Instructor: Professor Amy Carter
Office: FC 122
Office Hours: M: 2-3:30; T: Noon-1:15 and 2-3:30; W: 2-3:30; R 1-3 and by appointment.
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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. The course 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, short answer, and essay questions. Usually 25 to 35 questions.
- The Final Exam is not cumulative. It will cover material from October 29 to the end of the semester.
- If you arrive more than 15 minutes late for an exam, you won’t be allowed to take it.
- You will be asked to complete five Local Government Memos regarding a randomly-assigned location. The zip code of your location is: XXXXX
Grading Structure:

| Exam 1: October 1 | 20% |
| Exam 2: October 29 | 20% |
| Final Exam: December 12 | 20% |
| Five Local Government Memos | 40% (8% each) |

Required Texts:
There is no required textbook for this course. There will be assigned readings every week of the semester. These readings will be made available on Black Board. You are expected to be prepared to discuss these readings in your Seminar course.

Course Policies:
You are expected to come prepared for class and to make thoughtful contributions 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. The TAMU—CC Student Health Center is free for all undergraduate students. If you are seen there, they will give you a doctor’s note upon your request. I may issue extra credit points at random based on attendance at my discretion.

Communication:
Please check your Islander email every day for announcements related to this course. Additionally, you are expected to access Black Board for readings, announcements, assignments, and grade reports.

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 for the course!

**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 8, 2019 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, on-line shopping (or other distracting behaviors such as gambling, gaming, etc.). 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.

Students experiencing pregnancy should reach out to the Disability Services office as well. You are entitled to extra legal rights and certain on-campus privileges.

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. They will be happy to help you. Thank you for your service!

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
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.

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.

It Takes a Village
If you are a caretaker, it’s fine to bring them with you to class. Please do not feel that you have to choose between your familial duties and your coursework.

SCHEDULE

Aug. 27: **INTRODUCTION**
- Syllabus presentation
- Expectations
- Case Study: Texas State Legislature requirements affecting this class

Aug 29: **INSTITUTIONS: WHAT ARE THEY?**
- Diversity across states and communities in the United States
- Case Study: State legislative term limits
- Discussion of first Local Government Memo

Sep 3, 5: **AMERICAN FEDERALISM**  
(Assigned Reading: TBD)
- Defining and interpreting
- Constitutional structure
- Division of powers
- Limits on states
- First Local Government Memo due by 5pm to Black Board

Sep. 10, 12: **DEMOCRACY AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS**  
(Assigned Reading: TBD)
- Defining direct and indirect democracy
- Referendum, initiative, & recall
- Case Study: California
- Discussion of second Local Government Memo

Sep.17, 19: **PARTICIPATION, ELECTIONS, & REPRESENTATION--THE MANY LEVELS OF STATE & LOCAL POLITICS**  
(Assigned Reading: TBD)
- Participation
- Voting
- Interest groups
- Grassroots politics
- Case Study: Home owners' associations
- Second Local Government Memo due on 9/19 by 5pm to Black Board

Sep. 24, 26: **POLITICAL PARTIES, INTEREST GROUPS, & THE NEWS MEDIA**  
(Assigned Reading: TBD)  
- Local and national party influence  
- Local and national interest group influence  
- Political advertising  
- The news media as watchdog  
- Case Study: The 2018 Arizona gubernatorial election  
- Discussion of third Local Government Memo

Oct 1: **EXAM ONE**

Oct. 3: **GOVERNORS AND STATE LEGISLATURES**  
(Assigned Reading: TBD)  
- Governors as state presidents  
- Who are state legislators and what do they do?  
- Professionalism of state legislatures  
- State and local bureaucracy v. the state legislature  
- Case Study: The Wisconsin State Legislature & education policy  
- Third Local Government Memo due on 10/3 by 5pm to Black Board

Oct 8, 10: **STATE AND LOCAL LEGAL SYSTEMS**  
(Assigned Reading: TBD)  
- In which court will you find yourself? Navigating state, local, and small claims courts  
- Criminal justice defined  
- How are judges chosen?  
- How is the police chief chosen?  
- Intersections of policy: Zero-tolerance, three strikes, the school-to-prison pipeline, and social justice movements  
- Case Study: Ferguson, Missouri  
- Discussion of fourth Local Government Memo

Oct 15, 17: **STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**  
(Assigned Reading: TBD)  
- Forms of local government  
- The magnitude of urban city government  
- Incorporation explained  
- Urban v. rural divide: How do states cope?  
- Intersections of policy: Land use politics  
- Case Study: Justice Souter and Concord, New Hampshire  
- Fourth Local Government Memo due on 10/17 by 5pm to Black Board
Oct 22, 24: **MAKING EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY**  
*(Assigned Reading: TBD)*  
- Social welfare defined  
- Dealing with the poor, dealing with the rich  
- Unfunded mandates  
- Medicaid and Medicare  
- Education policy and property tax  
- Alternative schooling models  
- Case Study: Charter Schools  
- Discussion of fifth Local Government Memo

Oct 29: **EXAM TWO**

Oct. 31: **TEXAS POLITICS: CULTURE, PEOPLE, HISTORY**  
*(Assigned Reading: TBD)*  
- 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  
- Fifth Local Government Memo due on 10/31 by 5pm to Black Board

Nov. 5, 7: **TEXAS POLITICS: TEXAS CONSTITUTION**  
*(Assigned Reading: TBD)*  
- Functions of State Constitutions  
- History of Texas Constitutions  
- Revising the Constitution  
- Impacts of 1876 Constitutions

Nov.12, 14: **TEXAS POLITICS: ELECTIONS IN TEXAS**  
*(Assigned Reading: TBD)*  
- Political participation  
- Types of elections  
- Campaigning  
- Development of Texas party system  
- Party machinery  
- Texas election campaigns  
- Political ideologies

Nov. 19, 21: **TEXAS POLITICS: THE LEGISLATURE**  
*(Assigned Reading: TBD)*
- Image of Texas legislature
- Functions of legislature
- Legislative process
- Legislative district lines

Nov. 26:  **TEXAS POLITICS: EXECUTIVE OFFICE AND THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
*(Assigned Reading: TBD)*
- Image and functions of governor
- Governor’s staff
- Governor’s powers
- State agencies
- Executive Branch
- Reorganization
- Sunset laws

Nov. 28:  **Thanksgiving Holiday: No class meeting**

Dec. 3:  **TEXAS POLITICS: LOCAL GOVERNMENT**  
*(Assigned Reading: TBD)*
- 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

**FINAL EXAM – FIXXXXXXX p.m. in our normal classroom.**

See: [https://registrar.tamucc.edu/Register%20for%20Classes/Final_Exams.html](https://registrar.tamucc.edu/Register%20for%20Classes/Final_Exams.html)