**MANDATORY WRITING ASSIGNMENT**

**DUE BEFORE 11:59 P.M. SUNDAY, MAY 6, 2017**

**Submitted via Canvas Assignment**

**Worth 25% of Final Course Grade**

SPRING 2018, GOVERNMENT 2306, Professor John Ben Sutter, J.D.

*PLEASE READ THIS ENTIRE DOCUMENT* ***CAREFULLY*** *&* ***COMPLETELY*** *IN ORDER TO MAKE YOUR BEST GRADE*

PUBLIC UNIVERSITY TUITION IN TEXAS: WHY SO EXPENSIVE TODAY WHEN IT WAS SO REASONABLE JUST A DECADE AGO?

You may be planning to transfer to a four-year college after completing your work here at HCC. If so, you are likely concerned about the high cost of tuition at a four-year institution whether the university be a private university (such as, for example, Baylor, Rice, SMU, TCU) or a public university (such as, for example the University of Houston, TSU, A&M, TSU, University of North Texas, the University of Texas).

Private universities have always been much more expensive in Texas than public universities (i.e., supported by the State of Texas) but the expensive of an education at a Texas public university has dramatically increased over the past ten years. Of course, the cost of living has an effect on university tuition and overall costs, but the increase in costs of public higher education at the university level has dramatically risen during the past decade. This is due, in part, to continued and significant cuts in funding to Texas public universities as dictated by budget cuts to these universities over the past decade by the Texas Legislature.

State support of public higher education had been, not that long ago, generous and consistent based on the idea that the economy, growth, and well-being of the State of Texas was directly tied to the benefits of having a highly educated work force in the state which would attract important industries and businesses to Texas thanks that such a highly educated employment base.

But over the past decade the Texas Legislature has, during each and every session, dramatically reduced the level of funding for the operation of public universities in the state. The legislature, had, in the past, imposed a cap (or ceiling) on tuition increases by the colleges. The legislature did this to keep student costs down so more students could easily attend Texas universities which were then being generously funded by the state.

Over the past decade with control of both houses of the Texas Legislature controlled by the Republican Party with a large majority in both chambers, one of the party’s principal agenda goals was enhanced with extensive tax cuts made in many programs that had, in the past been generously funded. One budget line that was among the many cut consistently was funding for state universities. Needing to make up for the short fall in funding, the legislature removed the cap on state universities raising student tuition, hence, the dramatic increase in the cost of higher education being handed to individual students through significant increases in tuition and fees every couple of years after the legislative session when more cuts were made by the legislature during its biennial session.

As a student, what is your reaction to this approach that the Texas Legislature taken to funding public higher education in the state. In this paper, read the articles that are attached and mention some of the salient information about funding cuts and the increase in costs to students in Texas for higher education. Discuss that in your paper. Discuss your reaction to these actions by the Texas Legislature and what you think of them personally, and how you react to them as a citizen of Texas (and your concern for what is best for the state). Ask your parent and neighbors—ask individuals who may feel that their taxes are high and welcome tax relief—what they think about the tax cuts given them by the Legislature in terms of how it effects students such as you and others…and how it impacts on the questions of long term student loan debt that will be encumbering many young Texans for years to come because of the drastically increased debt because of out-of-pocket costs now placed on those getting a public higher education degree.

Ask your friends their opinions and share those if you wish. Most importantly, examine the issue and the motivations that prompts the legislature to make the decisions that they make on funding higher education in Texas. There are, of course, at least two sides of the issue. Address both and say why you believe what you believe about the issue or issues.

Remember, I grade your paper on how well you examine the issue and report your thoughts on it. I do NOT grade you on what you believe, but instead on how well you make the case about what you think is the best approach for you and for our state.

**You are to read the attached articles and use material from them in your paper to explain the issue and support your arguments. You do NOT have to do any additional research (unless you wish to do so in order to further support key points you address in the paper). I have provided you with a number of articles on topic to assist you in learning about and discussing this topic and your thoughts about it.** When using material (quotes from or simply information from an article) you **MUST** show where you got the material otherwise you are guilty of plagiarism and could receive a severe penalty on your grade for such plagiarism (all the way down to ZERO depending how egregious your plagiarism). You don’t need to use a formal system like MLA or APA, or Turabian to cite and document the use of these sources. You may simply, in parentheses after “quoting” the material from the outside source tell me where you got it. If you wish to quote from one of the articles I have provided you, simply indicate the title of the article and the date of publication. If you wish to use an article to support your thoughts or opinion, provide a notation indicating the source. For example: (Michael Grunwald, “Trump’s First 100 Days: What Mattered, And What Didn’t,” POLITICO MAGAZINE, 26 April 2017, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/26/trump-first-100-days-president-rating-accomplishments-215071). If you quote or paraphrase from this article again in your paper, you’d need only put in parenthesis after the quote or paraphrase the following: (Grunwald), which would indicate you got the material from the Michael Grunwald article.

**You are to present in this essay *your opinions and thoughts***on what you know, where you learned it in general, and why you’ve made the decisions you did about this issue and arrived at the opinions you had the Texas Legislature’s decisions regarding tax cuts and decreasing funding for public higher education. This is not a research paper as much as it is an opinion essay—a discussion of YOUR opinions and what you know of the opinions of your inner circle of family and friends. You must lay the predicate of what the issues are, what the Legislature has done, and what effect it has had on tuition and fees charged to students and its impact of their lives. But you are to discuss your reactions to these policies made by the state and whether you think it is good policy, bad policy, or somewhere in between and **why**. So, feel comfortable talking about yourself and what is in your mind. NO ONE WILL READ THIS PAPER OTHER THAN ME, YOUR TEACHER. I WILL NOT SHARE IT WITH ANYONE, so your opinions and thoughts will remain yours and not shared unless you want to share them with others. AND **I DO NOT, REPEAT, NOT, GRADE YOUR ESSAY ON WHETHER I AGREE WITH YOUR OPINIONS OR NOT.** I GRADE ON WHETHER YOU MEET THE REQUIREMENTS SET OUT IN THE INSTRUCTIONS. I am **not** grading your opinions, just your ability to gather and express them relative to the political issues at hand. Your opinions may differ completely from mine but that does not enter in my grading of your essay. I am as likely to give an “A” to a student’s whose opinions differ from mine as to a student who agree to the letter with my opinions. Actually, a student whose opinions match mine would get a lower grade than the student who differed dramatically with my personal opinions if the essay by the latter student is better written, better organized, better thought out than a slap-dash poorly presented paper written by the former student.

Remember, this is a chance for you to take the stage and tell your audience (me, the reader of your paper) what you think and feel. Do not worry if you think you are not a strong writer. Don’t worry if you are ESL and have, at this time, weak language skills. Write in your best form and style and language skills, but I am nowhere close to being as interested in the formalities of all that as I am in hearing, in reading what you think, what you believe, what you have heard from your family and friends, and what your hopes or your fears may be. (NOTE: Again, no one will read this paper but me. I will erase the papers after the end of the semester. So, do not worry that I might share your personal feelings and believes in the paper. I am the only member of your audience and **will** protect your privacy.)

# MECHANICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PAPER:

* **1,000 WORD, MINIMUM**. You can write beyond the minimum number of words if you wish. However, points will be deducted for papers under 1,000 words—**five (5) points off for every 25 words under 1,000**. The 1,000 word-count is a MIMIMUM. You may certainly exceed that minimum-word count. (I encourage you to do so if you have the time to do it and ideas to share.)
* **Write your essay on a word processor** preferably with Microsoft Word, or a word processor and then highlight your document, copy it, then paste it onto the dialogue box on the Canvas site for submission of your paper. Look over the pasted document to make sure nothing has been left out.
* **PROVIDE THE word count at the end of the paper**. When you type a document on Microsoft Word, Word automatically counts the number of pages and words at the bottom left of the workspace in the status bar. If you don’t see the word count in the status bar, right- click the status bar and click “Word Count.” You can also go to “Tools” on a classic Word menu, pull down, and click on “Word Count.” On some versions of Word you can click on “Review” and then on “Word Count.” If your word count is below 1,000 then you lose points. AND **IF YOU DO NOT TYPE THE WORD COUNT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAPER I WILL PENALIZE YOU BY 5 POINTS.** (If you do forget to put it on your paper but remember it before you post the assignment, put the word count on the “comments” section found to the right of the page. Do NOT mail the word count to me afterwards. I will not accept it after the paper is submitted.)
* **Write this paper in *your* own words**. Don’t worry if you’re ESL or if you don’t think you’re a good writer. I want to hear your ideas, your experiences, your impressions, all in your own words. I won’t be grading for grammar. I’m grading on content and meeting the minimum requirements set out in the instructions.
* **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!** Do your own work. You have to write what is in your head, your heart, your mind. YOUR words are better than anyone else’s in telling me about what you know and what your think and believe. Don’t risk flunking this assignment by plagiarizing because you can do really, really well on this assignment without plagiarizing. If you do any outside research to support some point you wish to make and include it in your paper you MUST show where you got the material. You don’t need to use a formal system like MLA or APA, or Turabian. You may simply, in parentheses after “quoting” the material from the outside source tell me where you got it.
* **DO YOUR OWN WORK!** Do not work on this with another student. If you copy another student’s paper in part or whole, both you AND the student you copied from will be severely penalized. You will likely receive a grade of **F**…perhaps even a grade of **ZERO**. Be aware, I check carefully for plagiarism and sharing of work. And I am quite good at finding cheating and more than willing to flunk a student for plagiarizing and copying another’s work. BUT if you do your own work, if you correct cite and document where you got words or information from an outside source, if you follow these instructions, then you likely will earn a very good grade, a grade which will be 25% of your final course grade.
* Type the paper on your word processor and the highlight and copy the paper, then paste it into the submission box on the writing assignment module and submit it from there. Double space if you can but if the pasting into the dialogue box turns a double-spaced paper into a single-spaced paper do not worry…the single space is fine.

## DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF PAPER BY POSTING IT IN THE DIALOGUE BOX ON THE CANVAS ASSIGNMENT SITE AND SENDING IT VIA CANVAS IS SUNDAY, MAY 6, 2018, BEFORE 11:59 P.M.

## *If you have questions about the assignment or need assistance, don’t hesitate to write me at* *johnben.sutter@hccs.edu* *and I’ll do all I can to help.*

## READ THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES FOR THIS PAPER AND INCLUDE MATERIAL FROM THESE ARTICLES IN YOUR PAPER (BE SURE TO CITE TO THE SOUCE WHENEVER YOU QUOTE FROM AN ARTICLE OR PARAPHRASE MATERIAL FROM AN ARTICLE)

*You don’t have to use a lot from each one of the articles below, but just want you need from each of them to prove your points you’re trying to make.*

Michael Mitchell, Michael Leachman, and Kathleen Masterson, “A Lost Decade in Higher Education Funding: State Cuts Have Driven Up Tuition and Reduced Quality.” **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**, 23 August 2017.

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/a-lost-decade-in-higher-education-funding>

Lauren McGaughy and J. David McSwane, “Who’s a Better Steward When It Comes to Texas College Costs?” **Dallas Morning News**, 4 August 2016.

<http://interactives.dallasnews.com/2016/tuition-costs/>

Clare Cardona, “Texas College Tuition Up 55% Since 2003 Deregulation, Analysis Shows,” **Dallas Morning News**, September 2012.

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/texas/2012/09/22/texas-college-tuition-up-55-since-2003-deregulation-analysis-shows>

Charles Schwertner, “Tuition Deregulation is Failing Texas Students,” **Texas Tribune**, 7 December 2014.

<https://www.tribtalk.org/2014/12/07/tuition-deregulation-is-failing-texas-students/>

Benjamin Wermund, “Tuition on the Rise at Texas Universities,” **Houston** Chronicle, 15 January 2015.

<https://www.chron.com/local/education/campus-chronicles/article/Tuition-on-the-rise-at-Texas-universities-6002358.php>

Benjamin Wermund, “College Tuition on the Rise in Texas, Far Exceeding Household Income Growth,” **Houston Chronicle**, 27 April 2016.

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/College-tuition-on-the-rise-in-Texas-far-7377309.php>

Matthew Watkins and Annie Daniel, “Texas Families are Struggling to Pay for College—But So is the State,” **Texas Tribune**, 7 February 2017.

<https://www.texastribune.org/2017/02/07/texas-tuition-increasing-state-funding-falling/>

*Please alert me immediately if you have trouble with any of these links.*

*Also report any error, omissions or confusion directions in this assignment sheet so that I may correct it for you and the class. Thank you.*