

PSCI 2306 • U.S. and Texas Government (Spring 2021)

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Review Sheet for Midterm Exam

Exam Format

- This examination will be conducted online through Canvas, and will feature 50 multiple choice questions.
 - The number of questions on each topic in the exam will (approximately) reflect the relative time spent on each topic in the course. Each one-week topic should thus have approximately (but perhaps not exactly) the same number of exam questions, and each assigned chapter from the webtext or workbook should be featured in approximately (but perhaps not exactly) the same number of questions.
 - The exam will draw from both the assigned readings (including both webtext and workbook) and the lecture notes. Around 1/3 of the exam questions will be drawn from materials in the readings that were not covered at all in lecture, with the rest reflecting topics that were only covered in lecture or were covered in both lecture and the readings.
- Note that in the past, questions drawn from the readings (even on concepts or topics specifically listed on the review sheet) have produced the lowest scores of any questions on the test, so you should take special care to study these topics on the review sheet.
- The exam will not be written with the intention of fooling students with trick questions or with the goal of failing as many students as possible. The main goal of this course is to provide students with an understanding of how American (and Texas) government works and why the system was designed this way, so the exam questions will reflect this goal. The purpose of the exam is to assess how well students have learned these central topics.
 - The list of topics on this review sheet is not legally binding; these are just suggestions for the most important topics that are most likely to be on the test (some of which may not actually appear on the test). If you understand all of these topics you are much more likely to do well on the test.

Topics Covered in This Portion of the Course

Week 2: Government and Politics

The main focus of this topic (including both lecture notes and the assigned reading) is on putting American politics into context. This includes understanding the meaning of “government” and “politics” in a general sense, as well as how these terms apply to American government and politics. This also involves understanding the basic political culture of the United States, including both the general philosophical approach that underlies our political system (liberalism) and the core political values that most Americans hold (but recognizing that different Americans place different emphases on these values). The topic then concluded with the distinctive nature of Texas government and politics. While Texans share many of the same core assumptions and values as the American public more generally, as discussed in the previous topic, we in Texas also have some important differences. This includes the different history of what became the state of Texas (which was very different from the history of the first thirteen states) as well as different needs and interests.

Topics Covered in Lecture

- Definition and meaning of politics (Lasswell quote)
- Definition and major functions of government
- Forms of government: autocracy (monarchy/tyranny), oligarchy (military/theocracy/single party), democracy (direct/representative)
- Definition and meaning of political culture

- Core values & ideas of classical liberalism (individual liberty, limited govt, social contract)
- Liberty in modern American politics
- Equality in modern American politics (equality of outcome/opportunity)
- Limited government in modern American politics
- Historical path to today's Texas culture
- Major elements of Texas political culture: classical liberalism, social conservatism

Additional Topics from the Textbook (Chapter 1: "The Founding and the Constitution") - *note that some of this chapter's content, on the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution, was covered in week 3 of the video lectures*

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*

Week 3: U.S. and Texas Constitutions

The main focus of this topic (including both lecture notes and the assigned reading) is on the development and general content of the U.S. Constitution. This includes the early development of American political thought, reflecting influences such as the Magna Carta and liberalism, and being demonstrated in the series of congresses and conventions that led the move from British colonies to an independent country under the Articles of Confederation and (eventually) the Constitution. We also discussed the many debates or compromises that shaped the Constitution, recognizing that nobody got everyone they wanted out of the new document, but that everybody got enough of their wishes that the document was eventually ratified. As with political culture, discussed above, Texas has a very distinctive constitution that is quite different from the U.S. Constitution in its primary purpose, its length, and the ease with which it can be amended.

Topics Covered in Lecture

- Basic definition and purpose of constitutions
- Historical precursor to today's constitutions: Magna Carta
- Origins of Colonial revolt against British rule: political background before revolution, Currency Act / Stamp Act (and Stamp Act Congress), Tea Act (and Boston Tea Party / Intolerable Acts)
- The 1st and 2nd Continental Congresses (purposes/goals, results)
- Declaration of Independence: emphasis on natural rights, social contract/consent of the governed
- Articles of Confederation (origins, role/strength of central government, weaknesses)
- Annapolis Convention, Constitutional Convention (who & why, major goals, major results)
- Major debates/compromises in Constitution:
 - Virginia Plan, New Jersey Plan, Connecticut Plan/Great Compromise
 - Legality of slavery, 3/5 compromise
 - Separation of powers, checks and balances in the Constitution
 - Congress: grants of power/denials of power, necessary & proper clause
 - Executive: limits on power, advice & consent
 - Judiciary: role of Supreme Court, judicial review, supremacy clause
- Electoral College (what it does and why)
- Amending the Constitution: difficulty, process, number of successful amendments
- Ratification: procedure, Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists (main arguments of each), result
- The Bill of Rights: reason for existence, central elements
- Current status of the Constitution, overall assessment
- Historical background of Texas constitution / number of past Texas constitutions
- Similarities with U.S. Constitution: social contract, limited government, checks & balances
- Liberal vs. statutory constitutions: purpose, length, ease of amendment

- Differences from U.S. Constitution: guarantees of rights/liberties, limits on legislature / governor / judiciary, ease of amendment
- Overall assessment of the Texas Constitution: relatively weak, decentralized government, very detailed

Additional Topics from the Workbook (Chapter 2: "Workbook: The Constitution")

- Locke and individual rights
- More details on Federalist vs. Anti-federalist debate
- More details on Texas Constitution
- Examples of negative vs. positive rights: "welfare state," Civil Rights Act, health care

Additional Topics from the Textbook (Chapter 3: "Texas: The Constitution")

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- More details on past constitutions (major features, major influences):
 - 1827 Constitution of Coahuila y Tejas
 - 1836 Constitution of the Republic of Texas
 - 1861 Confederate Constitution
 - 1869 Radical Republican Constitution
- More details on current Texas constitution (including differences from US Constitution)
- Attempts to revise the Texas constitution (when, how would they have changed it, result)

Week 4: Federalism / State & Local Government

The main focus of this topic (including both lecture notes and the assigned reading) is the relationship between different levels of government. While most of the first portion of the course focused on the federal government, the fifty states are an important part of American politics, and there are often important areas of disagreement between the federal and state governments (as well as between the states and their local governments, although local governments are considered to be creations of the states and are not covered directly by the Constitution). Think about the powers assigned to (or forbidden to) each level of government, as well as the reasons that these powers were divided this way.

Topics (Partially) Covered in Lecture

- Definition of federalism, generally and in US system
- Alternatives to federalism (confederation/confederacy, unitary government): how do they differ? how common are they in modern countries?
- Emergence of US federalism: federalist vs. anti-federalist debate, "dual sovereignty" compromise (a.k.a. dual federalism/layer cake federalism)
- Powers granted to the national government by the US Constitution: enumerated/expressed powers (including Commerce Clause, Spending Clause), implied powers (Necessary & Proper Clause), denied powers
- Powers granted to the states by the US Constitution: relations with other states (including full faith & credit clause), elections, denied powers, reserved powers (10th Amendment), powers typically reserved to states, dispute settlement between federal government & states
- Cooperative federalism (marble cake federalism): federal mandates (including unfunded mandates), intergovernmental grants / grants-in-aid (including categorical and block grants, importance to state & local revenues), controversy over federal coercion/overreach
- Controversies over federalism (including McCulloch v. Maryland, interpretation of Commerce Clause, same-sex marriage, marijuana laws)
- Purpose and typical roles of state and local government (including Dillon's Rule, home rule in Texas, typical division of responsibilities between state and local governments in Texas)

- Types of local governments in Texas (county, municipal, school districts, special purpose districts)
- Typical sources of local government funding, typical types of local government spending

Additional Topics from the Textbook (Chapter 4: "Federalism")

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- More detail on changing role/importance of federal vs. state governments over time
- Strengths & weaknesses of federal systems

Additional Topics from the Textbook (Chapter 5: "Texas: Federalism")

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- Clashes between Texas and federal government
- Texans' attitudes toward state and federal government

Additional Topics from the Workbook (Chapter 6: "Workbook: Federalism")

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- Examples: federalism and marijuana laws, federalism and Medicaid
- More details on block vs. categorical grants
- Example: federalism and education policy

Week 5: US Legislative Branch: Congress

The main focus of this topic (including both lecture notes and the assigned reading) is the role of Congress. This includes the organization of Congress, the process by which a bill becomes a law, and the other powers and responsibilities of Congress (such as the "power of the purse" and "power of the sword"). It also includes the relationship of Congresspersons and their constituents, which may not be as clear or straightforward as many people believe.

Topics (Partially) Covered in Lecture

- For both House and Senate: number of members, length of term; which is "People's house"?
- Redistricting and gerrymandering (relevant for House, Senate, or both? impact?)
- Congressional leaders (Speaker of House, President of Senate, President Pro Tempore, Majority/Minority Leaders, Majority/Minority Whips): selection, roles
- Congressional caucuses/conferences: membership, roles
- Congressional committees: main purposes (distributive & informational), purposes of each type (standing-select/special/ad hoc-joint)
- How a bill becomes a law (introduced, referred to committee/subcommittee, debate in full chamber, vote in full chamber, conference committee, go to president for signature/veto/override)
- Types of vetoes (including pocket vetoes, line item vetoes, veto overrides)
- Ultimate fate of bills in Congress (where do bills stop?)
- Filibusters: purpose, how they can be stopped, role in lawmaking
- Major legislative roles (power of the purse/budgeting, advice & consent/confirmation hearings, power of the sword/foreign policy, War Powers Resolution, impeachment & conviction)
- Congress members' relationship with constituents-party-lobbyists
- Incumbency and reelection (general pattern, explanations, impact)

Additional Topics from the Webtext (Chapter 7, "Congress")

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- More detail on gerrymandering (legality of it, possible solutions)
- More detail on influences on Congress members' decisions (including logrolling, representativeness of

their constituents, delegate vs. trustee models)

Additional Topics from the Workbook (Chapter 8, "Workbook: The Legislative Branch")

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- More details on delegate vs. trustee models of representation
- Differences between Texas and federal legislatures
- Legislative strategies and communication

Week 6: Texas Legislature

The main focus of this topic (including both lecture notes and the assigned reading) is on the ways that the Texas legislature is similar to, or different from, the federal Congress.

Topics (Partially) Covered in Lecture

- Basic structure of legislature (number and name of chambers), number of members, length of term
- Gerrymandering?: competitiveness of legislative seats
- Legislative sessions: how often/how long, which bills must be passed, special sessions
- Citizen vs professional legislatures: which is Texas?, comparison to other states
- Major functions (pass laws, pas budget, oversight, redistricting, impeachment)
- Presiding officers in each chamber (Lt. Governor, Speaker): selection, powers and responsibilities

Additional Topics from the Webtext (Chapter 9, "Texas: The Legislature")

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- Representativeness of Texas legislature (by party, gender, race, ethnicity, age, occupation)
- More details on responsibilities of Texas legislature
- More details on Texas lawmaking (including role of Lt. Governor / Speaker of House, committees)