SYLLABUS  
Fall 2011

POLS 4311.001  
Instructor: Dr. Jo Marie Rios
MW 5:30 – 6:45  
Office: BH 3.02
BH 205  
Office Hours: MW 3:30 – 5 pm;
Fall 2011  
T 1 – 3 pm
361-825-2387  
e-mail: jo.rios@tamucc.edu

Urban Politics

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The institutions, political processes and policy issues of urban areas of the United States.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
This course is an introduction to urban politics in the United States. It is designed to familiarize students with the principal actors, institutions and policies of sub-state government in the United States. This class will focus on (1) the politics of municipal governments in the U.S., particularly Texas, and (2) urban policymaking. Many of the political challenges faced by urban government relate to two major characteristics of cities. First, municipal governments lack much of the formal authority needed to resolve issues that arise within their borders, leaving economic growth and development as the primary focus of urban public policy. Second, the heterogeneity of urban demographics, such as race, ethnicity and class, has influenced most aspects of urban politics.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
Specifically, the objectives of this course are:

• To assess the political environment of local government and explain how this environment affects urban policy.

• To assess the governance structures for municipal government.
• To recognize the role of the policy cycle as it relates to urban policy areas.

• To develop critical thinking skills in order to analyze current policies.

• To debate salient policy issues through the use of presentations of urban policy areas.

• To evaluate a substantive policy area and develop a policy research paper.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


RECOMMENDED TEXTS:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The requirements for this course include: two exams, presentation of an urban policy issue area, a policy research paper, and a final exam. The grade distribution is described below:

Exam 1 15%
Exam 2 15%
Issue area presentation 15%
Service learning project and brief 20%
Policy research paper 20%
Final exam 15%

You are expected to come prepared for class and to make thoughtful contributions in class. Since we will be discussing numerous controversial issues, you should respect opposing opinions and use them to reflect on why people hold different views. You will also participate in numerous activities during class which will be graded.

GRADING STRUCTURE

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

**URBAN POLICY RESEARCH PAPERS:**
You will be required to write a policy research paper in this course. These papers will be based on the issue areas selected from the *CQ Researcher*. You must cite your references using the APA format. The paper must be 8 - 10 pages in length, typed, and double-spaced. Guidelines will be provided about the expectations for these papers.

**SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT:**
You will have the opportunity to engage in a service learning project for the community regarding disaster planning. You will engage with the community and prepare a short policy brief based on your findings. Guidelines and training will be provided for this project.

**GROUP PRESENTATIONS:**
As a member of a small group, you will present one of the issue areas presented below. Guidelines will be provided.

**Class Attendance:**
All students are expected to attend EVERY class. The major valid excuses for missing a class are illness and death. Notes and grades are available through Blackboard.

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism.**
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, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a grade of F.

**Dropping a Class**
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form.
stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. April 1, 2011 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Classroom/professional behavior
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Academic Etiquette:
There are certain rules that apply to my classes. It is difficult to learn in an environment that is not conducive to learning. Such activities include: talking to neighbors during class, reading newspapers, walking in late, napping, walking out of class prior to being dismissed. It is disrespectful to me and to the class. If you do not abide by these rules, you will be asked to leave my class. Please turn off your cell phones during my class.

Incompletes:
A grade of incomplete will be given only for extreme emergencies and will necessitate appropriate documentation. You must request a grade of “incomplete” and sign a form agreeing to the terms for a grade of I. However, you must have completed 75% of the coursework.

*Notice to Students with Disabilities: 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 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. 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](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.

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**PROVISIONAL COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1:**

Introduction and the role of municipal government
- Syllabus presentation
- Overview

**The Politics of Urban Policy**

**Weeks 2 – 3:**
The System of Intergovernmental Relations
- Cities
- Federalism
- Intergovernmental Relations
  England et al., Chapter 2
September 5th – Labor day, NO CLASS

Weeks 4 – 5:

Urban Political Structure
  ● The Reform Movement
  ● Forms of city government
  ● Home Rule
    England et al., Chapter 3

Exam 1  September 21st

Workshop on service learning project

Week 6:
Urban Policymaking
  ● The Nature of Urban Policy
  ● Chief Executives
  ● City Council
  ● Citizen’s influences
    England et al., Chapter 4

Weeks 7 – 8:
Urban Planning and Development
  ● Nature of City Planning
  ● Planning and politics
  ● Zoning
  ● Urban economic development
  ● Politics of urban development
    England et al., Chapter 5

Exam 2 – October 12th

Workshop on service learning project

Urban Issue Areas

Week 9:
Disaster Preparedness
CQ Researcher, Chapter 3
Video
Presentation on issue area (group) and debate
Week 10:
Aging Infrastructure
CQ Researcher, Chapter 5
Video
Presentation on issue area (group) and debate

Workshop on service learning project

Week 11:
Downtown Renaissance
CQ Researcher, Chapter 8
Video
Presentation on issue area (group) and debate

Week 12:
Housing the Homeless
CQ Researcher, Chapter 9
Video
Presentation on issue area (group) and debate

Week 13
Mortgage Crisis
CQ Researcher, Chapter 11
Video
Presentation on issue area (group) and debate

Weeks 14 – 16:
Service learning projects presentation and policy briefs

Research paper due 11/21/11

Last Day of Class – December 5th

FINAL EXAM December 12th, 4:30 – 7 p.m.