Course Syllabus - POLS 2306

Spring 2018

Denise M. Bloomquist, MDiv, ThM, MPA, Adjunct Professor
dbloomquist@angelo.edu

Course Syllabus and Policy Requirement Statement

By accessing course lesson materials you are indicating the following:

- You have read, understood, and will comply with the policies and procedures listed in the class syllabus, and that you have acquired the required textbook(s).
- You have read, understood, and will comply with class policies and procedures as specified in the Student Handbook.
- You have read, understood, and will comply with computer and software requirements as specified with Browser Test.
- You have familiarized yourself with how to access course content in Blackboard using the Student Quick Reference Guide or Blackboard Help for Students Course.

Course Description/Overview

The State of Texas has determined that, in order to receive their degrees, many undergraduate students must complete a course in the organizational structure and function of Texas government, as well as learn about the players and forces which impact it. The result is that the majority of students required to take this course are not political science majors and so some of you may be asking "Why?" The "why" is that this course prepares you for living life as responsible citizens in our state, as individuals who understand how the government is designed to work, what can enhance or impede its operation and effectiveness, and how individual citizens have roles and responsibilities within that system that they must actively engage in for the system, the state and the nation to succeed.

POLS 2306 addresses the principles and values which led to the formation of the Texas state governmental system, the campaign and election process, the players within this system, and how all of these interact and impact each other and the governmental systems as a whole. We will study the Texas Constitution and the structure of state government. We will also study the political process including types of elections, political party structure and activities, and in the impact of interest groups on the policy making process. Finally, we will study local and regional governmental bodies operating in Texas.

This is an introductory course. No prior knowledge of politics is expected. However familiarity with American and Texas history and a basic interest in current events related to Texas government will be very helpful.
Required Text:

**Texas Politics**, The Texas Politics Project, SOOMO Learning, 2017, ISBN: 978-0-9911355-9-2. This is an online text with print versions also available. It can be purchased by taking the following steps:

1. Go to [webtexts.com/signin](http://webtexts.com/signin) and register as a new student.
2. Select your state, university and specific course from the list (POLS 2306/Bloomquist).
3. Provide payment via credit card, debit card or passkey purchased from the bookstore.

Additional Readings & Resources/Non-Text:

Additional readings may be assigned and if/when they are, they will be made accessible via Blackboard. I will use Power Point presentations during class, but these will NOT be posted to Blackboard.

It is also suggested that throughout the semester, students stay current on Texas state and local governmental activities, since a portion of many classes may be dedicated to discussing current events related to course topics. This can be accomplished by accessing online news websites, State of Texas and local government websites, reading newspapers, and watching local television stations. Some suggested resources include:

- Texas Legislature Online (online only)
- Office of the Texas Governor (online only)
- Jonathan Tilove, Austin American Statesman Chief Political Writer (Twitter - @JTiloveTX)
- Dallas Morning News (print & online)
- San Angelo Standard-Times (print & online)
- The Texas Tribune (online only)
- KLST/KSAN (local TV & online)
- City of San Angelo (online)
- Tom Green County (online)
- Concho Valley Council of Governments (online)

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to

- Summarize the functions of and relationships between levels of state government
- Describe and evaluate the history and primary principles behind the development of the Texas Constitution and its role in contemporary political life.
- Explain the basic structure of each of the levels of government within the State of Texas
- Describe the various types of elections held within the State of Texas as well the related election processes impacting those elections
- Compare the influence of political parties and interest groups in public policy decisions.
- Explain the many factors which impact the overall political culture in Texas
Grading

Angelo State University employs a letter grade system. Grades in this course are determined on a percentage scale. Based on the course as currently projected, the point totals for each grade would be:

- **A** = 90-100% (450-500 points)
- **B** = 80-89% (400-449 points)
- **C** = 70-79% (350-399 points)
- **D** = 60-69% (300-349 points)
- **F** = 59% and below (299 points or below)

Exams:

Four exams will determine your grade for this course. The course is divided into units with an exam related to the material covered in each unit conducted at the end of that unit. Exams will be multiple choice and available via Blackboard. **Dates for exams, and the time allotted to complete each one, once a student begins an exam, will be announced in class.** Dates for exams are dependent on the rate by which we progress through the material. Each exam is worth 100 points. **Failure to complete an exam will result in a score of ZERO for that exam.**

A comprehensive final exam will also be offered. Students may complete the final exam to replace one previous lower test score. Students who fail to complete one of the four required exams, must take the comprehensive final exam.

Presentations:

Each student will be required to make a 5 minute presentation in class in the format outlined by the instructor. Dates for presentations will be scheduled throughout the semester and students will choose, by lottery, which date one's presentation will be given. The presentation is worth 100 points. **Failure to complete a presentation on the chosen date will result in a score of ZERO for this assignment.**

Outside Assignment(s):

Outside assignments require students to complete an activity assigned by the instructor and then write a 2-3 page paper related to that activity. One or more outside assignments may be included during the semester. If included, each outside assignment activity will be outlined in class and posted to Blackboard. Students will complete the activity in place of coming to the classroom on a specified day. Completed assignments are submitted via Blackboard in either Word or PDF format. No outside assignments are currently projected for this course, but the instructor retains the option of including one or more of these to the syllabus across the semester. If added to the course, each outside assignment will be worth 100 points and the overall grading scale for the course would also be adjusted upward accordingly. **Failure to complete an outside assignment by the due date will result in a score of ZERO for the assignment.**
**Attendance:**

Attendance will be taken at every class meeting via sign-in sheet. Students who do not sign the sheet will be marked absent. While I may use PowerPoint Presentations in class, **I do not post these to Blackboard.** Students who are absent from class will need to work with other students to determine what material was missed.

At the end of the semester, each student's attendance level will be used for giving consideration for a "bump" in grade if that student falls one point below a higher grade level. Students with no more than 2 absences across the semester will be given positive consideration for receiving the higher grade. Students with more than 2 absences will not be considered for a higher grade. There is no deduction of points for multiple absences.

**Office Hours/Communication:**

As an Adjunct Professor, I do not have an "official" office at ASU, but I am always open to meeting with a student when the need arises. If you need to meet with me in person, contact me by email ahead of time to arrange a specific meeting time & place.

If you have questions or concerns email me at dbloomquist@angelo.edu. I will check my email periodically during the day on weekdays, and occasionally on the weekends. Please do not expect an immediate response, but I will try to answer emails within 24 hours of receiving them. When emailing me, be sure to include POLS 2306 in the subject line. **At the end of the email please include your first and last name.**

**Recording Devices, Computers, iPods, Tablets and the Indispensable Cell Phone:**

The use of recording devices is not allowed in class (except in cases of ADA accommodation).

The use of tablets, iPods or similar entertainment devices is not allowed in class.

The use of computers and cell phones solely for note taking purposes is allowed in class.

And while I am as big a fan as anyone of hearing Ed Sheeran's "Shape of You" or The Chainsmokers "Closer" as a ringtone, the fact is that cell phones are a distraction. As a courtesy to me and your classmates, please turn your phone to silent before entering class. If you don’t, the rule is this: If your phone rings in class, I get to answer it and talk to whomever is on the line. I don’t care if it’s your mother, your brother, your doctor, your lawyer, your significant other or that “special someone” you met at the party last night, as I'm experienced and comfortable talking with strangers. **So if you choose to leave your phone on, know you have been forewarned, and you do so at your own peril.**

**Professionalism:**

In this course we will be discussing political issues that may garner as many different reactions as there are students in the class. As we live during a dynamic and volatile period in political history, I encourage full student participation and expect some disagreement - specifically participation and disagreement related to the reading and topics for the class. However, it is also imperative that during all class work, you must treat your peers and your instructor with civility and respect, no matter the similarities and/or differences in the opinions you may encounter.
Course Outline & Reading List

Additional topics not listed here may be included in lectures even if there is no corresponding reading assignment in the text. **This material will be included on exams.**

The projected course outline, reading assignments and exam schedule are listed below. **The professor retains the right to alter this schedule as the course progresses through the semester.**

**January 16th - February 1st**

**Unit I: TEXAS CONSTITUTION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE: OVERVIEW**

- Chapter 1  Political Culture
- Chapter 2  The Texas Constitution
- Chapter 13 Federalism

**Unit I Exam - February 6th (Completed on Blackboard)**

**February 8th - March 1st**

**Unit II: LEGISLATIVE STRUCTURE**

- Chapter 3  The Legislature
- Chapter 4  The Legislative Process
- Chapter 11 Public Policy

**Unit II Exam - March 6th (Completed on Blackboard)**

**March 8th - April 5th**

**Unit III: EXECUTIVE, JUDICIAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURES**

- Chapter 5  The Executive Branch
- Chapter 6  The Governor
- Chapter 7  The Justice System
- Chapter 12 Local Government

**Unit III Exam - April 10th (Completed on Blackboard)**
April 12th - April 26th

Unit IV: POLITICAL PROCESS

Chapter 8  Elections, Voting and Campaigns
Chapter 9  Political Parties
Chapter 10  Interest Groups

Unit IV Exam - May 1st (Completed on Blackboard)

Finals Week, May 7th - 11th

Final Exam (Completed on Blackboard)

University Policies

Academic Integrity:

Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding and complying with the university Academic Honor Code and the ASU Student Handbook.

Accommodations for Disability:

ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008 (ADAAA), and subsequent legislation.

Student Affairs is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability, and it is the student’s responsibility to initiate such a request by emailing studentservices@angelo.edu, or by contacting:

Office of Student Affairs
University Center, Suite 112
325-942-2047 Office
325-942-2211 FAX

Student absence for religious holidays:

A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.