POLS 2306-05  Dr. Christopher Olds  
Fall 2017  Phone: 956-665-8061  Email: christopher.olds@utrgv.edu  
ELABN 115 Tu and Th 9:25am-10:40am  Office hours: ELABN 204, M-Th 11:30am-12:30pm, and appointment

Required Materials
These two items are the only required materials in the course; do not let anyone tell you otherwise!


Access to the web-text should cost no more than $60. Make sure you register with the right course section (Olds 2306.05).

In-class Interactive Assessment: We will be using the Top Hat www.tophat.com classroom response system in class. You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or via text message (SMS). The link to sign up is here: https://app.tophat.com/register/student/

Use this join code (and only this join code) to sign up for our specific class: 858642

You can visit goo.gl/G1hhQz for the Student Quick Start Guide which outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as providing a brief overview to get you up and running on the system. Top Hat will require a subscription. There are three options to choose from:

- $26 for 4 months of unlimited access
- $38 for 12 months of unlimited access
- $75 for 5 years of unlimited access

Course Description and Prerequisites
From the University Catalog: This course examines the origins and development of the Texas state system of government and politics, which includes the Texas Constitution, policymaking processes, political action, power relations, and various political issues. This course fulfills three of the six-hour legislative requirement in U.S. and Texas government and politics. Open to freshmen. Prerequisites: TSI exemption in Reading, or College Ready TSI status in Reading, or Satisfactory grade for ENGL 0301/WRLS 0300.

Learning Objectives/Outcomes for the Course
As the instructor of this course, I expect that my students at the end of the course will:

1. Describe the unique historical trajectory and political culture of Texas.
2. Explain the origin and development of the Texas state constitution.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the foundation, structure, and process of the Texas state legislature.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the boundaries of power the Governor of Texas has relative to the chief executives of other states.
5. Analyze how the Texas judicial system functions.
6. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas policymaking.
7. Explain the nature of campaigning and elections in Texas.
8. Describe the prominent public policy topics currently being debated within Texas.
9. Develop meaningful digital literacy skills.
10. Construct impartial assessments of policy perspectives rooted in substantiated evidence from non-ideological sources.

Learning Objectives for Core Curriculum Requirements
Fundamental Component Areas (FCA): Students will be expected to perform satisfactorily in four FCA.
A. Critical Thinking Skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information by:
1. Generating and communicating ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information.
2. Gathering and assessing information relevant to a question.
3. Analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information.

B. Communication – to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral or visual communication by:
1. Developing, interpreting, and expressing ideas through written, oral, or visual communication in a way that respects the point of view others might have.
2. Using technology to express ideas rooted in evidence.

C. Social Responsibility Skills – to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities by:
1. Demonstrating intercultural competence.
2. Identifying civic responsibility.

D. Personal Responsibility – to include the ability to connect choices, action, and consequences to ethical decision-making by:
1. Evaluating how choices and actions relate to various types of consequences.
2. Accepting personal responsibility for decisions and actions that are taken or not taken.

**Grading Policies**

Grading will be based on the several assessments below. There is no extra credit offered or curving of any grade distributions. Each of the three tests covers specific sections of the course (see schedule), while the final exam is cumulative in composition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textbook Interaction:</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class Top Hat Participation:</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test #1 (50 questions worth 2 points each):</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test #2 (50 questions worth 2 points each):</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test #3 (50 questions worth 2 points each):</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam (100 questions worth 3 points each):</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Points Possible in Class:** 1000 points

**Textbook Interaction Breakdown:**
Scores are based on whether the student participates by responding directly within the web-text to “get the gist questions,” “short answer questions,” and “response board questions.” The web-text gives the total percentage of questions asked in the course that the student responds to, which can range from 0 to 100%. This percentage figure is multiplied by two to determine the number of points earned.

**In-class Top Hat Participation Score Breakdown:**
Scores are based on whether the student participates by responding in class only by answering the questions presented to them. Top Hat gives the total percentage of questions asked in the course that the student answers, which can range from 0 to 100%. This percentage figure is multiplied by two to determine the number of points earned.

**Final Letter Grade Breakdown:**
A grade = Earned 90% to 100% of the total points possible in class
B grade = Earned 80% to 89.99% of the total points possible in class
C grade = Earned 70% to 79.99% of the total points possible in class
D grade = Earned 60% to 69.99% of the total points possible in class
F grade = Earned 59.99% of the total points possible in class

**Some key items to make note of:**
*Percentages are not rounded up; please do not ask and/or demand anything else.
*Lowest test grade score is not dropped; please do not ask and/or demand anything else.
*Make-up tests must be set in advance with instructor prior to scheduled date of the test.  
*Tests will be in-class and will require a scantron. Scantron for three tests must be able to answer 50 questions, while the scantron for final must be able to answer 100 questions.  
*Students that exhibit behavior that indicates intentionally guessing at random to many web-text and/or Top Hat questions will be contacted personally about proper participation/engagement in the course. You must put a sincere effort into participating in-class and with the web-text to earn credit.  
*Any academic integrity violation in textbook interaction, such as plagiarism of one sentence in a response, results in an automatic 0 out of 200 score on the textbook interaction assessment score.  
*Any inflammatory post in the textbook “response board questions” designed to create a negative or hostile classroom environment will result in an automatic 0 out of 200 score on the textbook interaction assessment score.  
*Any academic integrity violation with the in-class Top Hat participation, such as trying to submit an answer to a question while outside of the physical classroom, results in an automatic 0 out of 200 score on the in-class participation assessment.  
*Any academic integrity violation during a test/exam results in an automatic 0 score for that particular test/exam.  
*Any students needing special accommodations to complete assessments must submit documentation from Student Accessibility Services in advance of the assessment.  
* Any and all grade disputes must be addressed directly to the professor within 3 days of receiving the grade. You should email me a clear explanation of the basis for the dispute, as well as some reference from university policies that supports your objection. After receiving this email, we will schedule a meeting to discuss the situation. Grade disputes raised after 3 days of the grades being made live (released for you to see) will not be addressed.

**Calendar of Activities**
The UTRGV academic calendar can be found at [https://my.utrgv.edu/home](https://my.utrgv.edu/home) at the bottom of the screen, prior to login. Some important dates for Fall 2017 include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 28</td>
<td>First day of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 31</td>
<td>Last day to add a course or register for fall 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 4</td>
<td>Labor Day – NO classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 15</td>
<td>Last day to drop a course; will count toward the 6-drop rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 23 – 26</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Holiday – NO classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 6</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>Study Day – NO class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 8 -14</td>
<td>Fall 2017 Final Exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 15-16</td>
<td>Commencement Ceremonies</td>
</tr>
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**UTRGV Policy Statements**

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**
Students with a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects academic performance) who would like to receive academic accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to initiate services. Accommodations can be arranged through SAS at any time, but are not retroactive. Students who suffer a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester are eligible for temporary services. **Brownsville Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at ability@utrgv.edu. **Edinburg Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

**MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD:**
Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account ([http://my.utrgv.edu](http://my.utrgv.edu)); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Date Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module 1</td>
<td>Oct. 5 – Oct. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 2</td>
<td>Nov. 29 – Dec. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(full semester)</td>
<td>Nov. 15 – Dec. 6</td>
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**ATTENDANCE:**
Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and may be dropped from the course for excessive absences. UTRGV’s attendance policy excuses students from attending class if they are participating in officially sponsored university activities, such as athletics; for observance of religious holy days; or for military service. Students should contact the instructor in advance of the excused absence and arrange to make up missed work or examinations.

*Lecture notes are not posted online, so it is important to attend class! No one has permission to record lectures (slides and/or spoken content) through audio, photograph, or video. Only individual students that provide documentation to the instructor from SAS that says a student needs lecture recording tools will be granted permission to record after arrangements have been made with the instructor.*

**SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY:**
As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, and VIOLENCE:**
In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “Responsible Employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at [www.utrgv.edu/equity](http://www.utrgv.edu/equity), including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

**COURSE DROPS:**
According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.

**Course Dismissal:**
Students that are repeatedly disruptive in the classroom or in the online course portal are subject to both dismissal from the course and contact from university administration.

**Course Schedule:**

**Week One** (8/29 and 8/31)
Reading: Political Culture in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Two** (9/5 and 9/7)
Reading: The Texas Constitution in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Three** (9/12 and 9/14)
Reading: The Texas Constitution in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)
**Week Four** (9/19 and 9/21)
Reading: The Legislature in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Five** (9/26 and 9/28)
*Test #1 on 9/26 (Test #1 will include all materials up to and including the Legislature chapter)*
Reading: The Legislative Process in [TEXAS POLITICS](#) (not in Test #1)

**Week Six** (10/3 and 10/5)
Reading: The Executive Branch in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Seven** (10/10 and 10/12)
Reading: The Governor in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Eight** (10/17 and 10/19)
Reading: The Governor in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Nine** (10/24 and 10/26)
Reading: The Justice System in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Ten** (10/31 and 11/2)
*Test #2 on 10/31 (Test #2 will include all materials including and between the Legislative Process and the Justice System chapters)*
Reading: Elections, Voting, and Campaigns in [TEXAS POLITICS](#) (not in Test #2)

**Week Eleven** (11/7 and 11/9)
Reading: Political Parties in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Twelve** (11/14 and 11/16)
Reading: Interest Groups in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Thirteen** (11/21, no class 11/23 for Thanksgiving holiday)
Reading: Public Policy in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Fourteen** (11/28 and 11/30)
Reading: Local Government in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)

**Week Fifteen** (12/5, no class 12/7 for university-wide study day)
Reading: Local Government in [TEXAS POLITICS](#)
*Test #3 on 12/5 (Test #3 will include all materials including and between the Elections, Voting, and Campaigns and Local Government chapters)*

**Final Exam:** 12/14 from 8:00am to 9:45am