State and Local Government

Course Description
This course will introduce students to the fundamentals of state and local government in the United States. We will cover the relationship between the federal government and states and also inter-state relationships. The class will primarily concern itself with the political institutions and public policies of Texas, while attempting to situate these in a local and national context.

Learning 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.

Major Course Requirements
Exams: (3) exams in multiple-choice format.
Exam 1: 25%
Exam 2: 30%
Exam 3: 35%
LearnSmart/Connect adaptive learning exercises via Blackboard 10%
Final Quiz: +2%
To log into Blackboard for the course go to the following: iol.tamucc.edu
After logging into your Island Online account click on our class (POLS 2306-005) on the right-hand side of the screen.

LearnSmart is an adaptive learning program intended to help students master key concepts in the course. Listed on the syllabus below are ten LearnSmart modules that link to the content area for a particular week. The modules adjust the questions to your answer choices/knowledge abilities and you must complete them to receive credit for the module. You should receive a code to log into the system when you purchase the textbook for the course. You can access the LearnSmart exercises via the Learnsmart/Notes link on the task bar in BB.

*The exams will not be comprehensive.* Scantrons will be provided, but pencils will not. Please bring one. The final quiz is meant to serve as a final overall assessment of key concepts in the class. It will be a multiple-choice exam available online in Blackboard and available to students from the final class period to the university-approved final exam time. Students must pass the exam with a 70 or higher to receive credit; not passing the exam will not hurt your grade in the course.

**Required Readings**
Text on Texas Politics available in the campus bookstore or online (The State of Texas: Government, Politics and Policy by Mora et al) ISBN# 9781259673160

**Format**
The class will be structured around instructor led lectures. The book will reinforce my lectures and students should read the corresponding chapters. Students should participate in class.

Attendance/PowerPoint: I will not check attendance everyday. I may issue random extra credit based on attendance at my discretion. Much of the material from lecture is not always covered in the book so attendance is very helpful. Lecture slides will be posted online prior to each exam for all students.

Note on Exam 1: Your first exam will be no more difficult than those that follow. Students (especially freshmen) tend to do much worse on the first exam than the latter exams. Bear this in mind ahead of time in case this applies to you after the first exam. I will post test reviews on Blackboard a week prior to each exam and hold a comprehensive class review prior to each exam.

Missed Exams: All missed exams will be given on **Missed Exam Day** without exception, unless the absence is due to a university-sanctioned function that is approved and scheduled in advance. If you take an exam and are unhappy with the outcome you cannot retake the exam on Missed Exam Day. This day is only for those students that did not take one or more of the exams.
Class Schedule:

Section I: Foundations—Culture, Ideology, and Public Policies

Week 1: Introduction
26: Cover the syllabus/class policies/expectations/Blackboard/introduction to LearnSmart/Connect

Week 2: Political Ideology and Texas Political Culture
31: Foundations of Political Ideology
2: Foundations of Texas Political Culture and the Texas Constitution
*Read Chapter 1 on Texas History and Politics in your textbook and complete the LearnSmart module on the same topic. The assignment will be available until 9/15 at 5:00 PM (CST)

Week 3: Gun Control Policy
7: The moral right to own weapons    **Labor Day-no class**
9: The right to carry in public places
*Read Chapter 2 on the Texas Constitution and complete the LearnSmart module on the same topic. The assignment will be available until 9/29 at 5:00 PM (CST).

Week 4: Prisons and Criminal Justice Policy in Texas
14: Prisons and Crime policy
16: Courts (review sheet for exam 1 distributed)
*Read Chapter 5 on the Court System in your Textbook and complete the LearnSmart module on the same topic. The assignment will be available until 9/29 at 5:00PM (CST)

Week 5: Test 1 is upon us…..
21: Exam 1 review (PowerPoint plus Q&A session)
23: Exam 1

Section II: Key Actors in the Political Process

Week 6: Elections and Texas Political Campaigns
28: Elections in Texas
30: Watch Last Man Standing
*Read Chapter 8 on elections and campaigns in your textbook and complete the LearnSmart module on the same topic; available to 10/13 at 5:00PM (CST)
Week 7: Political Parties and Party Organization
5: Functions of Political Parties
7: History of Political Parties in Texas
*Read Chapter 7 on voting and political participation in your textbook and complete the LearnSmart module on the same topic; available until 10/20 at 5:00PM (CST)

Week 8: Interest Groups and Lobbying
12: Lobbyists and Influence in Texas Politics (review sheet for exam 2 distributed)
14: Vote for me
*Read Chapter 10 on interest groups and lobbying in your textbook and complete the LearnSmart module on the same topic; available until 10/27 at 5:00PM (CST)

Week 9: Exam 2
19: Exam review
21: Exam II

Section III: Political Institutions and Processes

Week 10: Federalism and the Executive Branch
26: How federalism is structured in the U.S. Constitution
28: Federalism between states/policymaking in modern America
*Read Chapter 4 on the Executive Department and Governor in your textbook and complete the LearnSmart module on the same topic; available until 11/10 at 5:00PM (CST)

Week 11: The Judiciary and the Court System
2: The judicial system in Texas
4: The Plea bargaining process in Texas
*Read Chapter 3 in your textbook on the Texas Legislature and complete the LearnSmart module on the same topic; available until 11/17 at 5:00PM (CST)

Week 12: The Legislative and Administrative Branches
9: The Texas legislature in comparative perspective
11: The Texas Bureaucracy (exam III review sheet distributed)
*Read Chapter 6 on Local Government in Texas in your textbook and complete the LearnSmart module on the same topic; available until 11-24 at 5:00PM (CST)

Week 13: Exam III- Local Government
16: The structure and problems of local government
18: Exam 3
*Read 12 on Financing Local Government in your textbook and complete the LearnSmart module on the same topic; available until 12/1 at 5:00PM (CST)
Week 14 Local Government
23- Governing in Corpus Christi
25- ***No Class-Thanksgiving Holidays***

Week 15: Final Week
30: Missed Exam Day

*The final quiz will be available on 12/3 and should be taken on or before the university-approved final exam time TBD

You are done!

*The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course schedule or material due to instructional needs throughout 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 http://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 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.
**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. Instances of plagiarism will be handled on an individual basis, but generally speaking the first offense will result in a zero for the assignment; subsequent plagiarism will result in failing the course and/or reporting chronic plagiarism to the university administration for disciplinary action. Reuse of previous work, even if that work is original, is known as academic recycling; such work is not accepted in this course and instances of recycling will receive the same treatment as plagiarism.

**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.