Description

This course examines state and local politics with an emphasis on Texas.

Learning Goals

This class is designed to help students develop a variety of skills while learning about state and local politics. Communication skills are developed through written assignments. This class encourages the development of a range of analytical skills through the analysis of public policy, government institutions, and organized interests.

Texts:

There is no required textbook. Required readings will be available online through Desire2Lern.

Grading

Written papers and exercises 50%

Students will write analyses of (1) a city, (2) a state agency or office, (3) an organized interest group in Texas, and (4) a major public policy issue. All written assignments must be submitted through Desire2Learn.

Exams 40%

There will be a midterm exam and a final. The exams may be supplemented by quizzes at the instructor’s discretion.

Class Participation 10%

Students are required to attend class and attendance will be taken daily using a seating chart. Students are expected to be in their seat by the beginning of each class. Each absence will lead to the loss of points. Some class days (for example, when we have guest speakers) may be weighted more heavily than others.

Details of assignments, additional readings, and other course information will be posted on-line at D2L.

Deadlines

All written work should be submitted through D2L. It is the responsibility of the student to get the material submitted in a timely manner in the correct format. Each assignment will have a “Due Date” when the assignment is due and an “End Date” after which D2L will no longer accept your assignment. Assignments will be marked down if submitted after they are due and will only be accepted after the end date under exceptional circumstances.

Office Hours-LAN 136

Mondays & Wednesdays: 9:30 – 10:45 AM and 2:00 – 3:00 PM
Tuesdays & Thursdays: 9:00 – 9:30 AM and 2:00 – 3:00 PM
And by appointment

Program Learning Outcomes

In any given semester, one or more of the following program learning outcomes for the political science major may be addressed in this course.

1. The student will clearly articulate hypotheses.
2. The student will critically analyze and critique political institutions and/or complex contemporary political issues.
3. The student will demonstrate effective oral communication skills.
4. The student will develop a coherent research design.
5. The student will execute a well-developed research paper.
Tentative Course Outline & Readings

I. What is Texas? How history, tradition and myth shapes Texas politics today.
   Which of the 11 American nations do you live in? Reid Wilson
   *Texas Population Projections 2010 to 2050*, The Texas Demographic Center
   Key facts about race and marriage, 50 years after *Loving v. Virginia* by Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia, Gretchen Livingston and Anna Brown, Pew Research Center

II. State Constitutions and Federalism
   What the proper role for state and local governments?
   *Liberty Trumps Local Control*, Matt Rinaldi
   *A State Power Grab in Disguise*, Gene Terry
   *States Handing Off More Responsibilities to Cities*, Alan Greenblatt
   *What Brand of Federalism Is Next?*, Peter Harkness
   *Washington and the States: A Year of Uncertainty and Foreboding*, Pamela M. Prah

III. The Texas Legislature
   Is the Legislature Representative?
   *Can Redistricting Ever Be Fair?* Alan Greenblatt
   *Why Redistricting Commissions Aren't Immune From Politics*, Josh Goodman
   *Do Ethics Laws Work?* Peggy Kerns and Ginger Sampson
   *Does the Legislature Process Need Reform?*
   Gregoire’s Advice for Tough Times: ‘Set Your Partisanship Behind You, Now It’s Time to Govern’, Mary Branham
   The Brutal Death of Ethics Reform, Kirk Watson

IV. The Governor and the Plural Executive
   How Much Power Do We Want to Give the Governor?

V. The Bureaucracy
   *Who is Watching the Bureaucracy?*

VI. Texas Justice
   Who is Getting Justice In Texas?
   *Session's Reversal of the Private Prison Phase-Out*, Laura Riley
   Is the death penalty worth it?

VII. Parties in state politics
   *Is the Texas Republican Party a Success or Failure?*

VIII. Organized Interests and the Lobby
   *Are Organized Interests Running Amok in Texas?*
   Welcome to the Tea Party, by Louis Jacobson

IX. Taxing, Spending and Budgets
   *Is Texas fiscal policy dominated by conservatives or organized interests?*

X. Conclusion: Is Texas Getting It Right?
Academic Integrity (A-9.1)

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

Acceptable Student Behavior

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the iCare Program that provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Students with Disabilities

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.