COURSE SYLLABUS
POLS 2306
TEXAS STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Spring 2012
T-TH 12:30 – 1:45 pm
BH 104

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Web: Blackboard 9.1
Office Hours: Tuesday 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and 5:00 – 7:00 p.m., Wednesday 11:00 am – Noon, Thursday 11:00 am – 12:30 pm by appointment as necessary.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an examination of the politics, government, and administration of American states, counties, cities, and special districts, with special emphasis on Texas. Topics include the role of state and local governments in the federal system and an examination how Texas State and local governments are influenced by historical context, local power structures, group pluralism, special interests and economics. “State and Local Government” is designed to give you a broad review of how government works at the local level in Texas. The Texas Constitution and government will be emphasized. This course meets the Texas State statutory requirement for Texas State government.

Attendance and punctuality are expected in all classes. If an absence is essential, please indicate the reason for the absence. Each class will be devoted to discussion and analysis of the specific topics indicated for that class on the syllabus. It is important that each student come to each class well prepared to participate in discussions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Recall basic facts related to the foundations of Texas State government.

2. Describe key political concepts related to U.S. institutions such as the legislature, the governor, and the judiciary.

3. Demonstrate understanding of key concepts relating to the political behavior in the state of Texas such as voting, elections, and political parties.
REQUIRED TEXTS:


EVALUATION:

| Points |  
|---------|---------|
| Three exams @ 15 points each | 45 |
| Final Exam | 15 |
| Web-based Discussion (4@5 pts) | 20 |
| Written projects (2@10) | 20 |
| Total points | 100 |

Exams – These exams will be multiple-choice over the chapters covered in each section.

Final exam -- Will be similar to the others in that it will be multiple choice and not comprehensive.

Make-Up Exams – All make-up exams will be given on make-up exam day without exception unless the absence is approved by the University.

Web Based Discussion – There will be several opportunities to participate in discussions on the BlackBoard page. You must participate in four of those discussions. The rubric for grading the discussion questions is on BlackBoard.

There will be two writing assignments which will be integrative in nature that will be turned in via BlackBoard. The rubric for grading is on BlackBoard.

*Writing Assignment 1* -- Political culture reflects the political values and beliefs of a people. It helps explain how people feel about their government. The three types of political cultures discussed in the book are Moralistic, Traditionalistic and Individualistic. Define each of these cultural types *in your own words*. Texas is considered by some to be a mixture of Traditionalistic and Individualistic cultures give an example of three instances in the movie Lonestar that demonstrate one both of these political cultures. Are there examples of Moralistic culture in the movie? Give an example if you saw one. Turn in the assignment on the specified due date.

*Writing Assignment 2* -- Keep notes from the speakers that come to class. For each speaker post something new that you have learned from the speaker. Indicate how the new information you learned ties to the book and class. Why is this information something you think is important, and how will you use the new information? Turn the portfolio in on the specified due date.
Grading Criteria:

A = 90 – 100
B = 80 – 89
C = 70 – 79
D = 60 – 69
F = below 60

Extra Credit Work:
Extra credit work will not be assigned nor allowed under any circumstances.

CLASSROOM ETIQUET

By necessity, this course will be largely lecture driven. However, there will be ample opportunity for class discussion. Student opinion is encouraged as long as it is informed by reading or experience and is presented in a courteous manner to all in the room. Keep in mind that there will not always be consensus on a point but we will be considerate and respectful of others. One of the greatest offenses to this rule is talking while the lecture is proceeding or talking while other students are talking. Respect for classroom decorum also means that all ringers on cell phone, beepers, etc. should be turned off. No cell phone communication is allowed in the classroom. Students are expected to be to class on time and stay for the entire period. Excessive interruption by students arriving late and leaving early takes away from the learning experience and will not be tolerated. Finally, please do not bring things to eat into the classroom, drinks are ok only if you take your trash with you when class is over.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 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 contact the Disability Services Office at (361) 825-5816 or visit the office in Driftwood 101.

ACADEMIC ADVISING OFFICE

If you are majoring, or planning to major, in a field taught in the College of Liberal Arts, and if you have not yet obtained a signed degree plan, you should see your Academic Advisor immediately. Degree plans are important and useful to successful progress toward graduation.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

This class is considered a blended-learning course in which there are several instances where you will be required to use the internet to access course materials. It is recommended that you have some means of securing access to the internet when outside class either through a personal computer and your own internet connection, or through one of the computer labs located throughout the University. You should also become familiar with the Blackboard 9.1 structure,
particularly the discussions, assignments and test functions.

**COURSE OUTLINE (tentative)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Course Introduction --</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 12</td>
<td>Cover the syllabus/class policies/expectations</td>
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**PART I  THE CULTURE, PEOPLE, HISTORY, of TEXAS**

| Jan 17 | Reading: Maxwell & Crain, Chapter 1  
A political history of Texas beginning with migration to Texas and how history may define our future |
| Jan 19 | Reading: Maxwell & Crain, Chapter 2  
The roles of federalism, history and culture in Texas and their effects on drafts of the Texas Constitution |
| Jan 24 | Introduction of the movie: Lonestar and writing assignment 1 |
| Jan 26 | Complete the Movie, Lonestar |
| Feb 7 | Discussion and review for exam 1 |
| Feb 9 | Exam 1 |

**PART II  POLITICAL BEHAVIOR IN TEXAS**

| Feb 21 | Reading: Maxwell and Crain, Chapter 3  
Political participation, campaigns, voting and elections in Texas  
Writing Assignment 1 due. |
| Feb 23 | Reading: Maxwell and Crain, Chapter 4  
Political Parties in Texas – Democrats, Republicans, Tea Party? |
| Feb 28 | Reading: Maxwell & Crain, Chapter 5  
The role of special interests in Texas |
| March 1 | Class visitor on elections |
| March 6 | Discussion and review for Exam 2 |
| March 8 | Exam 2 |
March 13   Spring Break
March 15   Spring Break

PART III  INSTITUTIONS OF TEXAS GOVERNMENT

March 20   Reading: Maxwell & Crain, Chapters 6 & 7
           The organization, structure and legislative process
           of the Texas Legislature

March 22   More on the Legislative Process – Todd Hunter – District 32
           Representative, writing assignment 2.

March 27  Reading: Maxwell and Crane, Chapter 8
           The Office of the Texas Governor; Constitutional, Legislative and
           Political perspectives.

March 29  Reading: Maxwell & Crain, Chapter 9
           The role of the administration in Texas, its bureaucracy and public policy
           machine.

April 3    Reading: Maxwell & Crain, Chapter 10
           The Texas Judiciary, its structure and politics

April 5    Maxwell & Crain, Chapter 11
           Types of law, law enforcement and what due process means in Texas

April 10   Mr. Mark Skurka, Nueces County District Attorney, writing assignment 2.

April 12   Exam 3

PART IV   LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SPECIAL DISTRICTS

April 17   Reading: Maxwell and Crain, Chapter 14
           Local governments in Texas: Municipalities and Counties

April 19   Special Districts and COGS

April 24   Local Governmental Official to visit class, writing assignment 2.

April 26   Policies and Outcomes in Texas
           Reading: Maxwell and Crain, Chapter 13
           Spending and Services: Education in Texas

May 1      Policies and Outcomes in Texas,
Spending: Health and Human Services & Transportation in Texas, Writing Assignment 2 due.

May 8  Final Exam

IMPORTANT NOTES

1. Syllabus Disclaimer and Changes. The instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus. Such changes will be announced in class.

2. Attendance Policy. Please understand that your contribution has a bearing on the value of the course, both to yourself and to your colleagues; if you believe that your contribution is not important, and then please take another course. Each student is expected to come to class having read the material for the session and able to discuss the topic. The lack of class attendance will affect student learning and, hence, performance.

3. Late Hand-in. Acceptance of late hand-ins or postings is at the discretion of the instructor. Points will be deducted for late hand-ins or postings. Some postings may require replies. Replies must be substantive, providing more than merely a statement of liking or not liking something. They should include suggestions for improvement. Replies that are too brief may not receive all points. Points for replies are part of points associated with postings, above.

4. Distance Learning. Electronic, on-line learning may be substituted for in-class lectures. Students are responsible for accessing modules and completing assignments according to announced time tables. As noted earlier, acceptance of late hand-ins or postings is at the discretion of the instructor, and points will be deducted for late hand-ins.

5. Contacting the Instructor. The preferred way of contacting the instructor is through e-mail or during office hours. I check my e-mail almost daily (except when on travel), and will respond. If you send an e-mail, I may ask you for a phone number to contact you for follow-up, if necessary.

6. Student Conduct. Students should conduct themselves in ways that are consistent with promoting an efficient learning environment for themselves and everyone else. Students should be conscientious, helpful, properly motivated to learn, honest, and respectful of others and their opinions at all times. Such conduct is consistent with generally regarded norms of professionalism, including those found in graduate, professional degree programs. Points may be deducted for inappropriate conduct, and students referred to the University for further investigation of the matter.

   Students should also familiarize themselves with the university Code of Student Conduct. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give an unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructors, providing false or misleading information.
in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act. Other acts of misconduct are stated in the Code of Student Conduct. Please note that plagiarism is a serious academic offense that may result in a student being expelled from an academic program or institution.

7. 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. 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.html.

For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.