



Class Information

Day and Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 8-9:15am

Room Number: E211

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Brandon Seitzler

Instructor Email: bseitzler@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: 214.818.1309

Instructor Office Hours: Mondays 11am-1pm; Wednesdays 1:15-3:15pm

Course Description and Prerequisites

An examination of state and local government more generally and Texas state politics in particular. (This course satisfies for a Social/Behavioral Science course.)

Course Objectives

When we think about government and politics our minds most often reference the national level. However, our day-to-day lives are frequently impacted by the decisions that state and local governments make. In this course students will explore Texas and Dallas politics. This course encourages students to ask questions about the good life and how state and local governments contribute to and facilitate that good life. In other words, how do the government entities closest to us contribute to, facilitate, encourage, or impede human flourishing?

At the end of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Explain what public policies city, county, or state rather than federal government should make and why.
2. Justify what public services and amenities local governments provide.
3. Describe how the Texas government functions alongside local governments and the federal government.

Required Textbooks

- Champagne et. al. Governing Texas. Fifth Edition. W.W. Norton. 2021.
- Grieder, Erica. Big, Hot, Cheap, and Right: what America can learn from the strange genius of Texas. Public Affairs. 2013.

Recommended Reading

- www.economist.com – After reading whatever click-bait, infotainment news sources your friends and family link to on Facebook, have you ever found yourself thinking “there must be a better way!” (cue black and white infomercial video of frustration personified)? Try “The Economist!” The Economist goes to press once per week. This means that you are able to stay current on what is going on in the world but without the daily (or hourly) urgency created by daily newspapers and the 24-hour news cycle. By reading a weekly newspaper that is global in perspective you are able to step back and see what is going on in the world with a more complete and reasonable perspective. You can get a discounted student subscription to The Economist magazine. The digital subscription includes an audio version of each week’s edition.
- <https://www.strongtowns.org>

Course Requirements and Assignments

- Weekly Canvas reading quizzes (20%)
- Dallas Public Policy Introduction (10%) (See Addendum 1)
- Dallas Public Policy Literature Review (10%) (See Addendum 1)
- Dallas Public Policy Analysis (10%) (See Addendum 1)
- Dallas Public Policy Recommendation (10%) (See Addendum 1)
- Midterm Exam (20%)
- Final Exam (20%)

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

- You may not have your cell phone anywhere in sight during class.
- The one exception to my cell phone rule is using your cell phone as a calculator or to look something up online as a part of class participation. Other than these two exceptions, phones belong in bags.
- You may not use your laptop during class for anything other than class-related activities.
- Instructors work closely with the Student Success Manager. To help provide resources to students who may need it most, I will communicate the names of students who have two consecutive absences, low grades, or any other signs that they may be struggling. The Student Success Manager will reach out to these students and help find appropriate resources.

Class Attendance

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they anticipate being able to attend every class session on the day and time appearing on course schedules, and then making every effort to do so. When unavoidable situations result in absence or tardiness, students are responsible for acquiring any information missed. Instructors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion, individual instructors may determine how attendance affects students’ ability to meet course learning objectives and whether attendance affects course grades.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure's impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student's Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses' objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus's closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

			Grade Definitions (optional)
A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour	Exceptional
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour	
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour	
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour	Above Average
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour	
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour	
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour	Average
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour	
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour	
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour	Below Average
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour	
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour	Unacceptable

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An "I" may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar's Office. The "I" must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the "I" will become an "F."

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college's academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student's course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student's work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. Pastoral and certified counseling services are also available to Criswell students. Appointments are scheduled through the Dean of Students, at deanofstudents@criswell.edu.

Wallace Library: Students can access academic resources and obtain research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, which is located on campus. For more information, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu. Offsite login information is available in Canvas in the “Criswell Student Training Course” under “Library Information.”

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to improve and enhance their skills and confidence in any subject matter taught at the college. Tutors have been recommended by the faculty to ensure that the tutor(s) are qualified to serve the student body. Every tutor brings experience and expertise in an effort to provide the proper resources for the subject matter at hand. To consult with a tutor, students can visit the Tutoring Center located on the second floor in room E203, or schedule an appointment by emailing tutoringcenter@criswell.edu or by calling 214.818.1373.

Course Outline/Calendar

Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
August 16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Introduction • Syllabus • Tools for academic success 		
August 18		
August 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT Ch. 10 Local Government • BHCR Introduction • BHCR Ch. 1 Man-Made Miracle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 10 Reading Quiz • Paper topic due (You will choose from a list of options that we discuss in class. Topics will be assigned on a first-come basis.)
August 25		
August 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT Ch. 1 The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas • BHCR Ch. 2 The Texas Model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1 Reading Quiz
September 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Policy Introduction Workshop 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Policy Introduction Draft due
September 6	Monday 9/6 is Labor Day (no class that day)	
September 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT Ch. 2 The Texas Constitution • BHCR Ch. 3 The Troublesome Territory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 2 Reading Quiz
September 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT Ch. 3 Texas in the Federal System • BHCR Ch. 4 State of Hate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 3 Reading Quiz
September 15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Policy Introduction Presentations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Policy Introduction due
September 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT Ch. 4 Political Parties • BHCR Ch. 5 Land and Cattle • BHCR Ch. 6 Black Gold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 4 Reading Quiz
September 22		
September 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT Ch. 5 Campaigns and Elections • BHCR Ch. 7 The Ungoverned • BHCR Ch. 8 The Shadow State 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 5 Reading Quiz

September 29 • Public Policy Lit Review Workshop		• Public Policy Lit Review Draft due
October 4	• GT Ch. 6 Interest Groups and Lobbying • BHCR Ch. 9 Democratic Texas	• Ch. 6 Reading Quiz
October 6 • Public Policy Lit Review Presentations		• Public Policy Lit Review due
October 11	No Class – Student Development Week	
October 13	No Class – Student Development Week	
October 18	• GT Ch. 7 The Legislature • BHCR Ch. 10 The Rise of the Right	• Ch. 7 Reading Quiz
October 20 • Public Policy Analysis Workshop		• Midterm Exam Due 10/24 at 11:59pm • Midterm Exam is on Canvas. • Midterm Exam covers all lecture and reading material from 8/16 – 10/13. • Public Policy Analysis Draft due
October 25	• GT Ch. 8 The Executive Branch • BHCR Ch. 11 Twenty-First-Century Texas	• Ch. 8 Reading Quiz
October 27 • Public Policy Analysis Presentations		• Public Policy Analysis due
November 1	• GT Ch. 9 The Judiciary • BHCR Ch. 12 Vestigial Parts	• Ch. 9 Reading Quiz
November 3		
November 8	• GT Ch. 11 Public Finance • BHCR Ch. 13 Turning Texas Blue	• Ch. 11 Reading Quiz
November 10		
November 15	• GT Ch. 12 Public Policy • BHCR Ch. 14 The Coming Crack-Up	• Ch. 12 Reading Quiz
November 17 • Public Policy Recommendation Workshop		• Public Policy Recommendation Drafts due
November 22	No Class – Fall Break	
November 24	No Class – Fall Break	
November 29	• GT Ch. 13 Crime, Corrections, and Public Safety • BHCR Ch. 15 Tweaking the Model	• Ch. 13 Reading Quiz

December 1 • Public Policy Final and Full Paper Presentations		• Public Policy Recommendations due
December 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT Ch. 14 Building the Future: Public Policies for a Changing Texas • BHCR Ch. 16 Texas and the United States 	
December 8		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Final Exam Due 12/10 at 11:59pm</u> • Final exam is on Canvas. • Final exam covers all lecture and reading material from 10/18 – 12/6.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.

Addendum 1

POL 202 State and Local Government Writing Assignment

Over the course of the semester, you will complete four short writing assignments, each constituting 10 percent of your final grade. Each assignment should meet the requirements and guidelines outlined below. The due dates for each assignment are listed on the course syllabus.

The policy introduction should be just that – an introduction to the policy you have chosen. Its purpose is to contain the facts of your policy including but not limited to policy history, goals, purpose and mechanics. The literature review should move beyond the reporting of facts that take place in the policy introduction. In the literature review I expect you to synthesize what scholars before you have said about your topic. The purpose of a literature review is to establish for your reader your place in the literature. Without a literature review I, the reader, have no way of knowing whether what you have said is new, controversial, revolutionary, etc. Use the literature review as an opportunity to tell your readers why your paper exists – because you have something new to say!

The final two papers will progress beyond fact reporting and synthesizing to original analysis. On the basis of the facts you reported in the policy introduction and in light of the literature you reviewed, your policy analysis should provide your personal, informed perspective on the policy you have chosen. Potential questions to answer might include: Are there any unintended consequences that might arise from the policy? Are all groups within society equally affected by the policy? Are there negative implications for the environment? Could foreign or domestic economic investment be negatively impacted? Finally, in your policy recommendations you will build once more on your previous assignments and make recommendations for how policy makers should proceed or not proceed depending on your conclusions. This final paper will use the previous three assignments to build a case for why your recommendations should be considered and adopted by policymakers.

Paper guidelines:

- Double spaced – no extra space between paragraphs
- 12 pt Times New Roman Font
- 1 inch margins
- 500-600 words per assignment. This does not include reference pages or cover sheet.
- Assignment must be submitted electronically, via Canvas as a .pdf document. The file name must follow the format “LastName_AssignmentName.pdf”. In the header of each assignment, include your full name and assignment name. Assignments uploaded with the wrong file name or in the wrong file type will be penalized 10 points.
- Late assignments will be penalized 7 points per day
- Paper should be in Chicago or Turabian style including a bibliography.
- The policy Literature Review should contain 4-6 scholarly, references. The policy introduction, analysis and recommendations can and should make reference to these 4-6 sources when and where it is deemed necessary.