POLS 4311.001  
M 4:20 – 6:50 (8/27 – 12/5)  
IH 158  
Fall 2018  
361-825-2387

Instructor: Dr. Jo Marie Rios  
Office: BH 3.02  
Office Hours: M 3 – 4 pm; TR 12 – 2 pm  
e-mail: jo.rios@tamucc.edu

Urban Politics

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  
The institutions, political processes and policy issues of urban areas of the United States.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:  
This course is an introduction to urban politics in the United States. It is designed to familiarize students with the principal actors, institutions and policies of sub-state government in the United States. This class will focus on (1) the politics of municipal governments in the U.S., particularly Texas, and (2) urban policymaking. Many of the political challenges faced by urban government relate to two major characteristics of cities. First, municipal governments lack much of the formal authority needed to resolve issues that arise within their borders, leaving economic growth and development as the primary focus of urban public policy. Second, the heterogeneity of urban demographics, such as race, ethnicity and class, has influenced most aspects of urban politics.

Student Learning Outcomes:  
Specifically, the outcomes of this course are for you to demonstrate the following:

1. Understand Definitions, Concepts, and Theories
2. Demonstrate Advanced Knowledge in One Major Area.
3. Translate Skills to Professional or Graduate Program, or Career
Specifically, the objectives of this course are:

- To understand and assess the political environment and government structures of local government and explain how this environment affects urban policy.

- To understand and assess city planning documents, city charter, and strategic plans using theoretical constructs.

- To develop critical thinking skills in order to analyze current policies through the use of presentations and debates.

- To demonstrate and evaluate a substantive policy issue area through the use of exercises and a policy research paper.

**Required Texts:**


**Course Requirements:**
The requirements for this course include: two exams, presentation of an urban policy issue area, a policy research paper, and a final exam. The grade distribution is described below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue area presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy research paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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You are expected to come prepared for class and to make thoughtful contributions in class. Grades are available on Blackboard. **Separate guidelines and expectations will be provided.** These assignments will be due at the beginning of the class period following the group discussion. **Late papers will have a 10 point penalty. NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED LATER THAN ONE WEEK.**
Grading Structure:
A = 90 – 100
B = 80 – 89
C = 70 – 79
D = 60 – 69
F = below 60

Urban Policy Research Papers:
You will be required to write a policy research paper in this course. These papers will be based on the issue areas selected from the CQ Researcher and interaction with city-level government. You must cite your references using the APA format. The paper must be 9 - 11 pages in length, typed, and double-spaced. Guidelines will be provided about the expectations for these papers.

Group Presentations:
As a member of a small group, you will present one of the issue areas presented below. Guidelines will be provided.

Participation:
Participation is more than simply attending class. All classes require active, engaged learners to succeed, and this class is no different. In order to be an active learner it is absolutely essential that reading be done before coming to class. You will not be able to "catch up" as the class proceeds, and you will also miss out on most of the interesting points in the discussions. In order to ensure active participation, you will be assigned the presentation and discussion of the exercises or case study within a group format. Remember that participation will count for 10 percent of your grade.

Class Attendance:
All students are expected to attend EVERY class. The major valid excuses for missing a class are school-related, illness and death. For participation credit, 100% = 1 unexcused absence; 90% = 2; 80% = 3; 70% = 4; 60 = 5; 0% > 6. Documentation for excused absences must be submitted upon your return to class.

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.

**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 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.

**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. November 9, 2018 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**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: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. 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.

**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, 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 turn your cell phones on vibrate 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.
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.
# PROVISIONAL COURSE OUTLINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td>Introduction and the role of municipal government&lt;br&gt;• Syllabus presentation&lt;br&gt;• Group exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td>Labor Day</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weeks 1 - 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Politics of Urban Policy</strong>&lt;br&gt;American Cities continue to change and evolve&lt;br&gt;• How and why&lt;br&gt;• Fiscal affairs&lt;br&gt;• Social and demographic conditions&lt;br&gt;• System analysis&lt;br&gt;• Citizen participation&lt;br&gt;• E-government</td>
<td>England et al., Chapter 1</td>
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<td><strong>Weeks 3 - 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>The System of Intergovernmental Relations</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Cities&lt;br&gt;• Federalism&lt;br&gt;• Intergovernmental Relations&lt;br&gt;• Video</td>
<td>England et al., Chapter 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/24/18</td>
<td><strong>Exam 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Weeks 6 - 7</strong></td>
<td>Urban Political Structure&lt;br&gt;• The Reform Movement&lt;br&gt;• Forms of city government&lt;br&gt;• Home Rule&lt;br&gt;• Guest speaker</td>
<td>England et al., Chapter 3</td>
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<td><strong>Week 8</strong></td>
<td>Urban Policymaking&lt;br&gt;• The Nature of Urban Policy&lt;br&gt;• Chief Executives&lt;br&gt;• City Council&lt;br&gt;• Citizen’s influences</td>
<td>England et al., Chapter 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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| Week 9 | Urban Planning and Development | - Nature of City Planning  
- Planning and politics  
- Zoning  
- Urban economic development  
- Politics of urban development |
| England et al., Chapter 5 |
| 10/27/18 | Exam 2 |
| 10/27/18 | Week 11 | Urban Policy and Issue Areas |
| | Race and Education | CQ Researcher, Chapter 2  
Video  
Presentation on issue area (group) and debate |
| | Coastal Development | CQ Researcher, Chapter 3  
Video  
Presentation on issue area (group) and debate |
| 11/19/18 | RESEARCH PAPER DUE |
| 12/2/18 | Last day of class |
| 12/10/18 | FINAL EXAM | 4:30 – 7 pm |