

Term: Fall 2015

Course Title: Texas Government

Course Prefix: POSC

Course No.: 1123

Section No.: P03

Department of Division of Social Work,
Behavioral and Political
Sciences

College of Brailsford College of Arts and
Sciences

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Office Hours: Monday 10AM – 12PM ; Wednesday 1PM – 5PM; Friday 1PM – 5PM and by
Appointment

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesday – Thursday 9AM – 12PM

Course Location: **NSCI 101 – 12:00 – 12:50 (MWF)**

Catalog Description: Surveys the origin and development of the Texas Constitution; the structure and powers of Texas government, including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; local government; areas of political participation and public policy in Texas. (GOVT 2306)

Prerequisites: None

Co-requisites: None

Required Text: *Texas Politics*, e-book version, 2015. The Texas Politics Project at Soomo Learning, ISBN: 978-0-9911355-9-2.

**Recommended
Text/Readings:
Access to Learning
Resources:**

PVAMU Library:
phone: (936) 261-1500;
web: <http://www.pvamu/library/>
University Bookstore:
phone: (936) 261-1990;
web: <https://www.bkstr.com/Home/10001-10734-1?demoKey=d>

**Course Goals or
Overview:** The goal of this course is to stimulate students' thinking and understanding of the Texas political system with special emphasis on institutions, public policy and the relationship with the national government.

Course Outcomes/Objectives

See below for how specific course outcomes align with the Government/Political Science objectives of the PVAMU Core Curriculum. *At the end of this course, the student will be able to:*

Course outcome aligns with . . .	PVAMU Core Objective
1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.	CO #1 Critical Thinking
2. Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.	CO #1 Critical Thinking
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.	CO #1 Critical Thinking
4. Differentiate the structure and powers of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.	CO #1 Critical Thinking
5. Assess the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.	CO #1 Critical Thinking
6. Analyze the state and local election process in Texas.	CO #1: Critical Thinking
7. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens of Texas.	CO #5 Social Responsibility
8. Write a research paper critiquing an important public policy issue in Texas.	CO: #2: Communication
9. Write an essay exam on debates and divisions surrounding a key policy issue in Texas.	CO: #2: Communication
10. Properly document a research paper with a reference list and in-text citations.	CO #6: Personal Responsibility

Course Requirements & Evaluation Methods

This course will utilize the following instruments to determine students' proficiency of the learning outcomes:

Exams – There will be four multiple choice tests consisting of 50 questions each. The critical thinking and social responsibility core objectives will be stressed on these exams. Exam questions will also test students' civic knowledge regarding such things as the role and structure of government and non-government institutions in Texas. They will also test students' critical thinking skills by asking them to differentiate between levels of government and compare and contrast the Texas experience with that of the national government.

Writing Assignments – There will be two writing assignments, the first of which will be used for assessment purposes. The critical thinking, communication, social responsibility and personal responsibility core objectives will be emphasized. The short research paper will be used to assess students' ability to properly conduct, deploy and then cite research sources as well as their ability to communicate the strengths and weaknesses of evidence presented in disparate source materials. The second assignment will gauge the student's critical thinking and critical reading skills as students will have to read a contemporary piece of scholarship and analyze the key components and message.

The following grading matrix indicates the relative weights of each instrument used to determine student grades:

Grading Matrix

Instrument	Value (in points)	Percent of Course grade
Exam 1	100	20
Exam 2	100	20
Exam 3 (the lowest score of exams 1-3 is dropped)	100	20
Exam 4	100	20
Writing Assignment 1 – Short Assignment	100	20
Writing Assignment 2 – Essay Quiz	100	20
Total:		100%

Grade determination: A=90-100 B=80-89 C=70-79 D=60-69 F=Below 60

Course Procedures

Exam Policy: Exams should be taken as scheduled. No makeup examinations will be allowed except under documented emergencies (See Student Handbook and description below). The lowest score between exams 1-3 will be dropped. You cannot drop the final exam grade. Exams are **NOT** cumulative. **Exams will be given in class. You are expected to bring a scantron and pencil. No technology is allowed.**

Submission of Writing Assignments Policy: All written assignments must be typed, in 10- or 12-point font, double-spaced and stapled only (if more than one page). **No late assignments will be taken under any circumstances.** Assignments are due in class on the due date. Students cannot turn in other student's assignments. Only assignments turned in during class or submitted (as required) through the E-Courses Assignment Tab/Dropbox will be accepted for grading. Assignments sent via email, slipped under my office door or stuck in my campus mailbox will NOT be accepted for grading. Assignments do not need a cover page, but they do need a title. Papers are graded according to the following: content, organization, writing, and research/reference and will be given on a 100 point scale. Rubrics will be provided for each assignment. If you notice a grade is not posted after seven days, it is incumbent on you to notify the instructor.

Political Science Program Policy on Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious academic crime and the Political Science Program has a strict, rigorous enforcement policy for students who commit plagiarism. In general, plagiarism is using another person's words, statistics, and/or ideas as if they were your own. Plagiarism, which is formally defined in the University Rules and Procedures section of this syllabus, can come in many forms, such as directly quoting a source without quotation marks, directly quoting a source without giving a reference citation, paraphrasing a source without giving a reference citation and so forth. It is incumbent on students to seek help from the instructor or other University resources to avoid even the appearance of plagiarism in their work. Any student caught committing ANY type of plagiarism in a Political Science course will receive one OR MORE of the following punishments, depending on the severity of the offense and in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct:

1. Grade Penalty (an F for the assignment and/or an F for the course);
2. Letter of Reprimand
3. Probation
4. Suspension
5. Dismissal from Academic Program
6. Expulsion from the university.

Students must consult the University's Code of Conduct for other forms of academic dishonesty and the punishments.

Writing Assignment #1: Due on or before Thursday, Sept. 17 in class.

Writing assignment on immigration. This assignment requires you to research issues regarding Texas immigration policy. Here are the following requirements for this assignment:

Since *US V. Arizona* (2010), immigration law has been seen as a national issue, but many states are still trying to address the issue. Go to the website of the Texas Legislature (<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>) and conduct a search for any legislation relating to immigration at the state level that has been considered by the Texas Legislature in the last 10 years. A bill is just a proposed law that has not been signed by the Texas Governor. Write a two page (500 words) opinion/editorial paper about this proposed law. An opinion/editorial paper is a well-researched essay about a topic in which you advocate for some specific course of action. These short papers are usually published in newspapers or as blogs on websites.

Your paper must:

- 1.) identify the title of the bill, the name of the primary sponsor and his or her title, the political party of the sponsor and his or her state;
- 2.) provide a brief summary of two provisions or specific parts of the bill. Basically, describe at least two things that the bill would do if enacted into law;
- 3.) address whether or not you agree with the bill and why. This question can also be addressed by discussion of the immigration issue as a whole and using this law as a case study;
- 4.) discuss immigration more broadly and list two good things and two bad things about immigration. These should be cited from some credible or scholarly source;
- 5.) in the conclusion, discuss at least two ways in which people can get more involved with this issue. These

should be meaningful courses of action in which citizens can try to influence public policy. It could even be a suggestion for your “readers” on how they can get involved if they care about the issue; and

6.) be based on scholarly research and cite at least three (3) reliable, quality references from the media and/or the internet within the body of the paper using the parenthetical citation style (see below for link). One of the citations MUST come from the class textbook, and NONE may be from ANY encyclopedia, including Wikipedia. For full credit, you must have three sources and at least three citations. You must also have a properly formatted reference section at the end of the paper. The paper’s in-text citations AND works cited section must conform to the format found in the examples from this website: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html (be sure to click on the Author-Date tab!).

- a. Students must be very careful when they examine internet websites and provide at minimum the author/publisher, date published or accessed, and the title of the article or website. The URL should also be available.
- b. Failure to cite within the text or to provide a properly formatted reference list will result in a zero for the paper.
- c. For full credit, you have to upload the paper into Taskstream and turn it in during class. I will show you how to use Taskstream in class.

Your report should be about two pages of text (not counting the works cited section). This assignment is due in hard copy form on its assigned due date. No late assignments will be taken under any circumstances. All papers must have a title, but not a separate title page, which is a waste of paper. Assignments that are sent via email, slipped under my office door or stuck in my campus mailbox will not be accepted for grading. Only assignments turned in during class will be accepted for grading. Papers are graded according to the following four criteria: 1) content; 2) organization; 3) quality of writing; and 4) quality of research sources and reference citation formats. . The assignment must be uploaded into the E-Courses system and the Taskstream System.

Writing Assignment #2: Essay Exam on Friday November 05, 2015 at 11:55 (Upload into E-Courses)

Students must read “Texas Judicial Selection and Reform: A Case Study”. This will be provided via E-Courses. Students must be prepared to come to class to take a short essay quiz based on this required reading. Blue books are needed and may be purchased from the bookstore.

Electronic Communication: Notes and other course materials may be posted on Moodle/Ecourses, which is available at <http://ecourses.pvamu.edu>. You are expected to use this website as a resource for the class. The University also maintains an email account for you. Periodically, I may send you class notices or other information.

I expect you to check your Prairie View A&M email account at least once a day. If you have problems accessing your account, please call (936) 261-2525. Not having access to your Panther Email is not an excuse for missing important information. The new Moodle/Ecourses is heavily reliant on your PVAMU email. I check Ecourses messages less frequently than my Prairie View email, so my PV email – nkmitchell@pvamu.edu – is by far the best way to communicate with me.

Make-up Policy: You will only be allowed to make up an exam or assignment if you have a valid excuse. Valid excuses include *documented* illness, school or business trips, or family crises. Without proper documentation, there will be no makeup assignments. **If granted a make-up, you have a period of three (3) class days to schedule your make-up assignment or exam. After that point, the grade becomes a zero.** Please provide written documentation for why you need to make up an assignment from a university official, doctor, police officer, or coach. Student athletes must notify me **BEFORE** they attend an event to represent the school and **MUST** be proactive in getting their assignments completed. Make up exams may be an essay/short answer test or a modified version of the original exam. Any assigned extra credit cannot be made up.

Grade Groveling Policy: Students concerned about their grades should endeavor to attend all class sessions and complete all work to the best of their ability. Students **earn** high grades, based on demonstrating mastery of the subject matter and not based on what they want or need for their overall GPA. Therefore, no grade groveling will be entertained and no “do-overs” allowed.

Formatting Documents: Microsoft Word is the standard word processing tool used at PVAMU. If you’re using other word processors, be sure to use the “save as” tool and save the document in either the Microsoft Word, Rich-Text, or plain text format. All writing assignments must use acceptable citation style and document all sources. **No assignments will be accepted via email under any circumstances unless instructions are given.**

YOUR INSTRUCTOR CANNOT READ documents from Apple Products. Convert to .pdf, .rtf or .doc/.docx.

Course Content: Topics and Readings

16 WEEK CALENDAR

Week One: 8/24/2015 – 8/28/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

Course Introduction: Political Culture
Chapter 1
NA

Week Two: 08/31/2015 – 9/04/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

Texas Constitution
Chapter 2
NA

Week Three: 09/07/2015 - 9/11/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

Review and Exam One
Chapter 1 and 2 Review
Exam One, Thursday, September 10.

Week Four: 09/14/2015 - 09/18/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

The Texas Legislature
Chapter 3
Assignment #1 is due, Thursday, September 17.

Week Five: 09/21/2015 – 09/25/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

The Legislative Process in Texas
Chapter 4
NA

Week Six: 09/28/2015 - 10/02/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

The Executive Branch / Bureaucracy in Texas
Chapter 5
NA

Week Seven: 10/05/2015 - 10/09/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

The Governor of Texas
Chapter 6
NA

Week Eight: 10/12/2015 - 10/16/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

Review and Mid-term (Exam Two)
Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6
Exam Two, Thursday, October 15.

Week Nine: 10/19/2015 – 10/23/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

Texas Justice and The Texas Judiciary
Chapter 7
NA

Week Ten: 10/26/2015 – 10/30/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

Public Policy
Chapter 11
NA

Week Eleven: 11/02/2015 – 11/06/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

Local Government
Chapter 12
Assign. #2: Essay Exam on Assigned reading, Thursday, November 5.

Week Twelve: 11/09/2015 – 11/13/2015

Chapter (s):
Assignment (s):

Review and Exam Three
Chapters 7, 11, 12
Exam Three, Thursday, November 12.

Week Thirteen: 11/16/2015 – 11/20/2015

Chapter (s):

Elections, Campaigns, Voting and Political Parties
Chapters 8 and 9

Assignment (s):

Week Fourteen: 11/23/2015 – 11/27/2015

Chapter (s):

Assignment (s):

Interest Groups

Chapter 10.

(November 26 – November 29 Thanksgiving Holiday)

Week Fifteen: 11/30/2015 – 12/04/2015

Chapter (s):

Assignment (s):

Review and Final Exam Period Begins

Chapters 8, 9 and 10

Week Sixteen: 12/07/2015 – 12/11/2015

Final Exam Period Concludes.

University Rules and Procedures

Disability statement (See Student Handbook): Students with disabilities, including learning disabilities, who wish to request accommodations in class should register with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal laws, a student requesting special accommodations must provide documentation of their disability to the SSD coordinator. Please contact 936-261-3585 if you have questions.

Academic misconduct (See Student Handbook): You are expected to practice academic honesty in every aspect of this course and all other courses. Make sure you are familiar with your Student Handbook, especially the section on academic misconduct. Students who engage in academic misconduct are subject to university disciplinary procedures.

Forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Cheating: deception in which a student misrepresents that he/she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he/she has not mastered; giving or receiving aid unauthorized by the instructor on assignments or examinations.
2. Academic misconduct: tampering with grades or taking part in obtaining or distributing any part of a scheduled test.
3. Fabrication: use of invented information or falsified research.
4. Plagiarism: unacknowledged quotation and/or paraphrase of someone else's words, ideas, or data as one's own in work submitted for credit. Failure to identify information or essays from the Internet and submitting them as one's own work also constitutes plagiarism.

Nonacademic misconduct (See Student Handbook): The University respects the rights of instructors to teach and students to learn. Maintenance of these rights requires campus conditions that do not impede their exercise. Campus behavior that interferes with either (1) the instructor's ability to conduct the class, (2) the inability of other students to profit from the instructional program, or (3) campus behavior that interferes with the rights of others will not be tolerated. An individual engaging in such disruptive behavior may be subject to disciplinary action. Such incidents will be adjudicated by the Dean of Students under nonacademic procedures.

Sexual misconduct (See Student Handbook): Sexual harassment of students and employers at Prairie View A&M University is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Any member of the university community violating this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

Attendance Policy: Prairie View A&M University requires regular class attendance. Excessive absences will result in lowered grades. Excessive absenteeism, whether excused or unexcused, may result in a student's course grade being reduced or in assignment of a grade of "F". Attendance will be taken starting on day one of class, however absences are accumulated starting week 2. For the purposes of this class missing more than five (5) classes, without excuse, will result in a letter grade deduction.

Late / Tardy Policy: Attending class on time is important. Class will start at the scheduled time and will end at the scheduled time. If you come to class more than 10 minutes late, you will be asked to leave class and you will be counted absent.

Student Academic Appeals Process: Authority and responsibility for assigning grades to students rests with the faculty. However, in those instances where students believe that miscommunication, errors, or unfairness of any kind may have adversely affected the instructor's assessment of their academic performance, the student has a right to appeal by the procedure listed in the Undergraduate Catalog and by doing so within thirty days of receiving the grade or experiencing any other problematic academic event that prompted the complaint.

Please see me first if you feel that you have been treated unfairly. I will gladly work with you. If we are unable to reach a satisfactory conclusion, then you may contact my supervisor in WOOL 102 or x3202.

Technical Considerations for Online and Web-Assist Courses

Minimum Hardware and Software Requirements:

- Pentium with Windows XP or PowerMac with OS 9
- Internet provider with SLIP or PPP
- 64MB RAM
- 15" monitor, 800x600, color or 16 bit
- Microphone and recording software
- Netscape Communicator ver. 4.61 or Microsoft Internet Explorer ver. 5.0 /plug-ins
- Participants should have a basic proficiency of the following computer skills:
 - Sending and receiving email
- A working knowledge of the Internet
- Proficiency in Microsoft Word
- Proficiency in the Acrobat PDF Reader
- Basic knowledge of Windows or Mac O.S.
- 56K modem or network access
- 8X or greater CD-ROM
- Hard drive with 40MB available space
- Sound card w/speakers
- Keyboard & mouse

Netiquette (online etiquette): students are expected to participate in all discussions and virtual classroom chats when directed to do so. Students are to be respectful and courteous to others in the discussions. Foul or abusive language will not be tolerated. When referring to information from books, websites or articles, please use APA standards to reference sources.

Technical Support: Students should call the Prairie View A&M University Helpdesk at 936-261-2525 for technical issues with accessing your online course. The helpdesk is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week. For other technical questions regarding your online course, call the Office of Distance Learning at 936-261-3290 or 936-261-3282

Communication Expectations and Standards: All emails or discussion postings will receive a response from the instructor within 48 hours. You can send email anytime that is convenient to you, but I check my email messages continuously during the day throughout the work-week (Monday through Friday). I will respond to email messages during the work-week by the close of business (5:00 pm) on the day following my receipt of them. Emails that I receive on Friday will be responded to by the close of business on the following Monday.

In your email communication, please notify me of your NAME, Course, and Course Time, so that I can quickly respond. **The most effective way to communicate with me is through my PVAMU email account:** nkmitchell@pvamu.edu.