



On-Campus Course Syllabus

POL202

State and Local Government

Fall 2024

Class Information

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

Room Number: E209

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Brandon Seitzler

Instructor Email: bseitzler@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: 214.818.1309

Instructor Office Hours: Mondays 11am-1pm; Tuesdays 8:45-9:15am; Thursdays 8:45-9:15am, 11am-12pm.

[Schedule meetings at www.calendly.com/bseitzler](https://www.calendly.com/bseitzler)

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 you 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. Sixth Edition. W.W. Norton. 2023.
- Other readings will be provided as they are assigned

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 can 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 can 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. – Education discount
- <https://www.strongtowns.org>
- <https://www.texastribune.org>
- The Dallas Morning News – Education access
- Texas Monthly – Education discount

Course Requirements and Assignments

- Class Participation (10%) – (See Addendum 2 for Participation Rubric)
- Weekly reading quizzes (20%) (No late reading quizzes will be allowed)
- Public Policy Introduction (10%) (See Addendum 1)
- Public Policy Literature Review (10%) (See Addendum 1)
- Public Policy Analysis (10%) (See Addendum 1)
- Public Policy Recommendation (10%) (See Addendum 1)
- Midterm Exam (15%) – In-class exam
- Final Exam (15%) – In-class exam

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

- The ideas expressed by readings, resources, and outside guests in this course should not be interpreted as implying the instructor’s or college’s endorsement. Course materials and outside speakers are selected for their perceived value in helping to meet the course goals and objectives.
- At all times and especially when we are working in and with the community you are expected to exhibit the college’s graduate profile:
 - **Ambassadors** who communicate effectively across various platforms and contexts.
 - **Cultivators** who seek to understand diverse populations and develop purposeful relationships.
 - **Peacemakers** who pursue truth and righteousness through mercy and reconciliation.
 - **Problem-solvers** who think critically, creatively, and collaboratively.
 - **Professionals** who demonstrate competence in their field of study and intentionality in their vocation.
- 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 participation requires both attendance and preparation. If you miss classes, you will fall behind very quickly. If you read the chapter before class, our time together will make much more sense to you.
- The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.
- The following language is quoted from Criswell College's Credit Hours policy: "For academic purposes, Criswell College uses "Carnegie" units to measure semester credit hours. A Carnegie unit of credit is awarded to students for the satisfactory completion of at least one 50-minute session of classroom or direct faculty instruction and at least 100 minutes of out-of-class work per week for not less than 15 weeks."
 - This policy does not mean that attending class or doing work for a certain amount of time guarantees a certain grade or credit for the course.
 - This policy does mean that you must complete this many hours of work to qualify for course credit.
 - Therefore, one way that you might think of your time being divided up, **per week**, over the course of the semester, for a 3-credit course is the following:
 - 150 minutes of class instruction (two 75-minute course sessions per week).
 - 300+ minutes of out-of-class work. A possible allocation of this out-of-class time could be:
 - 180 minutes of reading
 - 120 minutes of homework
 - This means that each 3-hour course you register for requires a **minimum** of 7.5 hours of work per week.
 - If you are taking 12 hours this semester, you should think of your school commitment as a 30-hour per week job.
 - If you are taking 15 hours this semester, you should think of your school commitment as a 37.5-hour per week job.

Class Attendance

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they (1) anticipate being able to attend every on-campus class session on the day and time appearing on course schedules, or (2) participating in academically related activities as identified in online-course schedules including synchronous class sessions conducted remotely by video, and then making every effort to do so. When unavoidable situations result in absence or tardiness, students are responsible for acquiring any missed information. Professors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion, individual professors may determine how attendance affects students' ability to meet course learning objectives and whether attendance affects course grades. Professors apprise students of such information in course syllabi.

Students receiving grants, loans, or scholarships must meet specified requirements of various departments at the college and should consult relevant sections of the *Academic Catalog*. To ensure such funds will not be forfeited, students are responsible for contacting the proper departments to ascertain any specific course participation requirements and consequences of not meeting such requirements. Students receiving grants,

loans, or scholarships should consult the Financial Aid office.

While Criswell College is a non-attendance taking institution, it nevertheless must demonstrate that students begin their courses in order to comply with Federal Aid regulations. Accordingly, students must participate in academically related activities during census periods. Failure to meet this requirement will result in students being administratively dropped from courses.

Academically related activity is defined as any course-related activity that may be used as evidence of attendance. Examples include:

- physical presence in a classroom during a class session with the instructor present,
- participation in a synchronous remote video class session with the instructor present,
- submission of an academic assignment, quiz, or exam,
- participation in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction,
- participation in a study group or discussion board that is assigned by the instructor,
- documentation showing that the student and a faculty member corresponded about the academic subject of the course.

NOTE: Logging into a Canvas course alone and logging into a Synchronous Online class session without active participation or with the camera off are not considered attendance.

NOTE: A census period begins on the first day of a semester/term and runs through the end of the last day to drop courses. During the census period, attendance data is collected in order to demonstrate compliance with Federal Aid regulations. There is no census period for winter terms since there is no last day to drop courses.

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
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.

Research and Writing Standards

The default writing style for written assignments in Criswell College Courses is the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. However, instructors are free to require alternative writing styles in their courses. These styles include but are not limited to the American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) writing guides.

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. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

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. Login credentials are emailed to students near the beginning of the semester.

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to improve and enhance their skills and confidence. 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 schedule an appointment through Calendly (<https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>) or by visiting the Tutoring Center located on the second floor in room E203. For questions, call 214.818.1373 or email at tutoringcenter@criswell.edu.

Course Outline/Calendar

Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
August 19 • Course Introduction • Syllabus • Tools for academic success		
August 21	• “A Border Runs Through It,” Christianity Today	
August 26	• GT Ch. 1 The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas	• 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 28		• Ch. 1 Reading Quiz
September 2	• Monday 9/2 is Labor Day (no class that day)	

September 4 Public Policy Introduction Workshop	• GT Ch. 2 The Texas Constitution	• Ch. 2 Reading Quiz • Public Policy Introduction Draft due
September 9	• GT Ch. 3 Texas in the Federal System	• Ch. 3 Reading Quiz
September 11		
September 16	• GT Ch. 4 Political Parties	• Ch. 4 Reading Quiz
September 18 Public Policy Introduction Presentations		• Public Policy Introduction due
September 23	• GT Ch. 5 Campaigns and Elections	• Ch. 5 Reading Quiz
September 25		
September 30	• GT Ch. 6 Interest Groups and Lobbying	• Ch. 6 Reading Quiz
October 2 Public Policy Lit Review Workshop		• Public Policy Lit Review Draft due
October 7 Midterm Exam	Midterm exam in class Midterm exam covers all lecture and reading material from 8/19 – 10/2.	
October 9	• GT Ch. 7 The Legislature	• Ch. 7 Reading Quiz
October 14	No Class – Student Development Week	
October 16	No Class – Student Development Week	
October 21	• GT Ch. 8 The Executive Branch	• Ch. 8 Reading Quiz
October 23 Public Policy Lit Review Presentations		• Public Policy Lit Review due
October 28	• GT Ch. 9 The Judiciary	• Ch. 9 Reading Quiz
October 30 Public Policy Analysis Workshop		• Public Policy Analysis Draft due
November 4	• GT Ch. 10 Local Government	• Ch. 10 Reading Quiz
November 6		
November 11	• GT Ch. 11 Public Finance	• Ch. 11 Reading Quiz
November 13 Public Policy Analysis Presentations		• Public Policy Analysis due

November 18	• GT Ch. 12 Public Policy	• Ch. 12 Reading Quiz
November 20 Public Policy Recommendation Workshop		• Public Policy Recommendation Drafts due
November 25	No Class – Fall Break	
November 27	No Class – Fall Break	
December 2	• GT Ch. 13 Crime, Corrections, and Public Safety	• Ch. 13 Reading Quiz
December 4 Public Policy Final and Full Paper Presentations		• Public Policy Recommendations due
December 9	• GT Ch. 14 Governing a Changing Texas	• Ch. 14 Reading Quiz
December 11 Final Exam	Final exam in class Final Exam covers all lecture and reading material from 10/9 – 12/9.	

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.

You will choose your topic from the options presented and discussed in class during our first week together.

Paper guidelines:

- Double spaced – no extra space between paragraphs
- 12 pt Times New Roman Font
- 1 inch margins
- 600-700 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 5 points per day
- Papers should be in Chicago or Turabian style including a bibliography. Use Author-Date style.
- The policy Literature Review should contain 4-5 scholarly references. The policy introduction, analysis and recommendations can and should make reference to these 4-5 sources when and where it is deemed necessary.

Addendum 2

Rubric for Assessing Student Participation

	Exemplary (3 points)	Proficient (2 points)	Developing (1 point)	Unacceptable (0 points)
Frequency of participation	Initiates contributions related to class topic more than once in each class. Asks questions of professor and fellow students and responds to direct questions.	Initiates contribution related to class topic once in each class. Asks questions of professor and responds to direct questions	Does not initiate contribution & needs instructor to solicit input. Does not ask questions but responds to direct questions.	Unable to contribute even when instructor solicits input. Fails to ask or answer questions.
Quality of comments	Comments always insightful & constructive; uses appropriate terminology. Comments balanced between general impressions, opinions & specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions. Contributions are relevant and promote deeper analysis of the topic	Comments mostly insightful & constructive; mostly uses appropriate terminology. Occasionally comments are too general or not relevant to the discussion.	Comments are sometimes constructive, with occasional signs of insight. Student does not use appropriate terminology; comments not always relevant to the discussion and/or distract from discussion.	Comments are uninformative, lacking in appropriate terminology. Heavy reliance on opinion & personal taste, e.g., “I love it”, “I hate it”, “It’s bad” etc. Comments distract from discussion.
Listening skills	Listens attentively when others present materials, perspectives, as indicated by comments that build on others’ remarks, i.e., student hears what others say & contributes to the dialogue. Incorporates and expands on the comments of other students	Mostly attentive when others present ideas, materials, as indicated by comments that reflect & build on others’ remarks.	Often inattentive and needs reminder of focus of discussion. Occasionally makes disruptive comments while others are speaking. Does not listen carefully; comments are often nonresponsive to discussion.	Does not listen to others; regularly talks while others speak or does not pay attention while others speak; detracts from discussion; sleeps, etc. Interrupts or makes inappropriate comments
Classroom conduct and respect for others	Avoids laptop use during discussion; makes eye contact; encourages others to share conflicting viewpoints; looks to learn from others’ experiences and backgrounds.	Demonstrates respect by avoiding laptop use while others are speaking; makes eye contact; avoids personal attacks when disagreements arise.	Is often distracted and inattentive during discussions; may dominate conversation or lack courtesy when addressing others; interrupts others often.	Is rude, insulting, or inappropriate.