POLS 2306-Texas Government: Fall 2017
Tuesday and Thursday: 8 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. Rassman 239

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday: 1 - 4 p.m.
Wednesday: 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; 2:30-3:30 p.m.
All other meetings by appointment only.

Course Description and Program for this Class: This course is a study of Texas state and local government and is part of Angelo State’s Core Curriculum. It is designed to provide students with the basic knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts and the roles of governmental and non-governmental institutions in the federal and state political systems.

The Student Learning Objectives for this course are:

Critical Thinking (CT1): Promote students' ability to think critically about politics and the federal and state political systems. Thinking critically means more than memorizing facts. It is the ability to gather, analyze, and synthesize the information relevant to a question, issue, or event.

Communication (CS1 and CS2): Develop students' ability to interpret, and express ideas through effective written and oral communication.

Social Responsibility (SR2 and SR3): Gain an understanding of the contexts that shape and influence federal and state politics and policies, and demonstrate knowledge of civic responsibility. Gaining knowledge about American and Texas political systems, students will develop their ability to effectively engage others in civic discourse.

Personal Responsibility (PR1): Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to understand and evaluate political choices and outcomes.

Student Responsibilities

First, read the assigned material before class and be ready to discuss the main points, concepts, and terms.
Second, you must attend class to do well.
Third, see me as soon as possible if you do not understand the assignments or need help with the course material. Do not wait until the last few weeks or days of the class to discuss problems or issues.

Required Text: Inside Texas Politics: Power, Policy, and Personality of the Lone Star State, Brandon Rottinghaus (Oxford University Press, 2018). Please note that I reserve the right to modify or change reading assignments.

ASU Attendance Policy as outlined in the ASU Student Handbook: Responsibility for regular and punctual attendance at all scheduled classes is expected and the university reserves the right to deal with individual cases of non-attendance.

POLS 2306 Attendance policy: You are required to attend all classes throughout the semester. Each day an attendance sheet will be passed around the class. It is your responsibility to sign this sheet. If you were in class but failed to sign the attendance sheet, you will be counted as absent for that date. There are no exceptions to this rule. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain lecture material from the class you missed. I no longer post my PowerPoint slides on Blackboard so I suggest that you make arrangements with a classmate to get their lecture notes if you miss a class due to illness or other activity. This policy applies to any movie shown in class as well.
Blackboard: The course has a Blackboard (Bb) page and you will need your user ID and password to access it. On Bb, you can find course announcements and a copy of the syllabus. Please note, I will not respond to email inquiries that could be answered simply by reading the syllabus or by checking Blackboard for announcements (due dates, my office hours, etc.). The syllabus is subject to change due to university cancellations, instructor illness, etc. You should regularly check Blackboard and your Angelo State University email for any changes to our class schedule (emergency, illness, etc.).

Lecture Outline, Assignments, and Exams: You should note that not all readings will be incorporated into lecture and discussion due to time constraints. All readings are meant to serve as background to the lecture. I strongly advise you to bring all assigned readings to class. Sometimes just glancing at the material can help you remember a concept or term and help to increase your participation during class discussion. Exam dates will not change unless there is an unforeseen event and whether or not they are discussed in class, all assigned readings are fair game for exams.

My policies for examinations: Once an exam begins, you must put everything away - this applies not just to notes and books, but also to any electronic device - cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc. If you are caught with any of these items in the open, you will forfeit your exam.

Accommodations: Any student who feels that s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or difficult life event should contact the Office of Student Affairs, Room 112 in the Houston Harte University Center to request accommodations. Please contact them early in the semester so that arrangements can be made. For more information, please visit their Angelo State webpage. Please speak with me privately about any arrangements that have been made.

The Office of Student Affairs, located in Room 112 in the Houston Harte University Center, can assist you with notifying your professors and advisors of any illnesses or family matters. Every effort will be made to accommodate for religious observances or university-related activities. Students who require these accommodations should inform the Office of Student Affairs or me as soon as possible.

Excuses: The professor is the sole judge of all excuses. No excuse will be accepted after the fact or for matters of personal convenience. For emergencies, an authoritative written excuse or notification from the Office of Student Affairs may be required.

Academic Honor Code: ASU’s Student Handbook discusses the details and parameters of academic integrity and student responsibility.

Incomplete: Decisions will be made after consulting with the Office of Student Affairs.

Policy on Makeup Exams: With the exception of the final exam, no make-up exams will be offered in the class unless approved by the instructor at least one week before the exam date or proper documentation verifying illness or unforeseen event. You are expected to take the final exam on the day it is scheduled. Angelo State University sets the final exam date and time and if a student cannot take the final exam on the scheduled date an “Incomplete” will be their assigned grade and a make-up exam will be scheduled at the beginning of the next semester.
Assignments and Exams

Exams: All exams will consist of two parts; short answer and fill-in-the-blank; 150 points combined.
Exams 1 & 2 are worth 40 points each and the Final Exam is worth 70 points.
      Part I will be short answer and based on select terms from the assigned reading material. For each term, students must provide its definition and explain how it relates to the American political system. Your work must demonstrate an understanding of the material.
      Part II is fill-in-the-blank and will be based on the assigned reading material.
      The Final Exam is comprehensive and, in addition to the new material covered after the second exam, will feature terms selected from Exams 1 & 2. Since feedback on your short answers was provided in the margins of your previous exams I will expect stronger responses on the Final Exam.
      Cheating will not be tolerated and will result in an F for that exam.
      Exam dates will not be moved. No exceptions will be made around "planned" activities or obligations unless approved by the university. In the case of a documented medical or family emergency it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible to schedule a make-up.

Texas State Legislature Research Assignment, Two Parts: worth 100 points
      Part I, Policy Research: A worksheet for this assignment will be distributed and reviewed in class following the lecture on the Texas Legislature. I no longer post course materials on Blackboard. Anyone who is absent the day the worksheet is provided in class will need to pick up a copy during my office hours.
      Students will be grouped according to the designated topic listed at the top of the worksheet. Each student is expected to follow the directions and complete the given tasks. Approach this assignment as a junior scholar; analysis should be objective and supported by information provided on the official Texas state legislature website and the assigned textbook material.
          Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in an F for this half of the assignment. Do not copy the text, or simply change a few words, from the legislature’s website, bill, or any other source. All work must be in your own words.
      Part II, In-Class Discussion: Points will be awarded on your observed participation and peer-evaluations by members of your assigned group.
      Students MUST attend class the day of this exercise in order to receive credit. Remember, the schedule is subject to change so it is your responsibility to stay informed of any changes to the date reserved for this assignment.
      Students who are absent or more than 20 minutes late to class the day of this assignment will automatically be docked 25 points. Exceptions will only be made if I am formally notified by the Office of Student Affairs or an ASU faculty advisor.

Pop Quizzes: 25 points each
      Pop quizzes (5-7 total) will be given throughout the semester and the questions will be based on the assigned reading. Quizzes can only be taken in/during class; no makeups. The lowest pop quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the course. However, all scores will remain visible on Blackboard.

Extra Credit Opportunity: In-Class Movie and Discussion: worth 10 points. You MUST attend every class in order to earn the extra credit points; the days the movie is shown and the day it is discussed in class. No partial credit will be given.
      Do not ask for additional or makeup extra credit opportunities. You will be told “No.”
Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is taking credit for another person's work such as omitting proper citations or omitting the use of quotation marks. Anyone caught plagiarizing on an assignment will be penalized.

First offense, the student will receive an “F” for that assignment. Revised work will not be accepted to make up for lost points. No exceptions.

Second offense, the student will receive and “F” for that assignment and will be required to meet with the department chair and me about the violation.

Third offense, the student will receive an “F” for the course.

Instructor Absences: There may be times when I will have to cancel the class. In some instances, I will know the day in advance and list it in the syllabus (conferences, etc.). However, there could be a time when I have to cancel class due to an unforeseen event so please check Blackboard and your email every day before class.

Technology: Computers will be permitted in the class but if it becomes apparent that they are being used for purposes other than taking notes I reserve the right to prohibit their use by anyone. Anyone using a laptop in class is required to take a seat in one of the first two rows at the front of the class.

- Texting in class is prohibited. First offense, you will be asked to leave the classroom. Second offense, loss of all extra credit points; this includes the points awarded for the in-class movie and discussion and any extra credit that may be offered on the course exams.

- If you have computer-related issues or problems contact the IT Department first, not your professors. This includes access-related issues involving Blackboard. In instances when your personal computer or internet service is down, remember, there are many computers available to students on campus in the library and computer labs.

Course Outline

It is your responsibility to read the course material. Some lectures may take longer so it is also important that you note where we are in the syllabus.

Read the assigned material BEFORE class so you are prepared to discuss the material and ask questions.

Part I: Citizenship and the Texas Political System

Week 1: August 29th - 31st
Tuesday: First Day, Review of the syllabus
Thursday: Before class read Chapter 1, The Struggle for Texas

Week 2: September 5th - 7th
Tuesday: Before class read Chapter 2, The Texas Constitution
Thursday: Before class read Chapter 3, Federalism

Week 3: September 12th - 14th
Tuesday: Lecture wrap-up and review
Thursday: Exam 1 (Covers material from Part I: Citizenship and the Texas Political System)

Part II: Texas Governing Institutions

Week 4: September 19th - 21st
Tuesday: Before class read Chapter 7, The Legislature
Thursday: Before class, finish reading Chapter 7

Week 5: September 26th - 28th
Tuesday: Before class read Chapter 8, The Governors of Texas
Thursday: Before class, finish reading Chapter 8
Texas State Legislature and Policy worksheet will be provided in class and reviewed.
Week 6: October 3rd - 5th  
Tuesday: Before class read Chapter 9, The Plural Executive and the Bureaucracy  
Thursday: Before class, finish reading Chapter 9  

Week 7: October 10th - 12th  
Tuesday: Before class read Chapter 10, The Texas Judiciary  
Thursday: Before class, finish reading Chapter 10  

Week 8: October 17th - 19th  
Tuesday: Lecture wrap-up and review  
Thursday: Exam 2 (Covers material from Part II: Texas Governing Institutions)  

Part III: Texas Elections, Political Parties, and Interest Groups  

Week 9: October 24th - 26th  
Tuesday: Before class read Chapter 4, Voting and Elections  
Thursday: Before class, finish reading Chapter 4  

Week 10: October 31st - November 2nd  
Tuesday: Before class read Chapter 5, Political Parties: Texas in Blue and Red  
Thursday: Before class, finish reading Chapter 5  
-Friday, November 3rd - Last day to drop classes  

Week 11: November 7th - 9th  
Tuesday: Before class read Chapter 6, Interest Groups  
Thursday: Finish reading Chapter 6  

Week 12: November 14th - 16th  
Tuesday: Lecture wrap-up and review  
Thursday: Exam 3 (Covers material from Part III: Texas Elections, Political Parties, and Interest Groups)  

Week 13: November 21st - 23rd  
Tuesday: Texas Legislature and Public Policy Assignment is due at the beginning of class.  
Thursday: No class, Thanksgiving Break  

Week 14: November 28th - 30th  
Tuesday: Movie, TBA  
Thursday: Movie and in-class discussion (attendance is mandatory for both days to earn the extra credit points)  

Part IV: Texas State Budget and Public Policy  

Week 15: December 5th - 7th  
Tuesday: Before class read Chapter13, Budget, Finances, and Policy  
Thursday: Review for the Final Exam  

Week 16: Final Exam, Tuesday, December 12th  
2306-050: 8 a.m. - 10 a.m.  
2306-070: 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
The final exam is comprehensive and will cover material from Parts I-IV. A more complete explanation is provided in this syllabus under the heading, Assignments and Exams.  

Final Grades will be assigned on the university’s A - F system:  
A: 100-90; B: 89-80; C: 79-70; 69-60; F: 59 or lower  
I DO NOT CURVE GRADES. All work must be completed accordingly.