

COURSE SYLLABUS
POL 2306.01
TEXAS POLITICS
CREDIT HOURS: 3
SPRING, 2018

LOCATION OF CLASS MEETING: CHSS C070
CLASS MEETING TIME: 10-10:50 MWF
INSTRUCTOR: DR. WILLIAM E. CARROLL
DEPARTMENT: POLITICAL SCIENCE
OFFICE LOCATION: CHSS 496F
INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION: PHONE – 41469; pol_wec@shsu.edu
Office Hours: 12 – 12:50, MWF

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is the required survey course in Texas government. The course provides a broad look at the political and institutional foundations of Texas government. It begins with an overview of Texas constitutions, dominant political culture, and the workings of federalism. The Texas legislature, Governor, and dual court system are presented next. These are followed by political parties, interest groups, and elections in Texas. Finally key policy areas are examined, including education, immigration, and the environment.

Approach/Method of Instruction: Classes are devoted to lectures and discussion. Lectures will be used to elaborate on or amplify material in the text, highlight topics or themes that may or may not be covered in the text – and provide optimum time and opportunity for discussion of any and all relevant topics and issues.

Prerequisite: None

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Factual Knowledge: the “nuts and bolts” of the Texas political and governmental systems, but in more precise terms, who exercises power in Texas, how, and on whose behalf. More specifically students should gain factual and analytical knowledge of Texas governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations; also to gain knowledge of civic responsibility and gain the ability to engage in democracy in Texas.
- Critical Thinking: learning to understand and evaluate the Texas political system in a more informed and “critical” manner: eschewing platitudes, hype, and knee-jerk opinions masquerading as “common sense.”

REQUIRED TEXT:

Brown, et al, Practicing Texas Politics, 2017-2018 edition Cengage, 2018

Other reading may be assigned (or recommended). We may also make use of text online resources. Students are expected to keep up with current events: free copies of the Houston Chronicle are provided in various locations on campus.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Class attendance is required, following university regulations. Repeated absences result in a grade penalty. Makeup exams are given only for verified and excused absences and at the convenience of the instructor.

EXAMS:

There will be four exams, objective in format. Each of the exams count equally toward the final grade. (The final is not cumulative). Dates of exams will be announced in class.

GRADING PLAN:

Grades will be based on the exams. The normal grading scale is used: 90 and above, A; 80 – 89, B; 70 - 79, C; 60 – 69, D; and 59 and below, F.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Per University policy: cheating, collusion, plagiarism, if discovered, will result in disciplinary action. These three do not exhaust the possibilities of academic dishonesty.

CLASSROOM RULES OF CONDUCT:

Per University policy: disruptive behavior – intentionally disrupting class, persistent talking at inappropriate times, disrespectful words or actions towards classmates or instructor, etc. shall result in a directive to leave the class and possible referral to the Dean of Students.

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM:

If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

COURSE OUTLINE:

- I. Texas and Texans and the Texas Constitutions
 - a. Texas and the Texans: Then and Now – Brown, chapter 1
 - b. The Texas Constitutions, American Federalism, and Local Governments – Brown, chapters 2-3

FIRST EXAM

- II. Political Participation, Interest Groups, and Political Parties in Texas
 - a. Voters, Campaigns, and Elections – Brown, chapter 5
 - b. Interest Groups in Texas – Brown, chapter 7
 - c. Political Parties in Texas – Brown, chapter 4
 - d. The Media – Brown, chapter 6

SECOND EXAM

- III. Political Institutions in Texas
 - a. The Texas Legislature – Brown, chapter 8
 - b. The Governor and the Executive Branch – Brown, chapter 9
 - c. The Judicial System in Texas – Brown, chapter 10

THIRD EXAM

- IV. Budgets and Public Policies and Criminal Justice System
 - a. Financing State Government: Budgets, Revenues, and Expenses (Policies) – Brown, chapter 11
 - b. Public Policies – Brown, chapter 12
 - c. The Criminal Justice System – Brown, chapter 13

FINAL EXAM

STUDY TIPS:

Students are strongly advised to take thorough class notes. It also helps to keep up with the assigned readings as we cover each topic in class, rather than leave it until the night before the exam. Keeping up with the reading also allows questions about the material to be addressed in class. There are key terms and review questions at the end of each chapter as well as practice quizzes, flash cards, chapter summaries, and internet links to online resources available with the text.

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS:

Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation towards the end of the semester (fall and spring).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Students with disabilities will be accommodated in any way possible. Please let me know early in the semester. For detailed description of University policy please go to shsu.edu/dept/disability.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:

Any student who needs to miss a class due to observance of a religious holiday will be accommodated in any way possible. Please let me know early in the semester.

