POLS 2306 State and Local Politics

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of politics, the constitutions and the political institutions of Texas. The information in this course is more practical than you might think: whether you are an engineering, business, or political science major, as a citizen it is important that you be informed about how government works. Businessmen find it difficult to navigate government that they do not understand, and engineers cannot get a patent unless they know the rules and laws that protect inventions, and citizens have almost no hope of finding out anything by calling a government agency in a phone book.

Learning Objectives: POLS 2306

• By having the students engage in critical thinking activities related to the Constitution, the political and philosophical foundations of the nation, governmental institutions, and political behavior.

• By having students engage in written, verbal or visual activities related to the Constitution, the political and philosophical foundations of the nation, governmental institutions, and political behavior.

• By having students engage in course related activities that connect personal responsibility and political ideology to encourage ethical decision making.

• By having students engage in course related activities that connect social responsibility to civil rights, civil liberties, and to voting and voting behavior.

Major Course Requirements

Your grade will consist of four (4) Exams (400 points), twelve (12) Exam Prep Exercises (400 points), ten (10) Short Assignments (100 points) and Attendance and Participation (100 points) for a total of 1,000 points. The exams will not be cumulative.
Major Course Requirements (Cont)

4 Exams @ 100 points = 400 (50 Questions @ 2pts for each question)
12 Exam Prep Exercises @ 100 points (total for each exam section) = 400
10 Short Assignments (online) @ 10 points = 100
Attendance and Participation in the Course = 100
Total Points Possible= 1,000

Grading Scale:

A: 900-1,000 points; B: 800-899 points; C: 700-799 points; D: 600-699 points; F: 0-599 points.

Required

Textbook:


Online Material: Connect Access Card

Course Policies

Attendance/tardiness:

Attendance will count for 10% of your overall grade. There will be a sign-in sheet that is circulated each class meeting that you will need to complete with your name/signature. (The act of forgery of a classmates signature will as be addressed using the Academic Integrity policy discussed within this syllabus.) In the event that you cannot attend, stay the entire class or must arrive late for class will we need to discuss the situation(s). Please note, due to the compressed nature of this course, it is imperative that you are attending on a daily basis.

Late work and Make-up Exams:

There is no late work accepted in the course. If you have circumstances that prohibit you from completing an assignment, we can discuss the situation.

If you miss an exam, you will be required to make-up the exam at the end of the semester. I do not allow make-ups until the end of the semester. Please be aware of this policy.

Extra Credit:

There will be one extra credit opportunity that will take place in the course. It is the only opportunity for extra credit and is worth 5 points total. This will be discussed during the course.

Cell Phone/Electronic Device Usage:

If you need to use your phone/electronic device for any reason, please leave the room. Please note: if you are leaving on a regular basis to use your phone/electronic device you will be counted absent for that day.
There are (of course) exceptions to this rule. If you are a member of the Police, Fire, Military profession; please let me know.
If you have children or other member of family for which you are the PRIMARY caregiver, please let me know.

Computers are permitted in the class for the purpose of taking notes. If you feel the need to engage in web-surfing, video gaming, watching of tv or any other non-course related activity please leave. I encourage and recommend the use of technology as it applies to the enrichment of students. For the integrity of the classroom any distracting or disturbing behavior will result in the loss of computers for all students in the classroom.

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 first offense result of a zero and subsequent offense of a grade of F for the course. In both cases, paperwork will be filed with the appropriate office(s).

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. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. **You will need to check online for this date** to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Preferred methods of scholarly citations

I use and encourage the use of the American Political Science Association citation method.

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.
Statement of Civility (can be in place of classroom/professional behavior)
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Grade Appeals*
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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 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 Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost.

Disabilities Accommodations*
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 Corpus Christi Hall 116.

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.

Statement of Academic Continuity
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.
Syllabus Course Outline
(Tentative Dates)

5/15 Thursday  Introduction and Foundational Aspects of Texas Politics
(Quiz #1 due online) (SA #1 due online)

5/19 Monday   Texas Constitution and Local Government in Texas
(Quiz #2 and #3 due online) (SA #2 and #3 due online)

5/20 Tuesday  Exam #1, Discussion and Introduction to Texas Parties
(Quiz #4 due online) (SA #4 due online)

5/21 Wednesday   Interest Groups, Impact on Voters and Elections in Texas
(Quiz #5 and #6 due online) (SA #5 and #6 due online)

5/22 Thursday  Exam #2, Discussion and the Texas Legislature
(Quiz #7 due online) (SA #7 due online)

5/26 Monday   No Class—Memorial Day Holiday

5/27 Tuesday  The Texas Executive (Governor) and the Court System of Texas
(Quiz #8 and #9 due online) (SA #8 and #9 due online)

5/28 Wednesday  Exam #3, Discussion and Taxation in the State of Texas
(Quiz #10 and #11 due online)

5/29 Thursday  Continued discussions of Taxation and the Use of Tax Dollars in Texas
(Quiz #12 due online) (SA #10 due online)

5/30 Friday   Final Exam (Exam #4) for State and Local Politics; Make-Up Exam if needed