POLS 2306.004 STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SPRING 2015 TR 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM, BH-205

Instructor: Kaitlin Nelson
Office: BH 3.66
Office Hours: MW 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM
W 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
By appointment
Telephone: 361-825-5781 (Email is preferred.)
Email: kaitlin.nelson@tamucc.edu

Please read this syllabus in full. You are responsible for its contents throughout the length of this course.

Course Description
This course serves to introduce the politics, constitutions, and political institutions of the state of Texas. Students will explore the relationship between the federal, state, and local branches of government.

Required Text (Available at campus and off-campus bookstore.)
Please note: Access to McGraw-Hill Connect is required for the course.

Class Websites
Blackboard – https://bb9.tamucc.edu/
McGraw-Hill Connect –

Learning Objectives
Upon completion of the course, students should be able to complete the following:
- Recall basic facts related to the foundations of the Texas state government.
- Describe key political concepts related to U.S. institutions such as the legislature, the governor, and the judiciary.
- Demonstrate their understanding of key concepts relating to the political behavior in the state of Texas such as voting, elections, and political parties.

Core Objectives
The four Core Objectives related to this course are Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. By the end of the semester, the course will have met these objectives:
- 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, and the policy making process.

**Major Course Requirements**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

- **Attendance – 10%**
  - You are expected to attend this course on a regular basis, and attendance will be taken with a sign-in sheet at the beginning of each class. You may miss three classes before your attendance grade will be negatively impacted.

- **Online Assignments – 20%**
  - There will be twelve online quizzes offered throughout the semester. The lowest two of the twelve will be dropped.
  - Online assignments will be conducted through the publisher’s Connect system. You are required to register for Connect in time for the first assignment. More information will be provided in class and on Blackboard.

- **Short Writing Assignments – 20%**
  - There will be four writing assignments offered throughout the semester. Writing assignments will be submitted as Word document attachments through Connect. Access to Connect is required to complete your writing assignments.
  - Late work is not accepted, and you cannot make up writing assignments.

- **Exams – 50%**
  - There are four noncumulative, multiple-choice exams for the course. These will be taken in-class.
  - No individual make-ups are given for missed exams.
  - In place of individual make-ups, a single make-up opportunity is offered during the final exam period for students who have missed one exam. Students may sign up to take a cumulative make-up exam during the final exam slot if they have a documented excuse for missing an earlier exam. The make-up exam is not an opportunity to replace a low exam grade. Students must notify the professor in advance if they will be taking the make-up exam. Students may only make up one exam.

**Grading Scale**

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A &= 90-100 \\
B &= 80-89 \\
C &= 70-79 \\
D &= 60-69 \\
F &= 59 \text{ and below}
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**Course Policies**

**Email Policy**
Email is a form of professional communication and should be treated as such. I will use email and Blackboard to communicate with you throughout the semester, and you are expected to regularly check your Islander email account.

Please respect the following policies regarding email communication:

- Email should include your first and last name, your class number, and your section number (e.g., Kaitlin Nelson – POLS 2306.007).
- All email to the professor must be sent from your official TAMUCC email address. This is to ensure your privacy and to avoid spam filters. I will not respond to emails originating from Gmail, Yahoo, or other domains.
- I make every effort to respond to emails in a timely manner. If you have not heard back from me within 48 hours, please send another message (from your Islander account!), as your first message likely did not go through.
- There is a 24-hour communication barrier prior to tests and assignment due dates. Emails concerning exam material or assignment requirements will not be answered the day before the assignment is due. Do not procrastinate.

**Classroom Decorum**
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.

**Extra Credit**
I do not offer any individual extra credit opportunities in this course. There are no exceptions to this policy. Please do not request individual extra credit at any point during the semester.

**Grade Appeals**
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

**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, where 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., email, websites, 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 secondary means of contact.

**Academic Calendar Reminders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 21</th>
<th>Classes Begin</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 28</td>
<td>Last day to late register or add a class</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 16 – 20</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>Last day to drop a class</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 4</td>
<td>Last day to withdraw from the University</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>Reading Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 7-8, May 11-13</td>
<td>Final Examinations</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 14-15</td>
<td>Grading Days</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 16</td>
<td>Spring Commencement</td>
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Course Schedule

*Please note: Readings should be completed before class on the date they are listed. (For example, you should come to class on Tuesday, January 27 having read Ch. 1, “Introduction to Texas History and Politics.”)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R 1/22</td>
<td>Course Introduction Syllabus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 1/27-1/29</td>
<td>Texas Political Culture and History; The Texas Constitution</td>
<td>Ch. 1, “Introduction to Texas History and Politics”; Ch. 2, “The Texas State Constitution and the American Federal System”</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 2/3-2/5</td>
<td>Federalism and Local Government</td>
<td>Ch. 6, “Local Governments in Texas”</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 2/10-2/12</td>
<td>The Texas Legislature</td>
<td>Exam 1 in class on T 2/10 Ch. 3, “The Texas Legislature”</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 2/17/2/19</td>
<td>The Texas Executive Branch</td>
<td>Exam 2 in class on R 2/26 Ch. 4, “The Executive Department and the Office of the Governor of Texas”</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 2/24-2/26</td>
<td>Texas Courts</td>
<td>Ch. 5, “The Court System in Texas”</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 3/3-3/5</td>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>Ch. 9, “Political Parties in Texas”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR 3/10-3/12</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>NO CLASSES</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 3/24-3/26</td>
<td>Voting &amp; Elections</td>
<td>Ch. 8, “Elections and Campaigns in Texas”</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 3/31-4/2</td>
<td>The Policy Process; Interest Groups</td>
<td>Exam 3 in class on T 3/31 Ch. 11, “Public Policy in Texas” (pp. 259-264); Ch. 10, “Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas”</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 4/7-4/9</td>
<td>Policy Issues in Texas</td>
<td>Ch. 11, “Public Policy in Texas”</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 4/14-4/16</td>
<td>Policy Issues in Texas</td>
<td>Ch. 11, cont.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR 4/21-4/23</td>
<td>Policy Issues in Texas</td>
<td>Ch. 11, cont.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 4/28-4/30</td>
<td>Policy Issues in Texas; Financing State Government</td>
<td>Ch. 11, cont.; Ch. 12, “Financing State Government”</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 5/5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exam 4 in class on T 5/5</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 5/12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Makeup Exam at 11:00 AM for those who schedule in advance.</td>
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This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Students are responsible for using the most current version.