

SEVENTH EDITION

# TEXAS POLITICS

GOVERNING THE LONE STAR STATE



CAL JILLSON

ROUTLEDGE

# TEXAS

## POLITICS

The seventh edition of this popular text has been expanded and updated to better fit the needs of a stand-alone Texas politics course. Jillson continues to approach the politics of the Lone Star State from historical, developmental, and analytical perspectives, while giving students the most even-handed, readable, and engaging description of Texas politics available today. Students are encouraged to connect the origins and development of government and politics in Texas to its current practice and the alternatives possible through change and reform. This text helps instructors prepare their students to master the origin and development of the Texas Constitution, the structure and powers of state and local government in Texas, how Texas fits into the U.S. federal system, as well as political participation, the electoral process, and public policy in Texas.

*Texas Politics* offers instructors and students an unmatched range of pedagogical aids and tools. Each chapter opens with an engaging vignette and a series of focus questions to orient readers to the learning objectives at hand and concludes with a chapter summary, a list of key terms, review questions, suggested readings, and web resources. “Let’s Compare” boxes help students see how Texas sits alongside other states, “Texas Legends” boxes spotlight key figures in Texas political history, “Pro & Con” boxes bring conflicting political views into sharper focus and every chapter features a timeline of important events in Texas history.

### **New to the seventh edition**

- Covers the 2016 national elections, the 2017 legislative session, and the 2018 state and national elections as they affect Texas.
- Highlights Governor Greg Abbott’s call for a constitutional convention; Texas voter ID law updates; redistricting cases; the right of secession; and *Obergefell v. Hodges*.
- Provides a detailed study of the 2018–2019 state budget and the taxing and spending decisions that went into it, including the Texas Supreme Court school funding decision of 2016.

**Cal Jillson** is professor in the department of political science at Southern Methodist University. His recent books include *American Government: Political Development and Institutional Change*, 10th edition; *Lone Star Tarnished: A Critical Look at Texas Politics and Public Policy*, 3rd edition; *The American Dream in History, Politics, and Fiction*; and *Pathways to Democracy: The Political Economy of Democratic Transition*. He is frequently cited in local and national media on a range of political issues.



An author-written Test Bank is available as an eResource on the Webpage for the book:  
[www.routledge.com/9780367028121](http://www.routledge.com/9780367028121)

## Praise for Previous Editions

"I've taught from all four editions of Cal Jillson's *Texas Politics* and am now looking forward to the fifth edition. I've organized my Texas government course to the Jillson text and it works like a charm, be it for a full semester or a shorter summer session."

—Gary Brown, *Lone Star College-Montgomery*

"Ounce per ounce this new Jillson 300-page edition, is among the better reads on Texas politics. The mandated essentials for Student Learning Objectives are presented in clear, to-the-point, prose; good tool for government teachers and students of rough-and-tumble Texan politics."

—Jose Angel Gutierrez, *University of Texas-Arlington*

"Jillson's text offers an excellent description and analysis of politics and political institutions in Texas. Students will appreciate the accessible and lively writing style. Brief but thorough, this textbook is well suited to the task of introducing students to Texas government."

—Daniel Sledge, *University of Texas-Arlington*

"Cal Jillson has provided students with a concise yet thorough introduction to the often Byzantine intricacies of the Texas government. Especially helpful are the special features in each chapter that bring abstract concepts into contemporary and concrete focus. Students who use this book will find it engaging, timely, and relevant, and will be spurred to further independent exploration of their state's institutions, warts and all—a critical step toward becoming actively participating democratic citizens."

—Kevin T. Holton, *South Texas College*

"Cal Jillson has masterfully developed a Texas politics book that combines readability with scholarship and enables the student to understand much of the institutional structure and unique character of Texas within the Federal context. Jillson provides needed insights to understanding Texas institutions and the interactions of interest groups within those institutions. He does so in an enjoyable readable format while addressing the important Texas state-mandated student learning outcomes and the significance of Texas politics for everyone. *Texas Politics* is reflective of the myriad of interesting stories which made Texas what it is today."

—Ray Sandoval, *Richland College*

"*Texas Politics* is a well-written and documented text that will be an asset to any professor or student interested in Texas politics. As mentioned in the Preface, one will find a broad 'range of pedagogical aids and tools' that will be helpful in the classroom."

—Morris D. Drumm, *Texas Christian University*

# TEXAS

## POLITICS

Governing the Lone Star State

CAL JILLSON

Southern Methodist University

Seventh Edition

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"Texas is a state of mind. Texas is an obsession. Above all, Texas is a nation in every sense of the word . . . Like most passionate nations Texas has its own private history based on, but not limited by, facts."

John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley*,  
1962, pp. 201–202



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# PREFACE

*Texas Politics: Governing the Lone Star State* was a joy to write. That joy turned to quiet satisfaction as teachers and students of Texas politics found the first six editions of this book accessible, informative, and, yes, fun. In this thoroughly revised and expanded seventh edition, we treat Texas politics as serious business, but we also recognize that it is a great show. Decisions that Texas political leaders make about taxes, education, health care, and child services directly affect the quality of people's lives and the prospects for their future success and security. But for the serious political junkie, it does not get any better than watching Ted Cruz redefine the Republican Party, watching the Democrats try to get up off the mat one more time, and watching demographic change reshuffle the partisan deck of Texas politics. I have tried to capture the structure and dynamics, the poetry and the prose, the good, the bad, and the ugly of Texas politics.

This book has been designed as a stand-alone text to fulfill the revised requirements of the Texas Government course. All of the topics and student learning outcomes (SLOs) mandated for the Texas Government course are treated in a thorough yet engaging way to enhance the teaching environment for faculty and the learning environment for students. My goal is to help teachers and students understand and enjoy Texas politics.

For those instructors who want more public policy in their Texas Politics course, I recommend combining this book, *Texas Politics: Governing the Lone Star State*, with my *Lone Star Tarnished: A Critical Look at Texas Politics and Public Policy* (Routledge, 3rd edition, 2018). *Lone Star Tarnished* offers chapters on wealth and income, public schools and higher education, social services, energy and the environment and more. These books work well together in my Texas Politics course and might work well together in yours. Contact me at [cjllson@smu.edu](mailto:cjllson@smu.edu) if you have questions.

*Texas Politics* approaches the politics of the Lone Star State from historical, developmental, and analytical perspectives. Each chapter opens with a discussion of the origins and development of the subject of the chapter, whether that subject is the Texas Constitution, the status of party competition in the state, or the role and powers of the governor. Once we know how some aspect of Texas politics has developed over time, we can ask how and how effectively it works today. And then, inevitably, the discussion must shift to alternatives,

to political change and reform. This text will allow teachers to share with their students the evolution of Texas politics, where we stand today, and where we seem to be headed.

In this new seventh edition, I have revised the text while still keeping in mind that my goal is to help teachers open and sustain an interesting conversation with their students. Faculty know too much that is fascinating and students have too many interesting questions for any book to try to anticipate and address them all. What I have done in the space that I have allowed myself is to describe how Texas politics works, how it came to work that way, and what general range of possibilities, both for continuity and for change, the future seems to hold. Where the conversation goes from there is up to students and their teachers, as it should be.

To students, I have tried to say more than that politics is important because it affects your lives in important ways and continuously. I have tried to provide a sense of how politics works and how people can become involved in it so that when an issue arises that you feel strongly about you will feel empowered. Politics is not just a spectator sport. It is a game that we are all entitled to play. Those who play Texas politics do not always win, but those who do not play almost always lose. To faculty teaching Texas politics, I have tried to help you communicate to your students what we know as political scientists and how much fun we had discovering it and sharing it.

Instructors and students will find an unmatched range of pedagogical aids and tools built into *Texas Politics*. Each chapter opens with a thought provoking vignette and a number of focus questions and concludes with a chapter summary, a list of key terms, suggested readings, and web resources. Each chapter's opening vignette is a compelling story that goes to the heart of a key issue to be covered in the chapter. It is intended to be an eye-opener, to capture student interest, before the content of the chapter puts the story conveyed in the vignette in its full context. The focus questions are listed at the beginning of the chapter and then again in the margins of the chapter where the information answering the question is to be found. Key terms are bolded in the text, listed at the end of the chapter, and included in a Glossary at the end of the book. Each chapter presents several carefully designed tables or figures to highlight the major ideas, issues, and institutions discussed. Each chapter also contains three pedagogical features guaranteed to capture student attention and spark classroom conversation and debate. A "Let's Compare" feature compares Texas to other states on some important dimension or issue, such as urbanization, voter turnout, gubernatorial powers, or tax rates. A "Pro & Con" feature presents both sides of a controversial topic like voter ID laws, campaign contribution limits, or legislator compensation in a way intended to open a classroom debate. Another feature, "Texas Legends," introduces students to the great names of Texas politics, not just Sam Houston and LBJ, but Minnie Fisher Cunningham and Sarah T. Hughes, names that students should know but may not yet know.

## NEW TO THIS EDITION

- Thorough consideration of the 2016 national elections, the 2017 legislative session, and the 2018 state and national elections as they affect Texas.
- In Chapter 2, we highlight Governor Abbott’s call for a constitutional convention (to reconsider the federal constitution, not ours) and in a new Pro & Con box we ask “Does Texas Have the Right to Secede” *spoiler alert*—no. Also in Chapter 2, we explore *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), the gay marriage case, from the perspective of federalism.
- In Chapter 3, we provide a detailed exploration of the 2018 gubernatorial race between Greg Abbott and Lupe Valdez, featuring a new table presenting vote splits by age, income, gender, race, ethnicity, and more. The Pro & Con dealing with Texas’s 2011 voter ID law has been thoroughly revised to reflect the 2016 federal court requirement that the law be made more voter friendly and the 2017 Trump administration switch from supporting the plaintiffs to supporting the state.
- In Chapter 4, we describe the fight that business interests put up against the “bathroom Bill” in the 2017 Texas legislature and the new group of West Texas mega-donors supporting conservative causes in the state.
- In Chapter 5, we assess a series of redistricting cases moving through the federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, that effect Texas and, potentially, many other states.
- In Chapter 7, we assess the first full term in office of Governor Greg Abbott and Lt. Governor Dan Patrick.
- In Chapter 8, we add a new section on the structure, strengths, and weaknesses of the Texas Commission of Judicial Conduct.
- In Chapter 9, in photos and text we highlight the election of Sylvester Turner as mayor of Houston and the national response to the police shootings in Dallas.
- In Chapter 10, we provide a detailed study of the 2018–2019 state budget and the taxing and spending decisions that went into it, including the Texas Supreme Court school funding decision of 2016.

In addition, Routledge hosts an eResource on the Webpage for this book. To help instructors with classroom preparation, the eResource includes an Author-written Test Bank with a range of question types, and all attuned to the course’s SLOs. The eResource can be found at [www.routledge.com/9781138290679](http://www.routledge.com/9781138290679).

*Texas Politics* is organized in ten chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 trace the state’s political history and place Texas within the broader context of American federalism. Chapter 1 describes the history and settlement of Texas and the cultural, economic, and political developments to the modern period. Chapter 2 describes the constitutional history of Texas, lays out the major provisions of the Texas Constitution, and describes how Texas fits into the American federal system.

Chapters 3 through 5 deal with political behavior. Chapter 3 deals with voters, campaigns, and elections. Key topics include voter registration, turnout,

campaign finance, and the conduct of Texas elections. Chapter 4 describes the resources and activities of interest groups in Texas and the generally ineffectual attempts to regulate them. Chapter 5 describes structure, history, and prospects of political parties in Texas.

Chapters 6 through 9 detail the major political institutions of Texas: the legislature, the governor and the executive branch, the judicial system, and local governments. Chapter 10 describes the budgetary process, major sources of tax revenues, and the major programs and expenditures of Texas state government. Special attention has been given to recent controversies over school finance, immigration, abortion rights, affirmative action, and redistricting. The personalities and issues of the 2014 and 2018 Texas elections are explored throughout.

The 2014 elections have been covered in detail because they ushered in great change. After 14 years as governor, Rick Perry declined to run for reelection, setting off a general scramble for high office in the state. The race for governor, in which Attorney General Greg Abbott (R-Houston) bested State Senator Wendy Davis (D-Fort Worth), drew national attention. Long-time Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst faced three challengers in the Republican primary: State Senator Dan Patrick, Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson, and Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples. Dan Patrick ultimately emerged victorious. Finally, George P. Bush, upon whom many future Republican hopes are pinned, was elected land commissioner. As a result, all six statewide executive offices had new incumbents following the 2014 elections. In 2018, all had been in office for four years, all had reshaped their offices, all had experienced both success and failure, so all had track records that voters could weigh and assess.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to the Routledge team that brought this edition of the book to print. Jennifer Knerr, as Acquisitions Editor, continues to have faith in the book. Ze'ev Sudry and Anna Dolan gently but very efficiently coordinated the development of this project, Colin Morgan kept the reader front of mind as he copy-edited the manuscript, and the rest of the Routledge team who brought the book to press.

Equally important were the reviewers who kept this project focused on the major issues of Texas politics. Present at the creation were: Nancy Bednar, Del Mar College; Bob Bezdek, Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi; Bob Bilodeau, South Plains College; Paul Blakelock, Kingwood College; Brent Boyea, University of Texas at Arlington; Gary Brown, Montgomery College; Cecillia Castillo, Texas State University, San Marcos; Morris Drumm, Texas Christian University; Brian Farmer, Amarillo College; Jose Angel Gutierrez, University of Texas at Arlington; Stefan Haag, Austin Community College; Robert Holder, McLennan Community College; Kevin Holton, South Texas College; Timothy Hoye, Texas Women's University; Jerry Polinard, University of Texas, Pan American; Ray Sandoval, Richland College; Daniel Sledge, University of Texas at Arlington; and Robert E. Sterken Jr, University of Texas at Tyler. Each is a Texas politics expert in his or her own right and I was proud to have their advice and guidance. Special thanks go to Gary Brown who was always there when we needed a really well-trained eye really fast.



Southern Methodist University has, as always, been supportive of my work and the Political Science Department has created a great working environment. Harold Stanley, Dennis Simon, and Matt Wilson teach me something about Texas politics every day. Beyond all of these, my wife Jane has provided the peace, security, and support that make life a joy.

# Chapter 1

## **TEXAS AND THE TEXANS: THEN AND NOW<sup>1</sup>**

### **JUAN SEGUIN AND THE TEJANOS' DILEMMA**

Despite the fact that Tejanos fought for independence at the Alamo and San Jacinto, mistrust and greed put Anglos and Tejanos at odds. Juan Seguin, perhaps the most famous Tejano participant in the Texas revolution, was a tragic case in point.

Juan Seguin came from a prominent Tejano family in San Antonio. Seguin fought at the Alamo before Travis sent him through the Mexican lines with letters and instructions to bring back reinforcements. Seguin delivered the letters but returned with reinforcements too late: the Alamo had already fallen. Seguin then led cavalry covering the retreat east of Houston's ragged army and of Anglo families trying to outrun Santa Anna's advance. Seguin's cavalry detachment rejoined Houston's army at San Jacinto. Houston was sensitive to the ambiguous place of the Tejanos in the fight for independence. On the eve of the decisive battle, Houston ordered Seguin and nineteen Tejanos to the rear with orders to guard the baggage train. Seguin protested and Houston relented, permitting the Tejanos to rejoin the line only after they had placed distinctive markers on their hats so the Anglos could tell them from the enemy.

After independence was secured, Seguin retained his rank in the Texas army and in 1840 he was elected mayor of San Antonio. As Texas filled with aggressive Anglo adventurers ignorant of the Tejanos service in the revolution, two Mexican invasions of South Texas in 1842 caused a spike in Anglo/Tejano tensions that brought Seguin down. In the first invasion, Seguin was ordered by Texas military officials to burn San Antonio to prevent its capture and use by the Mexicans. Seguin refused, abandoned the city, and then counterattacked, chasing the Mexicans from Texas, but

both Texas officials and San Antonio Anglos accused him of cowardice, if not treason. Fearing for his life, Seguin fled to Mexico, to “seek refuge among my enemies.” In Mexico, Seguin was arrested and impressed into the Mexican army where he fought during the U.S./Mexican War. Though Seguin returned briefly to Texas after the war, there was no place for him. He spent most of the rest of his long life—he died in 1890—in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

Ethnic tensions have been at the core of Texas politics from the beginning. After independence, Texas Anglos quickly reduced Hispanics to political and economic marginality. Tensions continue to exist today. Will the rapid growth of the Hispanic population—to plurality status by 2020 and majority status by 2040—reduce or intensify those tensions?



### Focus Questions

- Q1** Where does the larger-than-life Texas mystique come from?
- Q2** How has the geography of Texas affected the state’s development?
- Q3** How has the Texas economy evolved over the state’s history?
- Q4** How has the ethnic mix of the Texas population evolved over time?
- Q5** What factors will determine the future prosperity and stability of Texas?

**Q1** Where does the larger-than-life Texas mystique come from?

**T**exas is a big, complex, multifaceted, and utterly fascinating state. In both myth and reality, Texas is larger-than-life. It is the second largest state in the Union (behind only Alaska) and the second most populous (behind only California). No other state can summon an equally romantic history, beginning with the Alamo, a decade as the independent Republic of Texas, the cattle drives, the oil fields, and J.R. Ewing’s “Dallas.” Only California, Florida, and New York can boast anything similar—a brand name—an image that has implanted itself in the popular mind. Twenty-nine million people call Texas home today.

Throughout its history, Texas has attracted a volatile mix of adventurers, talented rascals on the rebound, and mavericks of various description. Mark Twain’s famous novel, *The Adventurers of Tom Sawyer* (1876), set in the Mississippi River town of St. Petersburg, Missouri, around 1840, included multiple references to Texas as a haven for criminals in flight from the law. In the

famous “haunted house” scene, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn overhear Injun Joe and his gang planning one last job and then their escape. Injun Joe explained: “We’ll do that ‘dangerous’ job after I’ve spied around a little. . . . Then for Texas! We’ll leg it together.”<sup>2</sup>

In fiction, Texas was beyond the reach of the law, but in “real life” most immigrants to early Texas were hardworking men and women searching for a fresh start. As early as the 1820s, the message *G.T.T.* (*Gone to Texas*) was scribbled on log cabins and boarded-up storefronts of Americans looking for a new beginning.<sup>3</sup> Stephen F. Austin, the founder of **Anglo** Texas, was born in Connecticut and schooled in Kentucky before settling in Texas. Sam Houston was born in Virginia and raised in Tennessee where he became governor before scandal drove him into Indian country and then on to Texas. Bowie came from Kentucky, Crockett from Tennessee, Fannin and Lamar from Georgia, and Travis from South Carolina. A few found Texas by traveling south: Anson Jones from Massachusetts, David Burnet from New Jersey, and Deaf Smith from New York.

History did not treat Texans gently. Texans had to fight for independence against a dangerous and arbitrary Mexican government. After ten rocky years of independence and fifteen as an American state on the distant frontier, Texas threw in its lot with the Confederacy. The **Civil War** left Texas defeated, occupied, and deeply traumatized. **Reconstruction** produced a sullen standoff between Anglo Texans and their state government. Once Anglo Texans regained control of their state in the 1870s, they wrote a constitution designed, above all else, to make government too weak and diffused to threaten them further. Modern Texans depend on that same government to confront and solve the vastly more complex problems of the twenty-first century. We will ask whether this nineteenth-century constitution serves Texas well today.

In Chapter 1 we describe the people, culture, geography, and economy of Texas. How did Texas, a late arrival as the 28th state, become “the great state of Texas,” or what Texas humorist Molly Ivins simply called “the great state” (assuming, apparently, that the Texas part was obvious)? Who settled Texas? When did they come? Where did they come from and where did they settle? How did they wrestle a living from the land? And what kind of society and polity did they intend to build?

## ORIGINS AND SETTLEMENTS

The land that became Texas had been home to native peoples for more than 16,000 years.<sup>4</sup> Only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did European exploration, conquest, and colonization impinge upon these first Texans. As late as 1800, between 20,000 and 30,000 Native Americans, including mighty tribes like the Comanche and Apache, lived in and ranged across Texas. About 3,500 Spanish Mexicans lived north of the **Rio Grande**, about half in San Antonio and most of the rest in La Bahia (Goliad) and Nacogdoches. Anglos and blacks numbered only in the dozens.<sup>5</sup>

**Anglo** A Spanish term referring to non-Hispanic whites.

**Civil War** The U.S. Civil War, pitting the northern states against the southern states, occurred between 1861 and 1865.

**Reconstruction** The period of post-Civil War (1867 to 1872) military occupation of the South during which the North attempted to reconstruct southern social, political, and economic life.

**Rio Grande** Spanish for Grand River, the Rio Grande forms Texas’s southern border with Mexico from El Paso to Brownsville.

By 1900, 2.35 million whites and 620,000 blacks lived in Texas. About 71,000 Hispanics (4 percent of the total population) lived in South Texas, most between the Neuces and the Rio Grande, and the Indians largely were gone (0.5 percent). The Anglo settlement of Texas (or conquest of northern Mexico, depending upon your taste and perspective) was one of the most stunning population movements in history.

## **Native Peoples**

The first Texans were big game—*really* big game—hunters. They tracked mammoth and giant bison across the plains of what today is north central Texas. As the last ice age receded about 7,000 years ago, these prehistoric animals disappeared and the native peoples became hunters and gatherers focusing on smaller animals, including deer and gazelle, as well as fish, nuts, berries, and useful plants. Settled agriculture began among some native tribes, especially in east and northeast Texas, around 400 AD. Hunting, fishing, and gathering from nature were still important, but crops of corn, beans, and squash provided flexibility and variety to native diets.

Intruders arrived early in the sixteenth century. The Spanish came first, but others, more numerous and more powerful, followed. Native people successfully resisted the Spanish attempts to draw them to the missions of early Texas, but they could not resist the rising Anglo immigration of the nineteenth century. The Caddo, Tonkawa, and Karankawa of Central and East Texas were subdued by the 1850s.<sup>6</sup> By the late 1870s, the Apache and the Comanche were forced from the Hill Country and high plains north into Oklahoma and west into New Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

## **Spanish Explorers and Mexican Settlers**

The Spanish explorer Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca is one of history's most intriguing figures. Initially shipwrecked in Florida, his party built barges and put to sea only to wreck again on Galveston Island. Cabeza de Vaca spent nearly eight years (1528–36) living among and trading with native tribes throughout Texas and the Southwest as far as the Gulf of California. His tales of prosperous lands and cities of gold piqued the interest of Spanish officials in Mexico City. Francisco Vasquez de Coronado was dispatched to make a more systematic survey. Coronado and a force of 2,000 Spaniards and Mexican-Indians spent nearly three years (1540–42) exploring Texas and the Southwest, penetrating as far as central Kansas. Coronado's failure to find the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola cooled Spanish interest in their northern provinces for more than a century.<sup>8</sup>

A brief incursion into Texas in the 1680s by the French trader and explorer Rene-Robert-Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle,<sup>9</sup> finally spurred the Spanish to expand their mission activities beyond the **Rio Grande Valley** as far north as San Antonio and as far east as Nacogdoches.<sup>10</sup> Still, as the nineteenth century dawned, Texas remained the lightly populated northernmost province of Spanish Mexico.<sup>11</sup>

**Rio Grande Valley** Texas's four southernmost counties, often referred to simply as "the valley," are heavily Hispanic. The phrase is sometimes used more expansively to refer to all of South Texas.

Then, in 1810, Mexico rebelled against Spain and after more than a decade of warfare won independence in 1821. Even as Mexicans celebrated independence, an Anglo tide was rising in Texas.

## **American Settlers**

Americans began drifting into Texas in small numbers beginning about 1800. The first major Anglo settlement, organized by Moses Austin and carried forward by his son, Stephen F. Austin, was established in 1823. Austin was authorized by Mexican authorities to offer up to one square league (4,428 acres) to settlers willing to occupy and work the land. Settlers were expected to be (or be willing to say they were) Catholics, to become Mexican citizens, and to forswear slavery. As Anglo numbers grew, Mexican authorities worried about how to control these independent, even rebellious, immigrants. Attempts to limit immigration and to enforce laws requiring Catholicism and prohibiting slavery irritated the Anglos and tensions grew.<sup>12</sup>

Mexican authorities worried that too many Americans would come and that their loyalties would remain with their homeland. The worry that the U.S. had designs on Texas was never far from Mexican minds. They had reason to worry. In 1832 Sam Houston, often seen as an unofficial U.S. agent, wrote to his old friend President Andrew Jackson, to report: "I have travelled near five hundred miles across Texas, and am now enabled to judge pretty near correctly of the soil, and the resources of the country, and I have no hesitancy in pronouncing it the finest country of its extent upon the globe." Texas boosterism and braggadoccio developed early.

The election of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna as president of Mexico in 1834 was initially seen as promising. Texans believed that Santa Anna supported their autonomy within a loose federal state. But Santa Anna soon sought to consolidate power by centralizing control over all of Mexico, including Texas. Hostilities broke out between Texans and elements of the Mexican army near San Antonio in October 1835. The first fight was the famous "Come and Take It" skirmish in which residents of Gonzales, about 70 miles east of San Antonio, defended a small cannon against Mexican cavalry sent to seize it.



North Wind Picture Archives

The iconic battle in the Texas War for Independence occurred at the Alamo in San Antonio. The siege ended when the Alamo fell to a predawn Mexican attack on March 6, 1836.



General Sam Houston later served as president of the Republic of Texas, U.S. senator, and governor of Texas.

**Republic of Texas** Texas was an independent nation from 1836 until it became a U.S. state on December 29, 1845.

A wild Texan charge (it would not be the last) dispersed the Mexicans and retained the cannon, at least for a time.

By early 1836, Santa Anna had crossed the Rio Grande at the head of a large army. The real fight for Texas was about to begin. The Texans were bloodied early, first at the Alamo (March 6, 1836) and then in the slaughter at Goliad (March 27, 1836). These early defeats sent thousands of panic-stricken Anglo Texans fleeing eastward in what came to be known as the “Runaway Scrape.” General Sam Houston’s ragtag Texas army also retreated eastward, stopping where possible to train the unruly volunteers in marching, close order drill, and firing by platoons.

Confident of victory, Santa Anna divided his force, sending several columns in pursuit of the bedraggled Texans. One column was sent to capture the provisional government of Texas and another was to find and destroy the Texas army. Still another was to drive the fleeing civilians across the Sabine and out of Texas. Santa Anna accompanied the lead elements in pursuit of Houston’s army. Yet, within weeks, the Texans had outmaneuvered Santa Anna’s force, caught them napping (literally), and routed them at San Jacinto (April 21, 1836). Santa Anna himself was captured on April 22 and forced to sign treaties recognizing Texas’s independence and withdrawing the remaining Mexican armies

south of the Rio Grande. A tentative independence had been won, but danger and uncertainty lurked all about.

The **Republic of Texas** experienced a decade-long rollercoaster ride of independent nationhood. Continued immigration and expansion vied with two Mexican invasions, frequent flirtations with bankruptcy, hyperinflation, and political instability to shape the new nation’s future. Once Texas began to stabilize under the strong hand of President Sam Houston in the early 1840s, the U.S. grew wary of Texas as a competitor for influence over the West. To forestall this competition, U.S. President James K. Polk welcomed Texas into the Union on December 29, 1845. Polk’s action sparked the Mexican–American War (1846–48) and secured for the U.S. not only Texas but all of the American Southwest and California.<sup>13</sup>

## **The Slaves**

Spain and Mexico outlawed slavery by the 1820s, so Anglos were reluctant to bring slaves into Texas before the 1830s. Once Texas secured its independence

## TEXAS LEGENDS | SAM HOUSTON: SHAPING EARLY TEXAS

No figure bulks larger in Texas history than Sam Houston. He is our flawed George Washington, though a comparison to Houston's mentor, Andrew Jackson, might be more apt. All three were men whose military accomplishments paved their way to political careers. Washington was born into the plantation aristocracy of Virginia, while Jackson and Houston were the rough products of the early nineteenth-century frontier.

Sam Houston was born on March 2, 1793, the fifth of nine children, to Samuel and Elizabeth (Paxton) Houston in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. The senior Sam Houston planned to move his family to Tennessee, partially to escape growing debts, but died before the move could be accomplished. His family moved on without him, settling in Maryville, Tennessee, in 1807. Young Sam Houston did not take to school, farm work, or clerking in his brother's store, so he left home at 16 to live among the Cherokee. They named him "The Raven."

Houston returned to Maryville in 1812 and before long enlisted in the army to fight the British in the War of 1812. Houston rose quickly through the ranks, capturing the attention of General Andrew Jackson, especially by his heroic actions in the 1814 Battle of Horseshoe Bend, where he was wounded three times. Jackson acted as sponsor and mentor to Houston until Jackson's death in June 1845.

Once he recovered from his wounds, Houston studied law and opened a law practice in 1818 in Lebanon, Tennessee. Soon he was appointed local prosecutor and militia captain in Nashville and his political career took off like a rocket. He was elected twice to the U.S. House and, in 1827 at the age of 34, he was elected governor of Tennessee. Then it all came crashing down. On January 22, 1829, the 36-year-old Houston married 19-year-old Eliza Allen of a prominent local family. Within weeks the marriage collapsed, Eliza returned to her family, and by April Houston had resigned the governorship and fled again to the Cherokee, now in the Arkansas Territory. Soon Houston had a new Indian name, which translated as "the Big Drunk."

By late 1832, Houston was in Texas and immediately swept up in the coming revolution. In 1833

and 1835, Houston attended conventions considering Texas's political and military options. He was commissioned a major general in the Texas army in November 1835 and at the March 1836 convention that declared Texas independence he was appointed commander-in-chief of Texas's military forces—such as they were. Within days, the Alamo, under the command of Travis and Bowie, fell and Fannin's troops, captured near Goliad, were slaughtered. Houston, initially with fewer than 400 men under his command, retreated east before Santa Anna's superior forces. By the time Houston's army reached San Jacinto its numbers had grown to 900, though the Mexican force was nearly twice that. Yet, in the mid-afternoon, "siesta time," of April 21, 1836, Houston ordered an attack and in less than twenty minutes won a decisive victory. By the end of the day, the Mexicans counted 630 dead, 203 wounded, and 730 captured. Santa Anna was captured the next day and soon forced to sign the Treaty of Velasco recognizing Texas independence.

In the fall of 1836, Houston was elected the first president of the Republic of Texas. Since there was a one-term limit on the presidency, he served in the Texas Congress in 1839–40, before being elected to the presidency again in 1841. Despite the tumult, 47-year-old Sam Houston married 21-year-old Margaret Moffette Lea of Marion, Alabama. They had eight children. When Texas was admitted to the Union in late 1845, Houston was elected to the United States Senate, where he served from February 21, 1846 through March 4, 1859. Houston unsuccessfully sought the governorship of Texas in 1857, but won it in 1859. He ran both times as a Unionist, arguing for negotiation of regional differences, rather than secession and war. Houston warned that the South would lose a war with the populous and industrialized North, but secession and war came anyway. When Texas voted to secede in February 1861 and joined the Confederacy in March, all officeholders, including Governor Houston, were required to take an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy. Houston refused and resigned, choosing to retire to his Huntsville home, rather than to fight either his state or his nation. Sam Houston died at Huntsville on July 26, 1863.



many southern slaveholders moved to Texas. Texas entered the Union as a slave state and the expansion of slavery in Texas continued through the 1850s. Most Texas slaves worked on cotton plantations east of a line running from Dallas through Austin to Corpus Christi.

In February 1861, Texas seceded from the United States to become the westernmost member of the Confederate States of America. Though Governor Sam Houston opposed secession, a majority of Texans embraced the Confederate cause. The Civil War and Reconstruction had a tremendous impact on Texas. Following Reconstruction, white Texans struggled to restore and then maintain the social, political, and economic primacy that they had enjoyed before the Civil War.

## THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF TEXAS

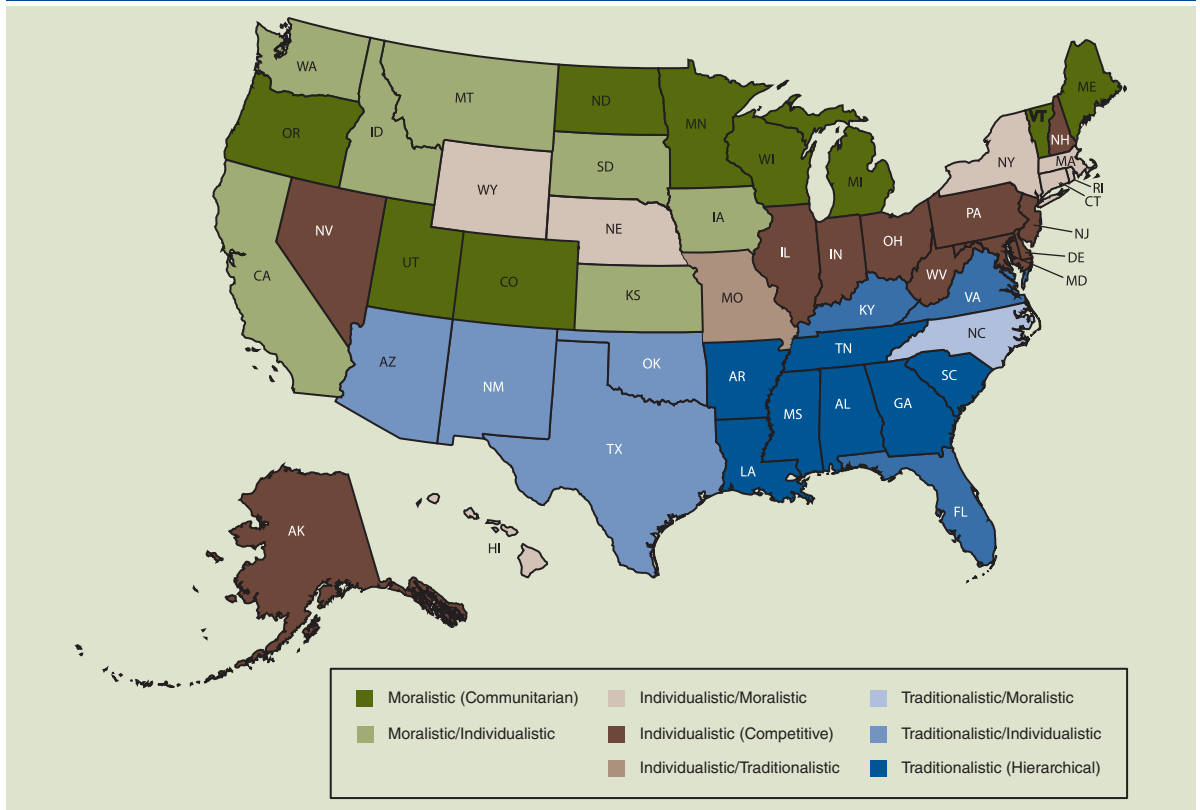
These formative decades stamped Texas political life with a distinctive feel and character. By the time Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836, Anglo Texans outnumbered Texans of Spanish or Mexican origin by ten to one. Anglo immigrants brought to Texas assumptions about and attitudes toward politics that they had learned in the United States. Most of the immigrants came out of the American South.

Scholars use the term **political culture** to denote widely shared attitudes toward politics.<sup>14</sup> These shared attitudes broadly define what citizens should expect from government and what roles they should expect to play in politics and governance. Political scientist Daniel Elazar has traced the roots of the American political culture back into the colonial period. By the 1830s, this American political culture (in the U.S. and Texas) had matured into a broad commitment to democratic capitalism for white men. Democratic capitalism joins elements of equality and community with elements of competition and hierarchy. Intriguingly, Elazar identified three regional **political subcultures** that draw from the broader American political culture, each in a distinctive way.

New England and the northern states draw most heavily from the egalitarian and communitarian strains (think town meetings) to form what Elazar called a moralistic political culture (see Figure 1.1). Today, we would probably call this a communitarian political culture, as moralistic tends to have strong religious overtones for us. Citizens in a moralistic political culture take politics seriously, participate at high levels, and approve higher taxes so that more public needs can be met. The Middle Atlantic and Middle Western states draw most heavily from the competitive strain (think Lincoln, railsplitter to president) to produce an individualistic political culture. Citizens in an individualistic political culture assume that politics, like business, is a competitive arena in which advancement can be sought, services can be delivered, contracts can be awarded, and benefits can be received. The South draws most heavily from the hierarchical strain (think *Gone with the Wind* and, in the Texas context, *Giant*) to produce a traditionalistic political culture. In a traditionalistic political culture, participation is low, government is small and taxes low, elites govern, and the maintenance of social order is paramount.

**Political culture** Widely held ideas concerning the relationship of citizens to their government and to each other in matters affecting politics and public affairs.

**Political subcultures** Distinct regional variations produced when some elements of the national political culture are emphasized and others deemphasized.

**FIGURE 1.1 Daniel Elazar's Regional Political Cultures**

Source: Adapted from Daniel J. Elazar, *American Federalism: A View from the States* (New York: HarperCollins, 1984), 124–125.

The first Anglo Texans came mostly out of the American South and settled in East Texas and the Gulf Coast region. The dominant southerners favored states' rights and the leadership of established elites. Midwesterners came somewhat later, in smaller numbers, and settled in North Texas, the Panhandle, and West Texas. They favored small government, low taxes, and individual opportunity. History, migration and immigration, urbanization, and economic change have mixed and modified these regional political subcultures. Nonetheless, scholars and political observers agree that the Texas political culture has always been, and remains, southern traditionalism with an admixture of western and midwestern individualism.<sup>15</sup>

As we shall see throughout this book, despite historic change, the Texas political culture has been remarkably stable.<sup>16</sup> The Texan political culture highlights small government, low taxes, and personal responsibility. Texas was once a rural agricultural state in which planter interests dominated the ruling Democratic Party. Today, Texas is an urban industrial state in which business interests dominate the ruling Republican Party. But throughout, political participation has been limited, citizens have been disengaged, the