

The University of Texas at Tyler

## Honors: Introduction to Texas Government & Politics

Fall 2022 ~ POLS 2306.001

### Professor: Dr. Robert Sterken

Office: Arts & Sciences 116

Twitter: @rsterken

E-mail: rsterken@uttyler.edu

Office Hours: TT 11a to 2p and by appointment.

Check Canvas for announcements!

**Welcome** to the study of Texas government & politics – HNRS/POLS 2306! I congratulate you on choosing to study Texas Government! This will be an exciting course and I am thrilled to have you with me for a semester of learning! We will have a wonderful semester together as we focus our efforts on critical analysis and communicating a clear and coherent understanding of Texas government and politics as well as our social and personal rights, duties, and responsibilities!

### Course Objectives:

- This course seeks to acquaint students with the study of political science, and
- to improve their understanding of the institutions and processes that govern Texas and other states, as well as the localities (such as cities and counties) within them.
- The student will become familiar with the historical antecedents which make up the political culture and regions of Texas.
- The student will learn to characterize the trends in Texas' political history.
- The student will be able to trace the changing political partisan face of Texas from a one-party Democratic state to a state with a strong Republican party.
- The student will become cognizant of the changes facing Texas in ethnic diversity and population growth.

**Required Reading Materials:** There are two (2) books required for this course:

**Uncovering Texas Politics** (<https://www.uttyler.edu/press/files/uncovering-texas-politics-in-the-21st-century.pdf>) You do not need a paper copy of this text, but it is available on Amazon if you would like to purchase it.

**Bill Ratliff: A Profile of Courage and Leadership in American Politics**, by Robert Sterken; ISBN-13: 978-1498546959.

Additional online videos will be assigned on the course Canvas site.

**Method of Instruction:** This is a small HONORS discussion-based course! Students are expected to complete readings and assignments before class meetings and to discuss major themes and topics during class. This is not a lecture course. I will not be on the stage (very often). I expect respectful, organic, and flexible class discussions. This robust course will emphasize learning and conceptual gain through guided peer-to-peer dialogue.

Watch the videos and take notes. YOU MUST WATCH THE VIDEOS. Students who do not watch the videos cannot answer the exam essay questions. Your grade will suffer if you do not watch the videos. You will need to take notes! As the exams will be drawn from the readings, assignments, and videos! Each of the videos is an essay question on each exam.

Complete the readings and assignments.

Take examinations 1, 2, and 3 in Canvas.

### **Assessment Instruments and Values:**

Examination # 1 15%

Examination # 2 15%

Ratliff Book Worksheet Assignments 20%

Textbook and Video Assignments 20%

Texas Capitol Reflection Note 5%

Attendance and Participation 10%

Final Exam 15%

**Course Requirements & Evaluation:** Are you learning? How much and how well are you learning? In this course, we will use several different tools to assess student learning. Since deep learning about Texas politics and government is our mission, students will demonstrate learning and understanding using several different tools.

Each assessment tool we use will have a specific weight contributing to your overall grade in the course. While some of the tools used are not weighted heavily – they will give you guidance and feedback and others (like in-class exams) are more heavily weighted. Please pay close attention to these weights and the expectations.

**Texas Capitol Reflection Note:** In this Honors section of Texas Government, we will travel to Austin and visit the Capitol. We will have an opportunity to experience the practice of the ideas

we cover in the course. You will write a reflection note about your Texas Capitol experience. Reflection is essential in connecting theory and practice. When you are asked to reflect upon the experience, you do not only describe your experience, but you evaluate it based on ideas from class. I expect you to engage with concepts from our course by critically connecting your observations, experiences, and opinions. I expect you to explain and analyze the concepts we've discussed from your point of view, eliciting original ideas and encouraging an active interest in the course material.

**Ratliff Assignment:** You must read the Bill Ratliff book and complete the writing assignments in Canvas. Late assignments will be docked one complete letter grade.

**Exams:** There will be three (3) **essay** examinations on the dates that are indicated below, covering the assigned materials from each module. The exams will be drawn from the material covered in the most recent section of the course: for example, Exam 2 will cover the material studied after Exam 1. Exam Content: Questions on examinations are drawn from your textbook and materials presented in the VIDEOS.

Please see the **Modules tab** in Canvas for a complete course outline, assignments, due dates and readings schedule.