UTRGV COURSE SYLLABUS---SUBJECT TO REVISION AT INSTRUCTOR’S DISCRETION

POLS 2306-11
Spring 2018
Texas Government & Politics
ELABN 103 Tu + Th 10:50 am to 12:05 pm

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Office hours: ELABN 204, Tu and Th 12:30 pm-2:30 pm, and by 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. It is very important that you register in the correct course section (POLS-2306-11). You can register at https://www.webtexts.com/. Click on “New Student” to create an account to access the web-text. You must use your official UTRGV email and full name as it appears in UTRGV records when registering. Once you have registered for the web-text, you will be able to access the web-text directly through Blackboard. Go to the “Required Webtext Reading” link under the Resources list on Blackboard to connect to the web-text straight through the Blackboard portal.

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/. Again, you must use your official UTRGV email and full name as it appears in UTRGV records when registering on Top Hat, otherwise you will not be receiving credit for your in-class participation.

Use this join code (and only this join code) to sign up for our specific class: 819655

You can visit goo.gl/G1hhOz 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

When using the mobile apps, please make sure you have downloaded the latest version of the Top Hat mobile apps. You will also need to accept location permissions during attendance if you are using the mobile apps.

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 and writing skills.
10. Construct impartial assessments of policy perspectives rooted in substantiated evidence from non-ideological sources.

**Learning Objectives for Core Curriculum Requirements**

This course fulfills a core area requirement in Government/Political Science:

(1) Courses in this category focus on consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas.

(2) Courses in this area involve the analysis of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations.

(3) The following four core objectives must be addressed in each course approved to fulfill this category requirement: *Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility.*

The core objectives are defined as:

**Critical Thinking**

Students will demonstrate comprehension of a variety of written texts and other information sources by analyzing and evaluating the logic, validity, and relevance of the information in them to solve challenging problems, to arrive at well-reasoned conclusions, and to develop and explore new questions.

**Communication Skills**

Students will demonstrate the ability to adapt their communications to a particular context, audience, and purpose using language, genre conventions, and sources appropriate to a specific discipline and/or communication task.

**Personal Responsibility**

Students will demonstrate an awareness of the range of human values and beliefs that they draw upon to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

**Social Responsibility**

Students will recognize and describe cultural diversity, the role of civic engagement in society, and the link between ethics and behavior.

**University Assessment** – There will be a short quiz of questions in addition to the final exam that students are required to take by the university. This assessment does not count in terms of your grade in the course. Nonetheless, since the assessment is required by UTRGV, it is important to make sure you submit your answers at the end of the semester.

**Grading Policies**

Grading will be based on the several assessments listed on the next page. There is no extra credit offered or curving of any grade distributions. Each of the three test covers specific sections of the course (see schedule), while the final
exam is cumulative in composition. Attendance in the class is necessary, as this is the only way to earn Top Hat interactive assessment credit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook Interaction:</th>
<th>182 points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Film Analysis Paper</td>
<td>18 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class Top Hat Participation:</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test #1 (50 questions worth 2 points each):</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test #2 (50 questions worth 2 points each):</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test #3 (50 questions worth 2 points each):</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam (100 questions worth 3 points each):</td>
<td>300 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points Possible in Class:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000 points</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Textbook Interaction Breakdown:**
Scores are based on whether the student participates by responding directly within the web-text to items like “get the gist questions” and “short answer questions.” The web-text gives the total percentage of questions asked in the chapter that the student responds to by the deadline for each chapter (refer to the schedule for the deadlines). This percentage is then used to calculate the number of points earned by interacting with each chapter. You can earn 14 points for each of the thirteen chapters in the web-text. You can always look back at prior chapters and respond to questions after each due date, but you will not earn credit for this.

**Film Analysis Paper Breakdown:**
Over the course of the semester, we will be screening various films in class. In a three-page essay (single-spaced, Times New Roman font, one-inch indentation all sides, and no title page), the student will write a brief summary of the key themes of one of the films screened in class that also explains how the film relates to specific concepts addressed in the web-text.

The paper must have a clear beginning, middle, and end. That means there should be an introductory paragraph presenting the purpose of the paper and a description of the thesis of the paper. There should be several body paragraphs, with each paragraph focused on either summarizing the film and/or contrasting the film to the web-text materials. The paper also needs to have a conclusion statement, which summarizes the key points of the paper and expresses potential aspects worthwhile to examine in the future given what was learned from comparing the film and the web-text together. The intention of the paper is to demonstrate your analytical and critical thinking skills.

Scores will be assessed using the following rubric:
- 6 points (outstanding) to 0 points (unsatisfactory)---did the student accurately summarize the main themes of the film?
- 6 points (outstanding) to 0 points (unsatisfactory)---did the student go into specific detail using facts from the film and facts from the web-text to explain how the themes of the film relate to some of the concepts in the web-text?
- 6 points (outstanding) to 0 points (unsatisfactory)---did the student follow paper formatting and presentation directions?

These three elements will be added up, such that 18 points maximum can be earned in this assignment. The film analysis paper will be submitted over Blackboard. Please be aware that all papers will be screened for any academic integrity concerns, such as plagiarism. It is important people submit their own papers that are written in their own words. The due date for the film analysis paper is presented in the course schedule.

**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.
Please note that the score is based only on the percentage of questions answered in class, not the percentage of questions you answer correctly. Top Hat questions can be asked during any portion of the class; if you miss out on answering the questions in class at the time they are presented, you cannot make up these questions! In other words, it is essential that you come to class and participate. Accommodations for those with a long-term illness or accessibility issue can be coordinated with appropriate documentation given to the instructor.

**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 the three tests and the final must be Scantron Form Number 882-E (the green rectangular form with 50 questions on each side).  
* 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 engagement, such as the plagiarism of one sentence in a response, results in an automatic 0 on the chapter for the week, as well as an academic integrity report filed with UTRGV administration.  
* Any intentionally inflammatory comments or disruptive behavior in class designed to create a negative or hostile classroom environment will result in a student from being dismissed from the class for the day, an automatic deduction of 5 points from the final Top Hat score, and a conduct report filed with UTRGV administration.  
* 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 spring 2018 include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 16</td>
<td>First day of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 19</td>
<td>Last day to add a course or register for spring 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12 – 17</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK - NO classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 30 – 31</td>
<td>EASTER HOLIDAY - NO classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>Last day to drop a course; will count toward the 6-drop rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>Study Day – NO class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 4 – 10</td>
<td>Spring 2018 Final Exams</td>
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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); 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/Period</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2018 Module 1</td>
<td>February 14 – February 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2018 Module 2</td>
<td>April 11 – April 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2018 (full semester)</td>
<td>April 11 – May 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, 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-repeat 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-repeat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.

STUDENT SERVICES: Students who demonstrate financial need have a variety of options when it comes to paying for college costs, such as scholarships, grants, loans and work-study. Students should visit the Students Services Center (U Central) for additional information. U Central is located in BMAIN 1.100 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 1.145.
(Edinburg) or can be reached by email (ucentral@utrgv.edu) or telephone: (888) 882-4026. In addition to financial aid, U Central can assist students with registration and admissions.

Students seeking academic help in their studies can use university resources in addition to an instructor's office hours. University Resources include the Learning Center, Writing Center, Advising Center and Career Center. The centers provide services such as tutoring, writing help, critical thinking, study skills, degree planning, and student employment. Locations are:

- Learning center: BSTUN 2.10 (Brownsville) or ELCTR 100 (Edinburg)
- Writing center: BLIBR 3.206 (Brownsville) or ESTAC 3.119 (Edinburg)
- Advising center: BMAIN 1.400 (Brownsville) or ESWKH 101 (Edinburg)
- Career center: BCRTZ 129 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 2.101 (Edinburg)

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** (1/16 and 1/18)
Reading: Political Culture in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 1/21/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Two** (1/23 and 1/25)
Reading: The Texas Constitution in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 1/28/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Three** (1/30 and 2/1)
Reading: The Legislature in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 2/4/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Four** (2/6 and 2/8)
Reading: The Legislative Process in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 2/11/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Five** (2/13 and 2/15)
Test #1 on 2/13 (Test #1 will include all materials up to and including the Legislative Process chapter)
Reading: The Executive Branch in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 2/18/18 at 11:59 pm CST (NOT ON TEST #1)

**Week Six** (2/20 and 2/22)
Reading: The Governor in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 2/25/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Seven** (2/27 and 3/1)
Reading: The Justice System in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 3/4/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Eight** (3/6 and 3/8)
Reading: Elections, Voting, and Campaigns in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 3/11/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Nine** (3/20 and 3/22)
Reading: Political Parties in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 3/25/18 at 11:59 pm CST

**Week Ten** (3/27 and 3/29)
Test #2 on 3/27 (Test #2 will include all materials including and between the Executive Branch and Political Parties chapters)
Reading: Interest Groups in *TEXAS POLITICS* web-text due 4/2/18 at 11:59 pm CST (NOT ON TEST #2)
Week Eleven (4/3 and 4/5)
Reading: Public Policy in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 4/8/18 at 11:59 pm CST

Week Twelve (4/10 and 4/12)
Reading: Local Government in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 4/15/18 at 11:59 pm CST

Week Thirteen (4/17 and 4/19)
Reading: Federalism in TEXAS POLITICS web-text due 4/22/18 at 11:59 pm CST

Week Fourteen (4/24 and 4/26)
Test #3 on 4/26 (Test #3 will include all materials including and between the Interest Groups and Federalism chapters)

(ALL WEEK FOURTEEN READINGS NOT ON TEST #3, BUT ON FINAL EXAM)

Week Fifteen (5/1, no class 5/3 for university-wide study day)
Film Analysis Paper submission due in Blackboard by 5/1 at 11:59 pm CST

(ALL WEEK FIFTEEN READINGS NOT ON TEST #3, BUT ON FINAL EXAM)

Final Exam Period: 5/8 from 10:15 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in ELABN 103