POLS 2306.007: State and Local Government
Fall 2015
Department of Social Sciences
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Dr. Juan Urbano Jr.
Email: Juan.Urbano@tamucc.edu
Office: BH 3.06
Phone: 361-825-3474
Class Meeting Time: Tuesday 7-9:30, CI-102
Office Hours: MW 1-3pm, Tues 6-7pm

Course Description and Goals
Welcome to State and Local Government. As an introductory course, we will discuss a multitude of concepts and theories that date back from the founding of Texas. We will discuss that are Texans encounter on a daily basis, either through state government or their local government entities. At the end of the semester, you should be familiar with Texas’ government institutions and the expanse of their power, political groups and interests that play a role in Texan politics, and the citizens and non-citizens who shape Texas politics and why.

Student Expectations
To ensure a good semester, please observe the following class expectations:

- Respect for others is very important. Each person should feel comfortable sharing opinions and ideas in an appropriate fashion.
- Make every effort to be on-time to class. Latecomers are a distraction to your fellow classmates and me.
- Reading newspapers, doing anything on a laptop that is not related to class, working on crossword puzzles, listening to music, texting or doing any outside work is not allowed in class.
- Turn off all cell phones.
- You are expected to have all readings complete BEFORE class. Preparation before class will facilitate better class discussions, aid in your completion of in class assignments, and enhance your overall learning experience.
- You are also expected to complete all assignments on time. No late work will be accepted.

Learning Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Students should be able to understand key concepts of the Texas constitution and the reasons we have a bicameral legislature, a part-time legislature, and limited government powers
2. We will cover the differences between parties and elections. Students will learn the general ideas of campaigns in Texas, theories on gerrymandering, and local voting laws.
3. Students should be able to articulate the complexities of Texas government institutions including interest groups pressure and the political behavior of Texas residents.

Contact Preferences
If you would like instruction and clarification beyond the lectures and discussions, please feel free to come to my office hours which are listed at the top of this page. If these times do not work into your schedule, I am also willing to set up an appointment to meet with you at a time that works for both of us. A face-to-face meeting is the most effective means of communication for more complex issues and allows me to work with you at your individual level of understanding. Please use email (juan.urbano@tamucc.edu) to voice any questions/comments you may have that will involve a ‘quick’ response. Effort will be made to address you email within 48 hours, if you do not receive an email within than time frame please send me another email. I do not answer emails on the weekends and I will not answer exam questions on the day of or the day before an exam.

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.

Intellectual Property Issues
Course materials prepared by myself, including the course syllabus, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by me are my property alone. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without my consent is prohibited. On request, I usually grant permission for students to audiotape lectures, on the condition that the individual making
the recording only uses these audiotapes as a study aid. Unless explicit permission is obtained by me, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course. Any individual or organization violating my copyright on course materials and lectures could be subject to charges of academic misconduct and/or to civil action for copyright violations.

**Grading**

Your POLS 2305 grade is broken down in the following fashion:

- Pop Quiz Writing Assignment
  Given In Class or Online                  10%
- Online homework assignments               15%
- 4 Exams, Best 3 are counted,              75%
  Final is the make-up exam and is cumulative

A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F=Below 60

**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.

**Exams**

A total of 4 exams are administered in class during the semester (including the final) and will test students on the content **COVERED IN CLASS AND IN THE ASSIGNED READING MATERIALS**. Each of the student’s highest 3 exam scores count as 25% of the total grade (totaling 75%) and the lowest score is dropped from the student’s grade. The make-up exam will be the fourth/final exam that will be administered during the time and date of the class final. The final will be cumulative.

**Required Text:** (Available at campus bookstore)

Book MUST INCLUDE Connect code; you will need the code to complete your online homework.

**TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR**

As the topic of American government is ever changing, I reserve the right to adapt our course calendar if new issues arise that begs for our attention.

Week 1 9/1: No Class, APSA Conference:

Week 2 9/8:
Introduction, review course syllabus, Chapter 1 Introduction to Texas History and Politics
Week 3 9/15:
Chapter 2-The Texas State Constitution and the American Federal System

Week 4 9/22:
Chapter 3-The Texas Legislature

Week 5 9/29:
Chapter 4-The Executive Department and the Office of the Governor of Texas
Chapter 5-The Court System in Texas

Week 6 10/6:
10-30-15
Exam 1 Covering Chapters 1-5

Week 7 10/13:
Chapter 7-Voting and Political Participation in Texas

Week 8 10/20:
Chapter 8-Elections and Campaigns in Texas

Week 9 10/27:
Chapter 9-Political Parties in Texas

Week 10 11/3:
Exam 2 Covering Chapters 7-9

Week 11 11/10:
Chapter 6-Local Governments in Texas

Week 12 11/17:
Chapter 10-Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas

Week 13 11/24:
Chapter 11-Public Policy in Texas
Chapter 12- Financing State Government

Week 14 12/1
Last Day of Class-Exam 3 Covering Chapters 6, 10-12

Final Exam Tuesday, December 8,  7:15-9:45pm