Class Overview:
This is a lower-division course that introduces students to the fundamentals of American Government. The class will focus on political behavior and institutions, public policy, and provide a complementary overview of U.S. political history when appropriate.

Learning Objectives:
On completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Recall basic facts related to the foundations of US national government.
2. Describe key political concepts related to US institutions such as Congress, the Presidency, and the Judiciary.
3. Demonstrate their understanding of key concepts relating to the US political behavior such as interest groups, political parties and the media.

Method of evaluating outcomes:
These goals will be accomplished through formal testing via essay exams. Formal testing will be supported through a series of less-formal means, such as written assignments, group activities, and attendance points.

Format:
The class will be structured around instructor led lectures. The book will reinforce my lectures. Class Participation…..please!

Grading:
Exam 1: 25%
Exam 2: 25%
Exam 3: 25%
Group Project/Writing Assignment: 20%
Attendance: 5%

Exams: (3) exams. (Multiple choice format will be used and expect around 30-50 questions).
Exams will not be comprehensive. Scantrons will be provided, but pencils will not. Please bring one.

Posting Grades: Grades will be posted via Blackboard for your convenience as soon as possible following the exam (app. 3 days)

Attendance: I will not check attendance everyday. I will randomly check attendance during the semester to account for the 5% of your grade.
Group Project: Identify, discuss, and solve a public policy problem at the state or national level.
Given the size of the class everyone will form groups of (5) and will attempt to solve a public policy problem in Texas or the United States (you will not want for problems because they are numerous and unsolved). You will work in groups that will present (on the last few class sessions) 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.

Standards:
1. Must have at least 15 slides
2. Must cite and use sources and APA or MLA citations
3. Must last between 10-15 minutes
4. Must include supporting sources (at least 10 from scholarly sources in the TAMUCC library that are properly cited throughout and in the references section)

Possible topics (not exhaustive):
The failures of education policy
Funding schools: Investigating the role of school funding in educational success
Is inequality the greatest social problem of our time?
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 state-funded universities like 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)?
Why did the United States enter the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and what did we accomplish?

Missed Exams: Missing an exam will not preclude you from taking it. If you happen to be absent
on exam day (for any reason), you will have an opportunity to re-take it on the class period prior
to the final exam. The only caveat to this policy is for those possessing a university approved excuse in writing (i.e. sports, academic conference, etc). If you fall into the latter category we will schedule the test soon after the original test date.

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, email, or contact one of my
graders

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 weigh the pros and cons.

Extra Credit: None. Please do not ask.

Books:
1. Gateways to Democracy. Textbook available in the bookstore or previous edition available
online.

Class Schedule:
*Test dates are set, but may change during the semester due to unforeseen circumstances. If this
occurs students will be notified well in advance.
SECTION 1: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Week 1: Introduction
Wednesday 23: An introduction to the class. I will explain my expectations for the class, distribute your syllabus, discuss the group assignment, etc

Week 2: Ideology (Jan 28/30)
Read chapter on the U.S. Constitution (chapter 2)

Week 3: Public Policymaking and Federalism (4/6)
Read chapters on Federalism and the Bureaucracy (chapters 3 and 13)

Weeks 4: Political Parties (11/13)
Read chapters on Political Parties and the Judiciary (chapters 9 and 14)

Week 5: Congress (18/20)
Read chapters on Congress and the Presidency (chapters 11 and 12)

Week 6: Finish material/exam 1 (25/27)
Review for exam

Exam 1: Wednesday, February 27

SECTION II: POLITICAL BEHAVIOR AND PUBLIC POLICY

Week 7: Political Participation and Elections (4/6)
Read chapters on Political Participation and Elections and the Media (chapters 7 and 10)

Week 8: Spring Break (11/13) **NO CLASS**

Week 9: Interest Groups and Lobbying (18/20)
Read chapter on Interest Groups (chapter 8)

Week 10: Foreign Policy (25/27)
Read chapter on Public Opinion (chapter 6)
Week 11: Exam/Energy and the Environment (1/3)

Exam 2: Monday, April 1

Week 12: Energy Policy Continued (8/10)
(Online readings assigned on Blackboard)

Week 13: Civil Rights and Liberties (15/17)
Read Chapters on Civil Rights and Liberties (chapters 4 and 5)

Week 14: Exam and Group Presentations (22/24)

*Schedule TBD

Week 15: Group Presentations (29/1)

Week 16: Final Class Period (5/6)

Exam 3 and Makeup Exams on May 6

*Final presentations due by university-approved final exam date*

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.