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 Outcomes

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

Four Exams 60%
Reading Quizzes 20%
Critical Thinking and Civic Engagement Essay 10%
Attendance 10%

Exams:

There will be four exams in the course but only three count towards your grade. You may miss one without penalty (reason does not matter). If you take all four exams, your lowest exam score will be dropped. The first three exams are not cumulative and will have review days. Exam 4 is cumulative and will be on the scheduled final exam day.

All exams are in-class, closed book/notebook, etc. All four exams will be multiple choice. The exams will cover lectures as well as readings from the text that I may or may not cover in class.

Reading Quizzes:

Only 8 of 11 reading quizzes will count towards your grade. Your lowest three grades for the reading quizzes will be dropped.

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 2306.003) on the right-hand side of the screen.

Critical Thinking and Civic Engagement Essay:

You will be required to submit a 2-3 page essay evaluating your critical thinking and civic engagement skills. This essay will consider the overarching question of the course “What does it mean to be a Texan?” using materials from the readings and lectures. More details and grading rubric will be made available.

Attendance:

Because of the benefits to everyone involved, your class participation can be used to improve your grade Participation grades are based on your contribution to classroom discussion. Attendance is mandatory. Students will only have three excused absences.

Required Readings


Some additional readings, to be determined over the course of the semester may be assigned and posted on Blackboard. You will be notified when posted. Also, since there will be considerable discussion of current events related to Texas government and politics, and the intersection of Texas and national politics, it is strongly recommended you read a newspaper and use online news sites on a regular basis.
Format

The class will be structured around instructor led lectures and class participation. The book will reinforce my lectures and students should read the corresponding chapters. Students should participate in class as they are comfortable and able.

Class Schedule:

Section I: Foundations

Week 1: Introduction to Texas Politics
1/14-1/16: Syllabus and Read Declaration of Independence (Blackboard)

Week 2: Introduction to Texas Politics Cont.
1/23: Read Federalist #10 (Blackboard)
***1/21: MLK Day: No Class
***Reading Quiz Due by 1/22 at 11:59pm

Week 3: Texas Political Culture
1/28-1/30: Read Ch. 1
***Reading Quiz Due by 1/27 at 11:59pm

Week 4: Texas Constitutions
2/4-2/6: Read Ch. 2 and Congressional Reconstruction Act (Blackboard)
***Reading Quiz Due by 2/3 at 11:59pm

Week 5: Federalism
2/11-2/13: Read Ch. 3 and Texas Declaration of Causes (Blackboard)
***Reading Quiz Due by 2/10 at 11:59pm

Week 6: Exam #1 and Review
2/18: Exam #1 Review
2/20: Exam #1

Section II: Institutions

Week 7: Texas Legislature
2/25-2/27: Read Ch. 7
***Reading Quiz Due by 2/24 at 11:59pm
Week 8: Texas Executive
3/4-3/6: Read Ch. 8 and Read Federalist #70
***Reading Quiz Due by 3/5 at 11:59pm

Week 9: Spring Break
3/11-3/13: No Class

Week 10: Texas Judiciary
3/18-3/20: Read Ch. 9 and Read Federalist #78
***Reading Quiz Due by 3/17 at 11:59pm

Week 11: Exam #2 and Review
3/25: Exam #2 Review
3/27: Exam #2

Section III: Policy and Process

Week 12: Parties
4/1-4/3: Read Ch. 4
***Reading Quiz Due by 3/31 at 11:59pm

Week 13: Elections
4/8-4/10: Read Ch. 5/ Hamilton/ Adams (Blackboard)
***Reading Quiz Due by 4/7 at 11:59pm

Week 14: Interest Groups
4/15-4/17: Read Ch. 6
***Reading Quiz Due by 4/14 at 11:59pm

Week 15: Policy
4/22: Read Ch. 12
4/24: Exam #3 Review
***Reading Quiz Due by 4/21 at 11:59pm
***4/24 Critical Thinking and Civic Engagement Essay Due by 11:59pm (submit via turnitin)

Week 16: Exam #3
4/30: Exam #3

Optional Final Exam
TBD
The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course schedule or material due to instructional needs throughout the semester.

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
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has 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. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at:
For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website,
http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

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.

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 an automatic zero and reported to university administration.

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.

Statement of Civility (can be in place of classroom/professional behavior)

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

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.

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 your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. 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. April 5th is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.