

Collin College Course Syllabus  
Fall 2017

Course Number: GOVT 2306

Course Title: Texas Government (Texas Constitution and Topics)

Instructor's Information:

Name: Tiffany Cartwright, Ph.D.

Office: B305H

Office Hours: MWF 9:00-9:50 AM

TR 8:00-8:20 and 10:00-10:55 AM

MW 1:30-2:00 (*online only*)

and by appointment

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In case of emergency, please contact Office of Academic Affairs, B122G, 214-491-6270

Class Information:

Section: C08

Meeting Times: TR 8:30-9:45 AM

Meeting Location: Central Park Campus, room LA217

Course 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

Course Credit Hours: 3    Lecture Hours: 3

Placement Assessment(s): Placement in ENGL 1301; College-Level Reading. *Consult the Testing Center Director if you have questions about an assessment level.*

Course Resources: (**optional**) Anthony Champagne and Edward J. Harpham. *Governing Texas: An Introduction to Texas Politics*, 3rd Edition, W. W. Norton & Co., ISBN: 978-0-393-28367-9  
*There is also an eBook edition of the book that you can purchase instead if you prefer. There is also a copy of the book on reserve in the Central Park Campus library.*

Supplies: Students will need at least three 882-E scantron forms for exams. Other supplies will be announced as needed.

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution. (Critical thinking)
2. Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government. (Social responsibility)

3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas. (Communication skills)
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government. (Communication skills)
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas. (Critical thinking; social responsibility)
6. Analyze the state and local election process. (Personal responsibility)
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens. (Personal responsibility; social responsibility)
8. Analyze issues, policies and political culture of Texas. (Critical thinking)

Methods of Evaluation:

Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	20%
Four Assignment Options, worth 10% each	40%
Total	100%

*Exams:* Exams will cover information presented in class. You will receive a study guide in class as we go along of what you should know from each section of the course. This information is a broad check list that will help you study for the exams. These exams are not cumulative, meaning they'll only cover the information we've gone over since the last exam. The final exam (Thursday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 AM) will be an optional cumulative exam covering information from the whole semester. If you choose to take this exam and you do better on it, this grade will replace your lowest exam score. You must let me know by Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup> if you plan to take the optional final exam. All of these exams will be of the multiple choice and true/false variety.

*Make-Up Exams:* Make-up exams will only be given for valid and documented reasons (illness, funerals, etc. – not vacations or sleeping in) as determined by the professor. Should you miss an exam, bring in your documentation to me first, and then we can proceed from there. Please keep in mind that all make-up exams, if granted, will be written exams and will be much harder. All make-up exams must be completed on or before December 8, 2017.

*Assignment Options:* Students must complete at least 4 of the following assignment options, each worth 10% of your final course grade. It is up to you to decide which 4 of the following assignments you choose to do. If you choose to do more than 4, then only the 4 highest grades will be counted toward your final grade for the class. The details of each assignment and deadlines for each assignment are listed below.

*Assignment Option #1 – Attendance and Participation:* Yes, you can get points just for showing up to class and being an engaged student! This assignment has two parts:

1. **Class Participation, 75%:** You are expected to participate in class every day, which means you need to contribute and join in with the class by asking questions, answering questions, and contributing your own constructive thoughts and comments. Participation affects how well you remember, understand, and apply information. This means that full

participation credit will only be given if you participate in class discussions, group activities, etc. If you show up to class but do not ever participate, then you will have a grade of zero for participation, so raise your hand and speak up! You will have two “freebie” days for participation, so if you have some sort of emergency one day and cannot be in class to participate, don’t worry – it won’t count against you. There is no participation grade given for exam days

2. **Attendance, 25%:** Attendance will be taken every class period, and please keep in mind that full credit will only be given to students who arrive on time and do not leave early. You will have two “freebie” days for your attendance, so if you have some sort of emergency one day and cannot attend, don’t worry – it won’t count against you. Do not waste your freebie days. You will not get more for any reason! There are no excused absences except for religious holidays and for official college business. There is no attendance grade given for exam days.

*Assignment Option #2 – Analyzing Texas Worksheet:* Texas is a complicated state with a long history, many different demographic groups, and a very unique state government. For this assignment, you’ll need to print out and complete [this worksheet](#). Your completed worksheet must be turned in by the beginning of class on **Tuesday, September 19<sup>th</sup>**. Only hard copies (on paper!) will be accepted. No late submissions will be accepted.

*Assignment Option #3 – Letter to your State Legislator:* This assignment should help you get to know your own state legislator! This assignment is broken down into two parts:

1. **Current Event Article, 10%:** You’ll need to pick a current event about Texas politics in the news to write about. Choose any news article about your current event (dated August 28, 2017 or later) from a newspaper, magazine, or other reputable news outlet. Print out that article and turn it in with your letter. You must note on there where and when the article is from, for example, “From CNN, published August 28, 2017.”
2. **Letter, 90%:** You’ll need to write a letter about the current event you’ve chosen – yes, it should actually be formatted as a letter. Your letter should...
  - be addressed to the correct Texas State Representative or Texas State Senator who represents you,
  - explain that you are their [constituent](#),
  - describe the current event chosen with some detail,
  - explain your position on the issue,
  - ask for their opinion,
  - use language suitable for communicating with a state legislator,
  - be typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman size 12 font, with 1 inch margins on all sides,
  - and the body of your letter should be a minimum of 1 page in length.

You’ll need to turn in your letter and current event article (on paper!) to me by the beginning of class on **Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup>**. Only hard copies will be accepted. No late submissions will be accepted.

*Assignment Option #4 – Texas Fakebook Profile:* Texas has had many remarkable governors who have guided our state through all sorts of historic events. For this assignment, you’ll need to print out and complete [this worksheet](#) to create a “Fakebook” profile on a former Texas

governor. Your completed worksheet must be turned in by the beginning of class on **Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>**. Only hard copies (on paper!) will be accepted. No late submissions will be accepted

*Assignment Option #5 – Experiencing Local Government:* For this assignment, you'll need to attend (either in person or [virtually](#)) one Collin College Board of Trustees Meeting. Here are the possible meeting dates this semester that you can attend:

- Tuesday, September 26, 2017 @ 7:00 pm
- Tuesday, October 24 @ 7:00 pm
- Tuesday, November 14 @ 7:00 pm

All of these meetings usually last for about 1½ to 2 hours. They are all held at the Collin Higher Education Center, room 139 (Northeast corner of Hwy 121 and 75 Central, 3452 Spur 399 McKinney, TX 75069) and are open to the public.

After you have watched the meeting, answer the following questions:

1. Identify all 9 of our board members. Indicate who is the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. Name one interesting fact that you have learned about one of them. You may want to use this [website](#) for assistance.
2. Describe how the meeting began.
3. Describe one of the *Agenda Items* discussed at the meeting. Did the board do anything about that agenda item at the meeting? (You can follow along in the agenda by going to this [website](#) and clicking on the date of the meeting you're attending on the right-hand side of the screen.)
4. Describe one of the *Information Reports* presented at the meeting.
5. Discuss one *Announcement* (usually about awards, accomplishments, program updates, etc.) made by the college president at the end of the meeting.
6. You may have noticed that board meetings are conducted using parliamentary procedure ("second," "so move," "all in favor," etc.). Why do you think this is used for meetings instead of more casual conversational terms?
7. Local government, especially our own Collin College Board of Trustees, has a very direct impact on you. Do you feel you were able to follow along with the meeting and understand most of what was happening? Why or why not?

Responses must be typed (Times New Roman, size 12 font). All work should be your own.

Answers will be graded for completeness and accuracy. You must turn in your responses to me (on paper!) at the beginning of class on **Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup>**. No late submissions will be accepted.

*Assignment Option #6 – Current Events Journal:* For each section of the course we cover (there are 6 sections listed below in the course calendar), you'll be following current events! Your current events journal must be turned in by the beginning of class on **Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup>**. Only hard copies (on paper!) will be accepted. No late submissions will be accepted. Here are the details of how this project grade is broken down:

1. **Find Articles, 50%:** Print/cut out 6 articles – one that relates to each section of the class listed below in the [Course Calendar](#). Each article should...
  - be from a newspaper, magazine, or other reputable news outlet;
  - be current, meaning it should be dated August 28, 2017 or later; and

- clearly say where and when the article is from, or, if not, please note it on there, for example, “From CNN, published August 28, 2017.”

If an article does not meet these three criteria, you will not receive points for that article.

2. **Summary Paragraphs, 50%:** For each article you’ve selected, you should...

- write a few sentences to summarize each article and
- explain the direct and specific connection to the section of the course that the article corresponds to.

Each article summary should be one short paragraph, for a total of 6 short paragraphs (one for each article). Responses must be typed (Times New Roman, size 12 font).

Grades are not curved. Letter grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	90-100%	
B	80-89.9%	If at any point during the semester you have concerns about your final grade, please come see me in person to figure out what you can do to improve.
C	70-79.9%	
D	60-69.9%	
F	59.9% and under	

Withdrawal Policy: See the current [Collin Registration Guide](#) for the last day to withdraw.

Dropping a class means that you remove yourself from the class up to the census date. Dropped classes do not appear on your official transcript. You may now drop online up to the census date. That last date to drop is Monday, September 11, 2017. Withdrawal from a class means that you remove yourself from the class after the census date. Withdrawn classes appear as a W on your official transcript but are not calculated in your grade point average. Withdrawals are not permitted online. Please read the Fall 2017 Registration Guide or contact the admissions office for information on how to withdraw. That last date to withdraw from this class is Friday, October 20, 2017. It is the *student’s responsibility* to drop the course; I cannot do it for you. Students who fail to drop the course and remain on the roll after the drop date will receive a performance grade!

Americans with Disabilities Act: Collin College will adhere to all applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal opportunity. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the ACCESS office, CPC-D118-I or 972.548.6816 (V/TTD: 972.881.5950) to arrange for appropriate accommodations. See the current [Collin Student Handbook](#) for additional information.

Collin College Academic Policies: See the current [Collin Student Handbook](#).

Scholastic Dishonesty & Academic Ethics: **7-2.2 Scholastic Dishonesty** Every member of the Collin College community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted for credit is expected to be the student’s own work. Collin College may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of scholastic dishonesty. While specific examples are listed below, this is not an exhaustive list and scholastic dishonesty may encompass other conduct, including any conduct through electronic or computerized means. Scholastic dishonesty shall involve, but is not limited to, one or more of the following acts:

**General Scholastic Dishonesty** includes, but is not limited to, statements, acts, or omissions related to applications for enrollment, credit or class work, research, and/or the award of a degree; falsifying

academic records; using annotated texts or teacher’s editions; using information about exams posted on the Internet or other electronic medium; leaving a test site without authority; failing to secure test materials; and/or submitting work that is not one’s own. Students are expected to record honestly and accurately the results of all their research. Falsification of research results shall include misrepresentations, distortions, or omissions in data or reports on research.

**Plagiarism** is the use of an author’s words or ideas as if they were one’s own without giving credit to the source, including, but not limited to, failure to acknowledge a direct quotation or patchwriting. In the preparation of all papers and other written work, students must distinguish their own ideas and knowledge from information derived from other sources. The term “sources” includes not only published primary and secondary materials, but also information and opinions gained directly from other people. Whenever ideas or facts are derived from a source, the source must be indicated by the student.

**Cheating** is the willful giving or receiving of information in an unauthorized manner during an examination or to complete an assignment; collaborating with another student during an examination without authority; using, buying, selling, soliciting, stealing, or otherwise obtaining course assignments and/or examination questions in advance; unauthorized copying of computer or Internet files; using someone else’s work for assignments as if it were one’s own; submitting or resubmitting an assignment in whole or in part (i.e. recycling an assignment) for more than one (1) class or institution without permission from each of the professors; or any other dishonest means of attempting to fulfill the requirements of a course.

**Collusion** is intentionally or unintentionally aiding or attempting to aid another in an act of scholastic dishonesty, including but not limited to, failing to secure academic work; providing a paper or project to another student; providing an inappropriate level of assistance or unauthorized collaboration; communicating answers to a classmate about an examination or any other course assignment; removing tests or answer sheets from a test site; and allowing a classmate to copy answers.

In cases where an incident report has been filed for an alleged violation of scholastic dishonesty, the faculty member is requested to delay posting a grade for the academic work in question until the case is final. Students found responsible for scholastic dishonesty offenses will receive an authorized disciplinary penalty or penalties from the Dean of Students Office. The student may also receive an academic penalty in the course where the scholastic dishonesty took place. The faculty member will determine the appropriate academic penalty.

Academic Penalty: Any student who has been found by the Dean of Students Office to have been academically dishonest due to plagiarism, cheating, or collusion on an assignment will receive a grade of zero for the assignment. In addition, students may not submit assignments for this class that students are planning to submit or have already submitted for another course without first obtaining express written consent from me *and* the professor(s) of the other course(s). Doing so without obtaining this permission from me and the professor(s) of the other course(s) will result in a grade of zero for the assignment.

Course Calendar: (subject to change with appropriate notice)

The readings listed below are optional and refer to the *Governing Texas* textbook.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
August 29-31	Syllabus and Course Introduction	
September 5-14	Section 1: Welcome to Texas & the Texas Constitution(s)	Chapters 1 & 2

September 19	Analyzing Texas Worksheet Due (Assignment #2)	
September 19-28	Section 2: Texas and the Nation & Local Government in Texas	Chapters 3 & 13
October 3	Exam #1	
October 5-17	Section 3: The Texas Legislature	Chapter 7
October 17	Letter to your State Legislator Due (Assignment #3)	
October 19-31	Section 4: The Texas Executive Branch	Chapter 8
October 31	Texas Fakebook Profile Due (Assignment #4)	
November 2	Exam #2	
November 7-16	Section 5: The Texas Judiciary & Crime and Corrections Policy	Chapters 9 & 10
November 16	Experiencing Local Government (Assignment #5)	
November 21-30	Section 6: Political Behavior: Political Parties, Elections, & Interest Groups and Lobbying	Chapters 4, 5, & 6
December 5	Exam #3	
December 7	Current Events Journal Due (Assignment #6)	
December 14	Optional Final Exam @ 8:30 AM	

Religious Holidays: Please refer to the [Collin Student Handbook](#).

Classroom Behavior: No, my notes from class will not be posted anywhere, so it would be a good idea to take notes during class. Why? You'll remember things better if you have to write them down. Should you miss a day of class, it's advised that you look over the assigned readings and try to get notes from a study partner. During class, please turn off all cell phones, pagers, mp3 players, tablets, laptops, and anything else electronic. Setting your phone to vibrate does not count as being turned off. The [student handbook](#) (7-2.4S) specifically bars the use of media or telecommunications devices during class. Laptops/phones/tablets/any other electronic devices are not allowed in class unless you need it for ADA purposes and have appropriate documentation from the ACCESS office. During class, please do not text, read the newspaper, do homework for this or any other class, or partake in any other inappropriate behavior, as you may have points deducted, be asked to leave the classroom, or be reported to the Dean of Students for a code of conduct violation. If you have a valid reason for needing your phone on during class, please let me know before class, and we will work out appropriate accommodations for you. On exam days, baseball caps and watches will not be allowed to be worn by students. Disruptive behavior will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Note: The professor reserves the right to make changes or modifications, if necessary, to this syllabus. Any major changes or modifications will be provided to the students in printed form.