**Class Overview:**
This course will introduce students to the fundamentals of state and local government in the state of Texas. The class will concern itself with the primary political institutions, actors, and public policies of Texas, while attempting to situate these in a national context when appropriate.

Topics Covered: Federalism and state policymaking; Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of Texas government; Political parties, interest groups and lobbying in Texas; Political campaigns and elections; Political ideology and the foundations of Texas political culture; State and local public policy issues;

**Learning Outcomes:**
1. Students shall be able to recognize and recall fundamental facts related to the: foundations of the state and local government, state and local political institutions, state and local political behavior, and state and local public policy.

2. Students shall be able to express and interpret information concerning key political concepts related to the: foundations of the state and local government, state and local political institutions, state and local political behavior, and state and local public policy.

**Method of Evaluating Outcomes:**
Successful completion of learning outcomes will be accomplished through formal testing via multiple-choice exams (demonstrate recall of key facts), writing assignments (demonstrate understanding of key facts), field observations (witness the practical application of learned material), and a group assignment (demonstrate independent learning, the ability to work collaboratively, and the synthesis and application of class material).

**Format:**
The class will be structured around instructor led lectures. The book will reinforce my lectures and students should read the corresponding chapters listed in the syllabus. Students will be encouraged (and required) to participate in class discussions, engage in analysis of the homework assignments, and to work collaboratively with their classmates.

**Books:**
Maxwell/Crain text on Texas Politics TAMUCC Edition is available in the campus bookstore. We will use the book again and the bookstore should buy it back. If you want
to purchase the book online you may buy the non-TAMUCC edition, but you need a copy ASAP!

**Grading Criteria:**

A. Attendance: Given that the Maymester course is short, but time intensive it is imperative that you always attend class. Each class is equivalent to roughly 2 weeks in the long semester. **If you miss more than (1) session you will automatically fail the course!**

Normal class day attendance (15% of your grade): 2% per day (-1% if you are late) *7 days (final 1% awarded for perfect attendance)

B. Field trip attendance (20%): 10% for attendance at each event. You instructor went to great lengths to plan these trips in advance and our hosts are expecting a certain number of people. There is no substitute for what you will learn on these trips and you will be penalized accordingly for non-attendance.

C. Final exam (25%): Cumulative multiple-choice exam to be taken on Tuesday, May 25.

D. Homework assignments (20%): short assignments where you respond to a few questions and are prepared to discuss them in class. **You must turn in all (4) assignments or receive no credit.** Each assignment should be no shorter than (2) pages.

E. Group project: (20%): Group presentation on a public policy issue in Texas

**Homework and Group Project Assignment Guidelines:**

Homework assignments:
Four assignments will be distributed and due the next class period. In each you should do some background research from your book/online sources and respond in essay form (minimum of 2-3 pages).

**Homework #1: Federalism and Education Policy- due May 16**
Everyone wants standards for K-12 education. We want to know that our kids are learning material that is important in their lives and for our future workforce. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is meant to create general standards and learning outcomes for schools, but critics argue it makes teachers teach to the test and children are learning less material than ever. With almost a decade after implementation college professors now argue we have a whole generation of NCLB students that cannot think critically or demonstrate basic college-level skills. Is NCLB a failure? States failed to do a better job prior to 2001. Should we leave it all up to the states again, should the federal government take a more active role? Is education that bad to begin with?
Homework #2: Choose a Political Party- due May 19
Fed up with the (2) major political parties? Why not choose a 3rd party option? Go to the link below and search through the extensive list of 3rd party choices currently on the political scene in American politics. Choose a party that you feel best represents your ideology and opinions. Please provide an overview of the parties’ platform and ideals and discuss why you think it is a good match for you politically:
http://www.politics1.com/parties.htm

Homework #3: What is my Political Compass? Due May 23
Follow the web links below and take both of the ideology quizzes. Write an essay describing the results of your quizzes. In your response please state if you agree or disagree with the results of the surveys and if there were inconsistencies in the results why you think this result occurred. Make sure you weave in some of your responses to the survey questions in your answer. Think carefully when reflecting on this one, as you have a (3) page minimum. Please cut and paste the results from the political compass test in your document (i.e. the grid that marks your political ideology that pops up after the quiz).
http://www.politicalcompass.org/test
http://typology.people-press.org/

Homework #4: Local Public Policy Issues- due May 26
Go to the Corpus Christi Caller Times website and read some local news stories:
Search through the articles and look at the stories that have a lot of comments. Based on this anecdotal evidence, what issues occupy your fellow citizens? What do people care about in this city?

Group Project: Identify, discuss, and solve a public policy problem in Texas.
Given the size of the class everyone will form groups of (3) and will attempt to solve a public policy problem in Texas (you will not want for problems because they are numerous and unsolved). You will work in groups that will present (on the last day of class) a detailed PowerPoint presentation that will include the following:

Identify: search out your issue and do a good amount of research. What is the history of this particular public policy problem? Why has it manifested itself into a policy issue over time? What is the extent of the problem? How much money does the government spend to address this issue? What solutions have been tried to solve the problem (if any)?

Solution: What are some of your solutions to dealing with this issue? Tell us how and why it will work. You will be graded on the quality of your group’s presentation and how well you can respond to questions from your peers and instructor during and after the presentation. Not everyone will need to present, but your group members will be grading you on your contribution. This is a serious term project for the class so treat it as such.
Required Standards:

1. Must have a minimum of 15-20 slides
2. Must cite and use sources and APA or MLA citations
3. Must last between 10-15 minutes (do not go over or under the time limit)

Possible topics (these are only suggestions):
The Texas Budget: Forecasting Pain in 2011
The failures of education policy
Funding schools: Investigating the role of school funding in educational success
Is social welfare that great: life on the government's dime?
How far will a college education get you (if anywhere) these days?
Failure to protect people from environmental pollution: should the needs of industry come before public health?
Environmental justice: the health and economic consequences of living next to heavy industry and being too poor to do anything about it
Do judicial elections corrupt the bench?
Privatized prisons and the incentives for mass incarceration
Should Texas do away with the death penalty?
Does locking people up reduce crime?
What do Texas politicians value: exploring the state budget
The obesity epidemic: why is Corpus Christi the fattest city in America and what are the consequences?
The colonias problem: Is it acceptable that many Texas live in 3rd world conditions?
I paid for this class: investigating how much students contribute to their college education and where TAMUCC spends its money.
The dead zone: how industrial and agricultural pollution is destroying the gulf
Guns on campus: will allowing college students to carry guns on campus make us safer (if we are not safe enough already)?
How bad is the illegal immigration problem in Texas and what should be done about it?

Course Schedule: Meeting time 12-3:45/BH 205
*The following is a tentative timeline for what material will be covered daily in the class. Breaks may increase/decrease depending on the course of instruction each day, as will the order of events.

Thursday, May 10: Introduction, Political Ideology, and Texas Political Culture
Introduction to class/distribute and discuss syllabus/roll taken 12-12:30
Lecture on Ideology 12:30-1:30
Lunch break 1:30-2:00
Lecture on Ideology and Texas Political Culture 2-2:45
Group projects chosen/groups meet and discuss projects with professor 2:45-3:45
Writing assignment #1 discussed
*Read chapters on ideology and the Texas Constitution in your textbook
Monday, May 14: Cooperative Federalism and Policymaking in the U.S. States
Lecture on Federalism 12-1:30
Lunch break 1:30-2:00
Lecture on Federalism 2-2:45
Watch documentary on ideology in America 2:45-3:45
**Homework assignment #1 is due**
*Read chapter on federalism in your textbook

Tuesday, May 15: Political Parties, Political Campaigns, and Elections in Texas
Lecture on campaigns and elections in Texas 12:00-1:30
Lunch break/groups meet 1:30-2:00
Discuss homework #1 questions on the topic of federalism in education 2-2:30
Watch documentary “Last Man Standing” 2:30-3:45
*Read chapters in your textbook on political parties and elections
*Possible Guest Speaker (Nueces County DA)

Wednesday, May 16: Courthouse Tour
You will need to arrange transportation to the courthouse downtown for a tour of the facilities, probation, judges, etc. You will meet your instructor and he will check roll on the day of the field trip. Details will follow in a later handout.
*Read chapters in your textbook on the legislative and executive branches of government in Texas

Thursday, May 17: Criminal Justice Policy and the Texas Judiciary
Lecture on prisons and the court system 12:00-1:30
Lunch break/groups meet 1:30-2:00
Discuss homework #2 2-2:30
Watch part of “The Plea” and “The Released” 2:30-3:45
**Homework #2 due**
*Read chapter on the Texas judiciary in your textbook

Monday, May 21: Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas
Lecture on lobbyists and influence in Texas politics 12-1:30
Lunch break 1:30-2:00
Watch “Vote for Me” on lobbying in Texas 2-3:30
Remaining time allotted for addressing group project questions
**Homework #3 due**
*Read chapters on interest groups and local politics in your textbook
Tuesday, May 22: Gun Control and Exam
Lecture on gun control policy 12-1:30
Lunch break 1:30-2:00
2-2:30-final opportunity to discuss group project with professor

Wednesday, May 23: All day and will run long.
**Prison Tour:** We will be going on a field trip to the Connally Prison Unit. Remember to sign up, get directions, and sign the waiver. The trip will take approximately 90 minutes so allot an appropriate amount of time for the drive. You must arrive at 9:30 for check-in. Once the door is locked you will not be allowed to enter. If you have work or family obligations, please allow about six hours in advance for the tour itself plus 2-3 hours of driving time.

Be warned! This is a maximum security prison. You will see and experience things that may make you uncomfortable. Inmates will likely berate some of you, cat call, make sexual gestures or statements (to men and women), and masturbate in your presence.

Prison is an entirely different world altogether, but this where the inmates live. It is not their intention to harm you and you should be respectful. You will be the center of attention! We will be escorted by guards and the warden for the entirety of the tour and you will come into contact with orderlies (especially when we eat lunch), but you will not come into contact with medium or maximum security offenders and you should avoid engaging them or getting close to their cells. Do not encourage bad behavior by wearing provocative clothing or making sexual gestures of statements. In fact you are required by prison rules to wear jeans and a shirt with no holes, graphics, etc.

Thursday, May 24: Presentation of Class Projects
*Homework #4 due*

Present group projects to the class

**Group Assignments and Presentation order:**

1:

2:
Friday, May 25: Final Exam

*Final Exam

**Communicating with your professor:** If you have any questions about the exam, your test grades, progress in the class, etc, please come by my office, give me a call or email

**Letters of Recommendation:** Many students are interested in going on to graduate school and require letters of recommendation from their professors. Many reach this point and are at a loss to find someone to write such a letter, perhaps because they have
never made a personal connection with a professor in the course of their studies or they are afraid to ask. I will be more than happy to write a letter of recommendation for students, but bear in mind that the quality of the letter is greatly impacted by the extent of our relationship which is going to be rather limited in this large section. I will write a maximum of (3) letters per semester.

**Interested in Graduate School?** I cannot speak for every discipline, but would love to chat with you about furthering your education beyond the undergraduate level, costs, trade-offs, pros and cons, etc. Just come by my office and ask.

**Political Science Major?** Interested in my discipline? Wondering if there are any decent job prospects for the Polisci major? Again, come by my office and we can weight the pros and cons.

**Extra Credit:** None. Please hesitate to ask.

**Student Responsibilities:**
TURN OFF CELL PHONES!!!
Pay attention during class. Private conversations, sleeping, and reading non-class related material will not be tolerated.
Learn something! Participate in class discussions.

**Students with Disabilities/Religious Needs:**
If you are a student with a disability or have special needs, please let me know during the first week of class. In addition, students observing religious holidays that conflict with class exams/presentations must let me know during the first week of class.
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Driftwood 101.
If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Academic Honesty:**
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) If unsure of what honesty entails or if for more information regarding the penalties for academic dishonesty, please refer to the University Catalog.

**Academic Advising**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**Grade Appeal Process**

As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, the student may take the steps below.

1. Presentation of grievance to instructor. (This step must be taken within fourteen calendar days after the beginning of the next term.)

2. Appeal to department chair or area coordinator.

3. Written appeal to the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee.

4. Preliminary review and advising by an ombudsman appointed by the Provost.

5. Submission of file by department chair to the chair of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee.

6. Review of file by committee chair and submission of case to committee.

7. Proceedings of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee. (Committee holds hearing, reviews data, presents findings to all parties, and makes recommendation to Provost.)

8. Decision by Provost.

9. Final appeal in writing to the Provost if student or instructor thinks appropriate procedures have not been followed.

For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.htm. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.