POLS 2306.232
State and Local Government
Fall 2016
MWF 11:00 to 11:50
CI-138

Instructor: Dr. Robert J. Dillard
Office: Bay Hall 303
Office Hours: MWF 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM
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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. 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:
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<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>Exam 4</td>
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<td>Integrated Assignment</td>
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<td>Essay on “Street Fight”</td>
<td>Extra Credit</td>
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Required Texts:
No textbook required. Additional readings will be posted no Blackboard.

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 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.

DISABILITY SERVICES
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, Room #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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA
Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call (361) 825-3466.

GRADE APPEALS PROCESS
Students who feel they have 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. 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/about/student-resources.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

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. 24  INTRODUCTION
• Syllabus presentation
• Expectations

Aug 26-31:  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
Sep 2-9: ***TEXAS CONSTITUTION***
- Functions of State Constitutions
- History of Texas Constitutions
- Revising the Constitution
- Impacts of 1876 Constitutions

Labor Day Holiday September 5th, No classes

Sep. 12-16: ***AMERICAN FEDERALISM***
- Defining and interpreting
- Constitutional structure
- Division of powers
- Limits on states

Sep19: Federalism and Review

**EXAM 1 – September 23rd, 2016**

Sep 26-30: ***ELECTIONS IN TEXAS***
- Political participation
- Types of elections
- Campaigning

Oct 3-7: **Elections**
- Video: Street Fight and discussion

Oct 10-14: ***POLITICAL PARTIES, FACTIONS AND CAMPAIGNS***
- Functions and characteristics
- Development of Texas party system
- Party machinery
- Texas election campaigns
- Political ideologies

Oct 17: Parties and Review

**EXAM 2 – October 19th, 2016**

Oct 21-26: ***THE LEGISLATURE***
- Image of Texas legislature
- Functions of legislature
- Legislative process
• Legislative district lines
• Policy making


• Image and functions of governor
• Governor’s staff
• Governor’s powers
• State agencies
• Executive Branch
• Reorganization
• Sunset laws
• Bureaucracy and public policy

Nov. 4: The Governor and Review

EXAM 3 – November 7th, 2016

Nov. 9-14: LAW AND THE COURTS

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

Nov. 16-21: 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
Nov 28-Dec 2: Public Opinion, Collective Action, and Interest Groups

Dec 5: Last day of class, exam review

FINAL EXAM – Friday, December 9th, 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in our normal classroom