POLS 2306.491  
State and Local Government  
Fall 2015  
TR 12:30 – 1:45 PM  
CI-113

Instructor: Dr. Robert J. Dillard  
Office: Bay Hall 303  
Office Hours: TR – 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM and TR – 1:45 PM to 3:30 PM  
Phone: 361-825-5511  
Email: jeff.dillard@tamucc.edu

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:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 – 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 – 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 – 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 69</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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Evaluation: The exams will consist of multiple choice questions. If you arrive after the first student has completed and turned in their exam, you will not be able to take the exam that day.

Grading Structure:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 3</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 4</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay on “Street Fight”</td>
<td>Extra Credit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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. In order to maximize attendance, I will take random roll call using sign-in sheets throughout the semester. If you have an excused absence (university-related, illness with M.D. excuse), you must bring me documentation. I may issue extra credit points at random based on attendance at my discretion.

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.

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. November 15, 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 leaning. 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 Appeals Process
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.

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.

SCHEDULE

Aug. 27

INTRODUCTION
• Syllabus presentation
• Expectations

Sep. 1-3:

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

Maxwell et. al. Chapter 1
Sep 8-10: **TEXAS CONSTITUTION**
- Functions of State Constitutions
- History of Texas Constitutions
- Revising the Constitution
- Impacts of 1876 Constitutions

Maxwell et. al. Chapter Ch. 2

Sep. 15-17: **AMERICAN FEDERALISM**
- Defining and interpreting
- Constitutional structure
- Division of powers
- Limits on states

Sep 22: **Federalism and Review**

**EXAM 1 – September 24th, 2015**

Sep. 29 – Oct 1: **ELECTIONS IN TEXAS**
- Political participation
- Types of elections
- Campaigning

Maxwell et. al. Chapter 3

Oct 6-8: **Elections**
- Video: Street Fight and discussion

Oct 13-15: **POLITICAL PARTIES, FACTIONS AND CAMPAIGNS**
- Functions and characteristics
- Development of Texas party system
- Party machinery
- Texas election campaigns
- Political ideologies

Maxwell et. al. Chapter 4

Oct 20: **Parties and Review**

**EXAM 2 – October 22nd, 2015**
Oct 27-29:  **THE LEGISLATURE**

- Image of Texas legislature
- Functions of legislature
- Legislative process
- Legislative district lines
- Policy making

Maxwell et. al. Chapter 6

Nov 3-5:  **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

Maxwell et. al. Chapter 8

Nov. 10:  **The Governor and Review**

**EXAM 3 – November 12th, 2015**

Nov. 17-19:  **LAW AND THE COURTS**

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

Maxwell et. al. Chapter 10
Nov. 24: **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

Maxwell et. al. Chapter 14

Dec. 1: **Local Government and Review**

**FINAL EXAM – Tuesday, December 8th, 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in our normal classroom**