POLS 2306.406  
State and Local Government  
Spring 2020  
MWF 11:00 to 11:50  
BH-103

Instructor: Dr. Robert J. Dillard  
Office: Bay Hall 303  
Office Hours: MWF 12:00 PM to 2:00 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:  
A 90 – 100  
B 80 – 89  
C 70 – 79  
D 60 – 69  
F below 60

Evaluation:  
- The exams will consist of multiple choice questions. Usually 25 to 35 questions.  
- The Final Exam is cumulative. It will cover material from the entire semester.  
- If you arrive late for an exam, you won't be allowed to take it.  
- I supply scantrons, but you have to bring your own pencil.  
- The Reading Quizzes will be available on Blackboard. Each quiz will cover an assigned reading from the textbook.  
- Instructions for the Extra Credit Assignment will be provided in class.
Grading Structure:

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Required Texts:

None

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 Honesty/Plagiarism

Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. Plagiarism is a violation academic expectations, but it is sometimes difficult to understand what plagiarism actually is. Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes:
- Using the work of another as your own,
- Downloading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,
- Using resource materials without correct documentation,
• Using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation.
• Turning in a researched project without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

When you are confused about citation of quotes or ideas, please visit the Writing Center or me to get help. Information on MLA documentation rules and APA documentation rules is available at Purdue University’s OWL: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/, and from our local Writing Center at CASA.

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

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.

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.

**Grade Appeals**

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at: [http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.c0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf](http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.c0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf).

**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. The Full Spring 2020 Drop Date is: **April 10th, 2020**.
SCHEDULE

Jan. 22  INTRODUCTION
  • Syllabus presentation
  • Expectations

Jan 24  CULTURE, PEOPLE, HISTORY

Jan. 27-31:  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

Feb 3-7:  TEXAS CONSTITUTION
  • Functions of State Constitutions
  • History of Texas Constitutions
  • Revising the Constitution
  • Impacts of 1876 Constitutions

Feb 10-12:  AMERICAN FEDERALISM
  • Defining and interpreting
  • Constitutional structure
  • Division of powers
  • Limits on states

Feb 14:  Reading Day – No Class
  (Reading available on Blackboard, all content is testable)

Feb. 17-19:  Federalism and Review

EXAM 1 – February 21ST, 2020

Feb. 24-28:  THE LEGISLATURE
  • Image of Texas legislature
  • Functions of legislature
  • Legislative process
  • Legislative district lines
  • Policy making
Mar 2-6  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

March 9 – March 13  Spring Break – No Class

Mar 16-18:  The Governor and Review

EXAM 2 – March 20th, 2019

Mar 23-25:  ELECTIONS IN TEXAS
  • Political participation
  • Types of elections
  • Campaigning

Mar. 27  Reading Day – No Class
  (Reading available on Blackboard, all content is testable)

Mar. 30-Apr 3:  Elections
  • Video: Street Fight and discussion

Apr 6-10:  POLITICAL PARTIES, FACTIONS AND CAMPAIGNS
  • Functions and characteristics
  • Development of Texas party system
  • Party machinery
  • Texas election campaigns
  • Political ideologies

Apr. 13-15:  Parties and Review

  • EXAM 3 – April 17th, 2020

Apr. 20-24:  LAW AND THE COURTS
  • Function of state courts
• Role of courts in policy making
• Texas courts
• Criminal law
• Civil law

Apr. 27-29: LOCAL GOVERNMENT
(Assigned Reading: Chapter 3 in Practicing Texas Politics)
• 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

May 1 Reading Day – No Class
(Reading available on Blackboard, all content is testable)

May 4: Interest Groups

May 6: Last day of class, exam review

FINAL EXAM – TBD. in our normal classroom