to pregnancy or parenting will find a Pregnancy and Parenting Accommodations Request form in *The Pathfinder* or may request the form from the course instructor.
- Withdrawing from a course is the student's responsibility. Students who do not attend class and who do not withdraw will receive the grade earned for the course.
- Student Handbook, *The Pathfinder*: <https://www.panola.edu/> (located at the bottom under students)