



# Course Syllabus

## POL 202 L1

### State and Local Government

### Fall 2025

#### 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](mailto:bseitzler@criswell.edu)

**Instructor Phone:** 214.818.1309

**Instructor Office Hours:** [Monday's 9:30-10:45am](#); [Wednesdays 9:30-10:45am](#); [Thursday 11am-12:30pm](#)

[Schedule meetings at www.calendly.com/bseitzler](http://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. Seventh Edition. W.W. Norton. 2025
- Other readings will be provided as they are assigned

## Recommended Reading

- [www.economist.com](http://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%) – Class preparation, attendance, and participation are **required**. If you are not in class by 9:30am, you will be counted absent.
- 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.

### Video Recording

To ensure FERPA compliance when a course is live-streamed or recorded, students can opt out of video recordings by requesting seating in a designated area off camera. Students who sit outside of this area are giving implicit permission to be recorded.

### Class Attendance:

Students should only enroll in courses they are able to attend regularly.

- **On-campus** students are expected to attend class **in person** according to the course syllabus.
- Students enrolled in the **online section** must pay any applicable online course fees.
- Online students are expected to attend class **synchronously** at the scheduled time via the designated video conferencing platform, Zoom, found in the left-hand global menu in Canvas.
- Online students must have their **cameras turned on with sound muted** during class, and actively participate in discussions and activities. In order to be properly identified, students must upload a picture ID to their Canvas Account Profile *prior to the first online meeting*. For instructions on how to upload a profile picture, [click here](#).

**Missed Classes:**

- Each instructor may decide how attendance impacts your grade and learning objectives. Details are provided within the course syllabus.
- Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence or tardiness.
  - Instructors are **not required** to allow make-up work for missed classes.

**Attendance & Financial Aid:**

- Students receiving **grants, loans, or scholarships** must meet participation requirements set by the college.
- It is the student's responsibility to:
  - Review relevant sections of the Academic Catalog.
  - Contact the **Financial Aid Office** for details on how attendance affects aid.
  - Understand the consequences of non-participation.

**Census Period Attendance Requirement:**

- Though Criswell College does not officially take attendance, it must verify that students **begin their courses** to meet federal aid regulations.
- **During the census period** (first two weeks of a 16-week semester or first week of shorter terms), students must participate in **academically related activities**, or they may be dropped from the course.

**Examples of Qualifying Activities:**

- Attending class in person or via live video with the instructor present
- Submitting an assignment, quiz, or exam
- Taking part in assigned tutorials, study groups, or discussion boards
- Having documented communication with the instructor about course content

**Important Note:**

Simply logging into Canvas or a Zoom session without participating (e.g., camera off, no interaction) **does not count** as attendance.

**Canvas:**

- Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based Learning Management System (LMS).
- **For online courses** at Criswell College, instructors use Canvas to:
  - Organize course content on a module basis using organizational tools within Canvas
  - Control the timing of course requirements through module control or assignment due dates to ensure that students are engaged for the full length of the semester or term
  - Accept assignments from students only inside the Canvas course (emailed assignments are not acceptable)
  - Provide written feedback on assignments only within Canvas, preferably through Speedgrader
  - Use the Announcement or e-mail feature in Canvas to communicate with the students rather than by broadcasting to a class email listserv outside of canvas
  - Use Zoom in Canvas for all "live" (synchronous) class sessions

**Important Note:**

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.

## 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.

## Course Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

**(Note to students: Instructors may use, modify or replace these guidelines as appropriate for their course. So, AI policies and guidelines may change from course to course and/or professor to professor.)**

Examples of AI-related functions you **may not use** without permission:

- Text Generation – You may not use AI to generate text for use in an assignment.
- Outline Generation – You may not use AI to generate an outline for an assignment.

AI-related tools you **may use** without permission:

- Spellcheck and grammar – built into Word, Pages, and Google Docs
- AI research and summarize – tools that help you find sources to cite, such as the new AI tools built into Logos Bible Software.)

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 a wide range of academic resources and receive research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, located on the second floor of the Education Building.

Login credentials for accessing the library’s databases are emailed to students near the beginning of each semester.

For more information or assistance, email the Wallace Library at [library@criswell.edu](mailto:library@criswell.edu) or visit [www.criswell.edu/academics/wallace-library/](http://www.criswell.edu/academics/wallace-library/).

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to enhance their skills and build confidence. All tutors are recommended by faculty to ensure they are qualified to support the student body. To meet with a tutor, students can schedule an appointment through Calendly at <https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>. The Tutoring Center is located in room E203 of the Education Building.

For questions, email [tutoringcenter@criswell.edu](mailto:tutoringcenter@criswell.edu).

## Course Outline/Calendar

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

Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
Mon 8/18		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Introduction</li> <li>• Syllabus</li> <li>• Tools for academic success</li> </ul>		
Wed 8/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus</li> <li>• “A Border Runs Through It,” Christianity Today</li> </ul>	
Mon 8/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GT Ch. 1 The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.)</li> </ul>
Wed 27		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 1 Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Mon 9/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Monday 9/2 is Labor Day (no class that day)</b></li> </ul>	
Wed 9/3 <b>Public Policy Introduction Workshop</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GT Ch. 2 The Texas Constitution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 2 Reading Quiz</li> <li>• Public Policy Introduction Draft due</li> </ul>
Mon 9/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GT Ch. 3 Texas in the Federal System</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 3 Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Wed 9/10		
Mon 9/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GT Ch. 4 Public Opinion and the Media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 4 Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Wed 9/17		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Policy Introduction due</li> </ul>

<b>Public Policy Introduction Presentations</b>		
Mon 9/22	• GT Ch. 5 Political Parties	• Ch. 5 Reading Quiz
Wed 9/24		
Mon 9/29	• GT Ch. 6 Campaigns and Elections	• Ch. 6 Reading Quiz
Wed 10/1 <b>Public Policy Lit Review Workshop</b>		• Public Policy Lit Review Draft due
Mon 10/6 <b>Midterm Exam</b>	Midterm exam in class  Midterm exam covers all lecture and reading material from 8/19 – 10/1.	
Wed 10/8	• GT Ch. 7 Interest Groups and Lobbying	• Ch. 7 Reading Quiz
Mon 10/13	<b>No Class – Student Development Week</b>	
Wed 10/15	<b>No Class – Student Development Week</b>	
Mon 10/20	• GT Ch. 8 The Legislature	• Ch. 8 Reading Quiz
Wed 10/22 <b>Public Policy Lit Review Presentations</b>		• Public Policy Lit Review due
Mon 10/27	• GT Ch. 9 The Executive Branch	• Ch. 9 Reading Quiz
Wed 10/29 <b>Public Policy Analysis Workshop</b>		• Public Policy Analysis Draft due
Mon 11/3	• GT Ch. 10 The Judiciary	• Ch. 10 Reading Quiz
Wed 11/5		
Mon 11/10	• GT Ch. 11 Local Government	• Ch. 11 Reading Quiz
Wed 11/12 <b>Public Policy Analysis Presentations</b>		• Public Policy Analysis due
Mon 11/17	• GT Ch. 12 Public Finance	• Ch. 12 Reading Quiz
Wed 11/19 <b>Public Policy Recommendation Workshop</b>		• Public Policy Recommendation Drafts due
Mon 11/25	<b>No Class – Fall Break</b>	

Wed 11/26	<b>No Class – Fall Break</b>	
Mon 12/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GT Ch. 13 Public Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 13 Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Wed 12/3 <b>Public Policy Final and Full Paper Presentations</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Policy Recommendations due</li> </ul>
Mon 12/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GT Ch. 14 Crime, Corrections, and Public Safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 14 Reading Quiz</li> </ul>
Wed 12/10 <b>Final Exam</b>	<p>Final exam in class</p> <p>Final Exam covers all lecture and reading material from 10/8 – 12/8.</p>	

***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.