



*All new states are invested, more or less, by a class of noisy, second-rate men who are always in favor of rash and extreme measures, but Texas was absolutely overrun by such men.*

Sam Houston (1793-1863)

# GOVT 2306: TEXAS STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

ROY EDWARD CASAGRANDA, PhD  
Professor of Government

Spring 2024

January 16 – May 12

Sections: 83282 Lec 048

Time: MW 9:00-10:20am

Classroom: RG10, rm 1314

Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com/nsi-rnow-gou>

Lectures Play list: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLG1NADbefbEM50zrWdQMHi0U02ywptjL>

Google Classroom: <https://classroom.google.com/c/NjU0NTI2OTc2OTg3>

code: nq4hd5q

Office: RG30 3114

Office Hours: MTWTh 10:20-10:30am

MTWTh 11:50-12:00 noon

MTWTh 1:20-2:15pm

You must make an appointment to meet with me. Ask at the end of class.

OER Textbook: <https://www.oercommons.org/courseware/8453>

Websites <http://gov.casagranda.com>  
<http://theaustinschool.com>

## SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTOR

This course has a supplemental instruction. Her name is Claire Allen. Her email is [claire.allen@g.austincc.edu](mailto:claire.allen@g.austincc.edu). She will be conducting online study sessions during the semester.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

I do not lecture from the textbook, but I do test you on that material. This is a sophomore level college course, and it is treated as such. The material will not be spoon-fed. You are expected to be an autonomous, self-directed, adult capable of academic level analysis, academic writing, and adult conversation of a sophomore in college. You are expected to keep up with the readings, attend lectures or listen to the recordings, keep up with due dates, and otherwise function like an adult. That means catching up on missed material without contacting the professor. Get notes from a classmate. Follow the syllabus. The professor is a resource. Ask the professor intellectual questions. The professor is not your mother.

The purpose of the course is to acquaint the student with Texas state and local government. The student will be introduced to: (a) a framework for analyzing Texas politics and government; (b) the constitutional basis for Texas government; (c) the processes of Texas politics and government; (d) the institutions of Texas politics and government; and (e) policies of Texas government. Specific behavioral objectives will accompany each unit of instruction.

Additionally, it is hoped that students will gain: an understanding of federalism; an awareness of the ways in which government affects/is affected by its citizens; political thinking as part of the process of becoming a more effective citizen; critical thinking skills; and a better understanding of the theoretical nature of government.

The course is divided up into two parts. Part 1 will provide an overview of elections, Texas history, the Texas Constitution, and federalism. In Part 2 we will look at institutional elements of policy generation and implementation, the bureaucracy, the Texas Legislature, the governor, and the judiciary.

While this is primarily a lecture course, the class may also include videos, transparencies, role-playing simulations, internet activities, writing assignments, and classroom discussions. Students must attend and participate regularly.

*Think of how stupid the average person is, and realize half of them are stupider than that.*

George Carlin

## CLASS POLICIES

### LECTURES

This is a fully online live lecture course. It is in principle exactly like my face-to-face sections except that it is conducted online. As such it is not busy worker intensive, but that puts the burden to perform on you, the college student. You are not required to attend lectures live. They will be uploaded to the [Austin School YouTube Channel](#), where you can watch them at your convenience. Some of you will be inclined to treat the lectures as optional. This is a mistake. Your essays are graded on your ability to synthesize and analyze the lecture material. In other words, if you do not keep up with the lectures there is little chance that you will be able to get passing grades on the Exams. You are not expected to agree with the lecture material, but you must address it to get a passing grade. Answers that ignore the lecture material will be given a failing grade. Additionally, attending the lecture live, will give you access to a large quantity of [auxiliary points](#).

You are encouraged to speak during lectures to add to the conversation or ask relevant questions. Do not type messages to the classroom, unless you are sending a link to something that you looked up. Such texting is usually disruptive and slows down the class considerably. If you have something to say, say it. Having said that, because of the awkwardness of this format, we will each at some point talk over someone, including me. Please do not worry or feel bad about this. In face-to-face conversation we give each other visual cues to indicate that we are done speaking. These are seriously hampered with the online format. We must each do our best to not talk over each other and we must not get upset when it happens.

### STUDENTS ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Students with Disabilities: Each ACC campus offers support services for students with documented physical or psychological disabilities. Students with disabilities must request reasonable accommodations through the Student Accessibility Services Office on the campus where they expect to take the majority of their classes. Students are encouraged to do this three weeks before the start of the semester.

### VOICEMAIL

Voicemail is abused. Most voicemail that is left is trivial or deals with trivial matters. Most people who leave voicemail ramble. It is not a good thing to waste people's time. I will not check voicemail. If you wish to discuss something, please make arrangements to meet with me during office hours by Google Meet.

### EMAIL

I do not like email. I realize that we live in a society where people consider email to be a normal means of communication and I will check it, but it is better to see me in person concerning any issue before or after class, during office hours using Google Meet. Emailing the professor about material that can be found on the syllabus or because you lost the syllabus makes you look bad. Its online!

I will not respond to email addresses that are clearly not your own. In other words, if you are using your parent's email, then I will not respond to any emails from such addresses. For example, if your name is John Smith and I receive an email that appears to come from "Paul Smith," then do not expect me to reply.

If you do not have your own email address and you are incapable of getting one, such as one provided by ACC, then you will just need to meet me during office hours.

*The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.*

Winston Churchill

## PERSONAL EMAIL, MESSAGING, and FACEBOOK

Do NOT ever message or text the professor using Facebook, his personal email address, or his personal cell phone for questions related to the class. You should view Facebook, personal email, and the personal cell as means of contacting the professor for Austin School business, only.

## POLICY ON ATTENDANCE and WITHDRAWAL

Each student is expected to attend and participate in each class meeting and to complete the assigned reading prior to each class. Attendance is a direct component of the final grade (see Classroom Participation and Attendance below). In addition, absences limit the student's opportunity to participate fully and will almost certainly impact the student's essay performance. Should it be necessary to miss a class a student should contact other class members for copies of the notes and materials covered in that class. Attendance is required on test days. Should you miss a test day there will be NO makeup exams, instead your final grade will be based on the tests taken. Should you miss two or more exams you should consider dropping the course rather than suffering a failing grade.

Late arrivals and early departures are disruptive so please be on time and plan to stay the entire period unless you have previously spoken to the instructor. Once roll is taken, no late arrivals will be counted as present. Excessive tardiness or failure to follow class policies on cell phones may result in the student being dropped from the course. Do NOT get up during class to throw something away. The professor reserves the right to withdraw (drop) anyone from the class for any reason. This does not mean that you will automatically be withdrawn if you are failing or if you are not attending class. If you wish to drop the course, please make sure to do so yourself. The instructor will not do it for you.

If, for any reason, you decide to withdraw from the course you must complete the required forms in the Admissions and Records office. Make sure to keep up with the official last day to withdraw of the semester. This is the same date for the professor to drop a student, so if you do not drop by this date, there is nothing that the professor can do help you. This may not be the same date for High School students, so be sure to be in compliance with your High School.

## TECHNOLOGY and TECHNOSKEPTICISM

Laptops and Cell phones and text-messaging devices are NOT allowed in my classroom. They must be turned off and should not be in evidence in the classroom unless you have prior approval from the instructor. Texting under the desk rarely conceals the activity and usually reflects poorly on the texter.

## INCOMPLETES

Incompletes will not be given to any student for any reason. If it becomes clear that you will not be able to complete the course please consider dropping the course by the drop deadline. Failure to complete the required coursework will likely result in lower grade or possibly an 'F' grade.

*We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.  
I hope to bring some of that discomfort of thought to the American people.*

John Anderson

## SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY

Acts prohibited by the college for which discipline may be administered include scholastic dishonesty, including but not limited to cheating on an exam or quiz, plagiarizing, and unauthorized collaboration with another in preparing outside work. Academic work submitted by students shall be the result of their thought, research, or self-expression. Academic work is defined as, but not limited to tests, quizzes, whether taken electronically or on paper, projects, either individual or group, classroom presentations, and homework.

If a student commits any of these actions, I will seek disciplinary action in the form of an academic penalty, which will likely include a course grade of 'F.' Look, I take this very seriously and it has a real simple solution. If you want to include text from someone else feel free to cite the original author. It will strengthen your argument and suggest that you have done research on the subject. Otherwise, I am ruthless and will show no mercy when it comes to plagiarism. Failure to comply with this rule is almost certain to cause you to fail the course.

*I am delighted to be here with you this evening, because after listening to George Bush all these years,  
I figured you needed to know what a real Texas accent sounds like.*

Governor Ann Richards

## CLASS PARTICIPATION and ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Just as each student is expected to attend class, each student is also expected to participate in the class discussion. This not only includes preparing for class and listening in class, but also includes asking questions, answering questions, providing examples, and expressing opinions. This class will be much more educational (as well as interesting) in an atmosphere of active participation and lively exchange of ideas. There will be numerous opportunities throughout the semester to use current events to explore and expand upon our understanding of the concepts we are studying. As a result I also expect students to keep up with current events. If you are not normally in the habit of doing, then so you must plan to begin looking at a reliable news source. The BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/> and The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/us> are two examples of the sort.

In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. These differences enhance the learning experience and create an atmosphere where students and instructors alike will be encouraged to think and learn. On sensitive and volatile topics, students may sometimes disagree not only with each other but also with the instructor. It is expected that faculty and students will respect the views of others when expressed in classroom situations. Each person has the right to express his or her opinion. Our Bill of Rights not only guarantees us the right to express our opinions but also provides us the opportunity to learn from our fellow citizens as they express their opinions.

*I loved when Bush came out and said, "We are losing the war against drugs." You know what that implies? There's a war being fought, and the people on drugs are winning it.*  
Bill Hicks, *Just for Laughs Comedy Festival (1990)*

## CONCEALED HANDGUN POLICY

The Austin Community College District concealed handgun policy ensures compliance with Section 411.2031 of the Texas Government Code (also known as the Campus Carry Law), while maintaining ACC's commitment to provide a safe environment for its students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Beginning August 1, 2017, individuals who are licensed to carry (LTC) may do so on campus premises except in locations and at activities prohibited by state or federal law, or the college's concealed handgun policy.

It is the responsibility of license holders to conceal their handguns at all times. Persons who see a handgun on campus are asked to contact the ACC Police Department by dialing 222 from a campus phone or 512-223-7999.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND SCHEDULE

### EVALUATION

Two exams will be given during this semester as noted on the Course Schedule. In addition to this your grade will include a Classroom Participation component and Auxiliary Assignments.

Writing assignments and take-home essays will be turned into Google Classroom or some other site to be determined by the professor. Papers handed to the professor should be assumed lost and NO credit will be received for them. Never treat a written assignment as a summarization. You are to ask and answer some question of political significance. Be creative, but also make sure to support your thesis and any claims made around it with evidence and logic.

### EVALUATION

1,000-POINT SCALE REQUIREMENT	POINTS TOWARDS FINAL GRADE
MIDTERM	250
FINAL	400
ATTENDANCE	240
<u>AUXILLARY ASSIGNMENTS</u>	<u>0-180</u>
MAXIMUM POSSIBLE	1070

## LETTER GRADE ASSIGNMENT

Final letter grades will be assigned after determining total points earned, as follows:

Final Grade Scale	Letter Grade
900 - 1100	A
800 - 899	B
700 - 799	C
600 - 699	D
0 - 599	F

**GOOGLE CLASSROOM CODE:** nq4hd5q

## EXAMS

Exams will be essay and multiple choice and either posted online or emailed to you. Since you will have a wide range of time to complete the test, there are NO make-up exams. Just get it done!

This is a college lecture course. You should view your essays as responses to the lectures. You are not expected to summarize or agree with the lectures, but you are expected to demonstrate mastery of the material presented in the lectures. In other words, if you do not attend the lectures live or view their recordings later, you cannot expect to perform well on the essays. If your essay looks like you read a Wikipedia article instead of listening to the lecture, you should expect to get an “F” on that essay.

*Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard.*  
H. L. Mencken

## ATTENDANCE

We are meeting 32 times. Each day that you attend is worth 8 points. The maximum number of attendance points that you can accumulate are 240. If you are late to class, I will give you 4 points. Since the maximum number of points is 240 and we are meeting 32 times, it means that you have two free days. There are no excused absences. The two free days are there for emergencies or if you just want a break. So use them wisely. If you waste your free days and then get sick and miss days, you will still fail to earn those attendance points.

## AUXILIARY ASSIGNMENTS

There are multiple ways to earn these 0-180 points.

1) Participate in Class: If you contribute during lectures, and add to the quality of those lectures, then I will give you up to points 64 points. This is subjective. If I don't know your name, it probably means that you have not participated enough for me to figure out who you are. If you are obnoxious and just speak to say something and you waste class time, etc., then you will earn negative points! Don't be that guy!

2) Live Austin School Events: There will likely be four lectures this year. If/as more become available I will inform you. (40 points). (Not available in Summer)

3) **60 Minutes:** You can write a 300-word essay about a political topic from a single story from 60 Minutes. The exact episode and story from that episode is up to you. However, since this essay **MUST** be political, so you will likely want to avoid writing about topics like Penelope Cruz, as fun as they might be. You can only receive credit for one 60 Minutes essay. (20 points)

4) **Frontline:** You can write a 300-word essay about a political topic from a single story from Frontline <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/>. The exact episode is up to you. However, since this essay **MUST** be political you will want to pick a story with political implications. You may do more than one Frontline, each subsequent frontline can be turned into the Movie Review slots on Google Classroom and count as 20 points each. (30 points)

**5) Radiolab:** You can write a 300-word essay about any topic from a single story from Radiolab <http://www.radiolab.org/>. The exact episode is up to you. You may not do more than one Radiolab for credit. (30 points)

**6) More Perfect:** You can write a 300-word essay about any topic from a single story from Radiolab <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolabmoreperfect/season-one/>. The exact episode is up to you, but I recommend that you start from the beginning. You may do more than one More Perfect episode for credit; each subsequent frontline can be turned into the Movie Review slots on Google Classroom and count as 20 points each. (30 points)

**7) Past Austin School Lectures:** You can write a 300-word political analysis as many of the following lectures (75 minutes or longer, only) as you like. To qualify the lecture must be at least 60 minutes long. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUGwVgtUewevtLvu7NaxVrw> (40 points)

**8) Movie Reviews:** You can write 300-word film review for up to a max of 5 of the following movies:

Incident at Oglala (20)

Charlie Wilson's War (20)

Lone Star (20)

Thin Blue Line (20)

W. (20)

Monsters (2010) (20)

Agora (20)

The Big Short (20)

Baraka (20)

Lincoln (25)

Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook (25)

Being There (1979) (30)

Smartest Guys in the Room (30)

Last Man Standing: Politics, Texas Style (30)

Where to Invade Next (30)

Eyes on the Prize (1987) (70) (6 hours)

For options **3-8** you must turn in your work to Google Classroom (see instructions above).

## HOW TO BEST COMPLETE THIS COURSE

1. Attend all class sessions; if you miss a class, get copies of the notes from a classmate.
2. Do not miss tests. It may be tempting to miss the first exam, but don't.
3. Read the assigned material prior to each class session.
4. Study the materials; prepare for and take each exam as scheduled.
5. Complete and turn in all assignments as assigned and on time. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR ANY REASON AFTER CLASS BEGINS ON THE DUE DATE.**
6. Contact the instructor if, at any time, you feel your performance is not up to your standards.

## FUNDAMENTAL ACADEMIC FORCES (STRONGEST TO WEAKEST)

1. Writing Ability
2. Reading Ability
3. Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills
4. Memorization

If you can master these four forces, then you can succeed in academia. To the extent possible this class will attempt to assist in developing all four skills further. However, it should be obvious that English classes are generally where the above skills (especially the first two) are formally taught. It is assumed that you have had English classes and that you will apply that skill set to all writing assignments.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPIC	EXAM	TEXT
1/17	Introduction		
Elections			
1/22, 1/24, 1/29, 1/31	Election Mechanics		Unit 7
2/5, 2/7, 2/12, 2/14, 2/19	Elections Politics		Unit 8
The Republic of Texas			
2/21	Country, State, Province, Nation		Lesson 1.1-3
2/26, 2/28, 3/4, 3/6	What Came Before		Lessons 1.4-6
3/11, 3/13	SPRING BREAK	NO CLASS	
3/18, 3/20, 3/25	The Birth of Texas		Lessons 1.7-9
3/27	ALL ACC FACULTY and STAFF MEETING WITH OUR NEW CHANCELLOR	NO CLASS	
4/1	Texas Constitutions		Lessons 2.1-11
4/3		MIDTERM	
<p><i>Successful politicians are insecure and intimidated men. They advance politically only as they placate, appease, bribe, seduce, bamboozle or otherwise manage to manipulate the demanding and threatening elements in their constituencies.</i> Walter Lippmann</p>			
The Façade			
4/3, 4/8	Federalism		2.12-13
4/10, 4/15, 4/17	The Legislature		Unit 3
4/22	The Bureaucracy and the Governor		Unit 4
The Machine			
4/24, 4/29, 5/1	Public Policy		Units 11 & 13
5/6	The Judiciary		Unit 5
5/8	Local Government		Unit 6
5/12		FINAL EXAM	
5/12	All Auxiliary Assignments are due by 11:59 PM to Google Classroom		

*The American dream is not dead. It is gasping for breath, but it is not dead.*  
Barbara Jordan





Barbara Jordan (1936-1996)

The instructor reserves the right to modify any portion of the syllabus at any time. The Course Schedule is meant as a guide; treat the rest as law.