State and Local Government

Course Description:
The purpose of this course is to familiarize you with the politics, government, and administration of American states, counties, cities, and special districts, with special emphasis on Texas. (Meets the University core requirement and the Texas State statutory requirement in Texas government.)

Student Learning Outcomes:
On completion of this course students will be able to:
1. Recall basic facts related to the foundations of the Texas state government.
2. Describe key political concepts related to US institutions such as the legislature, the governor, and the judiciary.
3. Demonstrate their understanding of key concepts relating to the political behavior in the state of Texas such as voting, elections, and political parties.

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

Evaluation: The exams will consist of multiple choice questions. There is also a short video analysis paper based on a documentary viewed in class. Guidelines for this paper are provided separately. The video is available only in the classroom.
Exam 1  20%
Exam 2  20%
Exam 3  20%
Exam 4  20%
Video Analysis Paper  10%
Participation  10%

If you arrive later than 10 minutes after the exam has started, you will not be able to take the exam that day.

Study Tools:
You may access the publisher’s website at:

ADD PUBLISHERS WEBSITE

This website includes quizzes, chapter outlines, flashcards. I highly recommend that you use this resource to study for exams.

Required Texts:

Course Policies:
You are expected to come prepared for class and to make thoughtful contribution in class. If you do not understand something, ask. It is very important that we discuss issues related to government and their impact on the community. You should be exposed to a variety of opinions that may differ from your own. Respect those opinions and use them to help you reflect on why people hold different views.

Class lectures provide the basis for the course. Concepts and information that I deem important will be presented in class. Regular and consistent attendance is essential if you want to do well in the course.

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.

Participation:
Students are able to earn a maximum of 10 percent based on participation points. I will take random roll call using sign-in sheets approximately 10 times during the semester. The participation points will be awarded as follows based
on unexcused absences. If you have an excused absence (university-related, illness with M.D. excuse), you must bring me documentation.

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**Makeup Exams:**
Make-up exams will be allowed only for emergencies and with advanced approval. These exams will be different from the regular exams and may require documented proof of emergency.

- You need to contact me to determine if you can take a make-up exam.
- If you have an unexcused reason for missing the exam, you will be able to take the missed exam on the day of the final exam.
- You will be offered the opportunity to take a comprehensive replacement exam to replace your lowest grade on the day of the final.

**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. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. ________, 2013 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 and going up the central aisle, 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 silence 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 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.

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

Week 1   INTRODUCTION
• Syllabus presentation
• Expectations

Weeks 2 - 3: CULTURE, PEOPLE, HISTORY
• Texans and Texas pride
• Population of Texas
• Past and future growth trends
• Demographic characteristics
• Impact on government programs (Murdock Report)
• Concept of political culture
• America’s political culture
• Texas’ political culture
• Historical Texas: politics and government
  Mora et al., Ch. 1

Weeks 3 - 4: TEXAS CONSTITUTION
• Functions of State Constitutions
• History of Texas Constitutions
• Revising the Constitution
• Impacts of 1876 Constitutions
  Maxwell et al., Ch. 2

AMERICAN FEDERALISM
• Defining and interpreting
• Constitutional structure
• Division of powers
• Limits on states
  Mora et al., Chapter 2 and notes

EXAM 1 – September 25th

Week 5: Video: Hacking Democracy and discussion
Week 6 : **ELECTIONS IN TEXAS**
- Political participation
- Types of elections
- Campaigning
Mora et al., Chapters 7, 8

Weeks 7 - 8: **POLITICAL PARTIES, FACTIONS AND CAMPAIGNS**
- Functions and characteristics
- Development of Texas party system
- Party machinery
- Texas election campaigns
- Political ideologies
Mora et al., Chapter 2

**EXAM 2 – October 23rd**

Week 9: Video: *Last Man Standing* and discussion

**Video Analysis Paper due November 4th**

Weeks 10 - 11: **THE LEGISLATURE**
- Image of Texas legislature
- Functions of legislature
- Legislative process
- Legislative district lines
- Policy making
Mora et al., Chapter 5

Week 12: **EXECUTIVE OFFICE AND THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**
- Image and functions of governor
- Governor’s staff
- Governor’s powers
- State agencies
- Executive Branch
- Reorganization
- Sunset laws
- Bureaucracy and public policy
Mora et al., Chapter 4
EXAM 3 – November 18th

THANKSGIVING BREAK November 21 – November 24

Week 13: LAW AND THE COURTS

- Function of state courts
- Role of courts in policy making
- Texas courts
- Criminal law
- Civil law

Mora et al., Chapter 5 and notes

Weeks 14 - 15: LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Comparison of state and city governments
- Forms of city government
- Participation in city politics
- County governments
- County responsibilities
- Constitutional provisions
- Policy making
- State and local taxes
- Sources of revenue
- Texas tax system
- State and local spending
- Federal aid
- Distribution of benefits
- Borrowing money

Mora et al., Chapters 6, 12

Last Day of Class – December 9th

FINAL EXAM – Monday, December 16, 2013, 1:45 – 4:15 pm.