

## Texas Government (GOVT 2306)



**Credit:** 3 semester credit hours (3 hours lecture)

**Prerequisite/Co-requisite:** TSI Complete for Reading.

### 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.

### Required Textbook and Materials:

1. *Government and Politics in the Lone Star State*, L. Tucker Gibson, Jr., Clay Robinson and Joanne Connor Green. 2014 Edition, Ninth Edition. Pearson Publishing.
  - a. ISBN: 978-0-13-397055-5
2. A package of #882 Scantrons and a #2 Pencil

### Course Objectives

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 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 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.

### Core Objectives

The following four Core Objectives must be addressed in each course approved to fulfill this category requirement:

1. **Critical Thinking Skills:** To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
2. **Communication Skills:** To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.
3. **Personal Responsibility:** To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
4. **Social Responsibility:** To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national and global communities.

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**Course Outline**

- A. Introduction
  - 1. Introduction of faculty and students
  - 2. Review Syllabus
  - 3. Review Class Policies
  - 4. Review Assignment
  - 5. Pre-Test
- B. Texas Society and Political Culture
  - 1. Differentiate between government and politics
  - 2. Show the relationship between the two
  - 3. Identify key events from Texas history that have shaped the state political landscape
  - 4. Analyze the economic evolution of Texas and identify economic factors that may influence public policy
  - 5. Profile the current Texas population and identify future demographic developments
  - 6. Identify the dominant political cultures in Texas
- C. Federalism and the Texas Constitution
  - 1. Explain how state power is constrained by federalism and by the national and state constitution
  - 2. Analyze how the national government has gained power within the federalism equation
  - 3. Explain why state constitutions tend to be long and restrictive
  - 4. Differentiate among the first six constitutions of Texas
  - 5. Explain why those who benefit from the current constitution will work to make comprehensive reform difficult
  - 6. Analyze how the current Constitution is partially a reaction to the previous Reconstruction-era document and partially a return to pre-Civil War policies
- D. Voting and Elections in Texas
  - 1. Identify past restrictions on voting rights in Texas
  - 2. Explain voter registration requirements in Texas
  - 3. Analyze causes of low voter turnout in Texas
  - 4. Differentiate among primary, general and special elections
  - 5. Explain the obstacles to running a campaign in Texas
- E. Political Parties in Texas
  - 1. Explain why political parties exist
  - 2. Differentiate between ideological and coalitional parties
  - 3. Describe the levels of political party organization in Texas
  - 4. Explain the long and successful history of the Democratic Party in Texas
  - 5. Explain the Republican Party's recent success in Texas
  - 6. Analyze the challenges facing each major party in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
  - 7. Explain the role of partisanship in Texas governance
- F. Interest Groups in Texas Politics
  - 1. Identify and explain the roles of interest groups in politics
  - 2. Compare and contrast the different types of interest groups in Texas
  - 3. Analyze the methods used by interest groups to influence policy makers
  - 4. Explain the relationship between money and interest groups in the political process
  - 5. Show the links between interest groups and other participants in the Texas political environment

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6. Identify practical ways that you can become involved in activities of interest groups
- G. The Media and Public Opinion in Texas
1. Trace the evolution of the print media in Texas
  2. Describe how radio emerged as a component of the Texas media
  3. Evaluate how television changed the way Texans consume news
  4. Evaluate how the media covers Texas politics
  5. Evaluate the importance of polling
  6. Evaluate public opinion in Texas politics
- H. The Legislative Process in Texas Politics
1. Explain the structure of the Texas legislature
  2. Analyze the structure of the Texas legislature
  3. Compare the structure and composition of the Texas legislature
  4. Explain redistricting and gerrymandering and analyze their impact on the Texas legislature
  5. Analyze the roles of the presiding officers and “the Team” in the legislature process
- I. The Governor of Texas
1. Outline the qualifications to hold the office of Governor
  2. Describe the most significant powers possessed by the governor while acting as chief executive
  3. Characterize the governor’s integral role in the legislative process
  4. Explain the judicial and clemency powers of the governor
  5. Describe the governor’s informal powers
6. Illustrate the impact of the governor’s staff
  7. Determine how reform might impact the governor’s office
- J. The Plural Executive and the Bureaucracy in Texas
1. Differentiate between cabinet and plural executive forms of government
  2. Explain the roles of the Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller, Land Commissioner and Commissioner of Agriculture
  3. Determine how the bureaucracy impacts the operation of state government
  4. Differentiate among the functions of various types of boards and commissions
  5. Describe the purpose and process of the Sunset Advisory Commission
- K. The Texas Court Systems
1. Differentiate between civil and criminal law
  2. Outline the structure of the Texas Court System
  3. Analyze how the Texas judiciary plays an important role in shaping public policy
  4. Explain why the method for selecting Texas judges is under constant criticism
- L. Local and County Governments and Special Districts in Texas
1. Compare and contrast the two types of cities and several forms of city government
  2. Evaluate the various structures of municipal government, including elections and forms of government
  3. Identify the major sources of revenue

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4. Identify the major sources of expenditures of local governments
  5. Explain why counties were established and how they have evolved
  6. Summarize the importance of special districts in Texas
- M. Public Policy in Texas
1. Explain why public policy is the cornerstone of politics
  2. Outline the stages of the public policy paradigm
  3. Analyze why some policy-making decisions have few or no fiscal implications
  4. Evaluate the reasons why the controversy over voter ID laws has remained at the forefront of public policy debate
- N. Criminal Justice Policy in Texas
1. Explain why crime rates are among the most important statistical data generated by government
2. Discuss why the use of the death penalty has been on the decline and will continue to decrease
  3. Identify the major types of law enforcement agencies at the state and local level
  4. Explain how an individual's right to due process extends through all stages of the criminal justice system
- O. Finance and Budgeting in Texas
1. Analyze the constraints on the budget process in Texas
  2. Explain the role of the legislative Budget Board
  3. Differentiate among the major sources of tax revenue in Texas
  4. Explain how nontax revenue has surpassed tax revenues
  5. Describe the top three areas of expenditures in Texas

### **Grade Scale**

90 – 100	A
80 – 89	B
70 – 79	C
60 – 69	D
0 – 59	F

### **Course Evaluation**

Final grades will be calculated according to the following criteria:

1. Tests (4) 60%
2. Response Topic 25%
3. Quizzes 15%

### **Course Policies**

1. Cheating of any kind will not be tolerated.
2. If you wish to drop a course, the student is responsible for initiating and dropping the course. Students who stop coming to class and fail to drop the course will earn an 'F' in the course.
3. No late assignments will be accepted.
4. A make up exam may be considered in the case of a documentable emergency beyond the student's control and are given only at the instructor's discretion.

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5. Amending and supplementing syllabus: The instructor reserves the right to change course requirements and/or dates that material will be covered and exam dates. Any such changes will be announced at least one class in advance and it is the responsibility of the student to check for any changes.
6. Respect other students, faculty and staff of LIT.
7. No food, drinks, or use of tobacco products in class.
8. Do not bring children to class.
9. Computers, telephones, headphones, and any other electronic devices must be turned off while in class or used only with permission of the instructor.
10. Belligerent, abusive, profane, threatening, and/or inappropriate behavior on the part of students is a violation of the LIT Student Conduct Regulations. Students who are found guilty of such misconduct may be subject to immediate dismissal from the institution.

### **Technical Requirements (for courses using Blackboard)**

The latest technical requirements, including hardware, compatible browsers, operating systems, software, Java, etc. can be found online at:

[https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting\\_Started/Browser\\_Support/Browser\\_Checker](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support/Browser_Checker) A functional broadband internet connection, such as DSL, cable, or WiFi is necessary to maximize the use of the online technology and resources.

### **Disabilities Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights for persons with disabilities. Among other things, these statutes require that all students with documented disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodations for their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Special Populations Coordinator at (409) 880-1737 or visit the Student Services office in the Cecil Beeson Building. You may also visit the online resource at <http://www.lit.edu/depts/stuserv/special/defaults.aspx>

### **Student Code of Conduct Statement**

It is the responsibility of all registered Lamar Institute of Technology students to access, read, understand and abide by all published policies, regulations, and procedures listed in the *LIT Catalog and Student Handbook*. The *LIT Catalog and Student Handbook* may be accessed at [www.lit.edu](http://www.lit.edu) or obtained in print upon request at the Student Services Office. Please note that the online version of the *LIT Catalog and Student Handbook* supersedes all other versions of the same document.

### **Starfish**

LIT utilizes an early alert system called Starfish. Throughout the semester, you may receive emails from Starfish regarding your course grades, attendance, or academic performance. Faculty members record student attendance, raise flags and kudos to express concern or give praise, and you can make an appointment with faculty and staff all through the Starfish home page. You can also login to Blackboard or MyLIT and click

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on the Starfish link to view academic alerts and detailed information. It is the responsibility of the student to pay attention to these emails and information in Starfish and consider taking the recommended actions. Starfish is used to help you be a successful student at LIT.

