

**SYLLABUS**

**POLS 2312-000 State and Local Government - Spring 2014**

**Professor:**Michael W Morris, BAS, MA

**Office Hours:**   
MWF 8:15-8:30a.m., UH 408

**E-mail:**   
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**Course Objectives and Goals**

This course assesses Texas's political and cultural history, describes the operations of political parties and interest groups in the political system, describes and evaluates the legislative branch and the legislative process, describes the role of the governor adn the other executive officials in the political process, describes the judicial system including the processes it follows in civil liberties, describes local government, and the financial structure for all levels of government in the state.

**Anticipated Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

* Define fundamental concepts associated with Texas politics
* Describe the structure and function of the differing branches of Texas Government
* Explain the theoretical and historical underpinnings of the Texas Constitution
* Explain how individuals participate in the Texas political system

**Required Course Tools**

There are three required course tools:

**1.Text*: Practicing Texas Politics***. Updated 14th Edition. Brown, Langenegger, Garcia, Lewis, Biles. **ISBN:** 978-0-49580284-6

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**2.** **MyMav Email Account:** All students **MUST** use their UT Arlington email account for communication with the instructor. The account is free to all students enrolled at UTA. If you do not have a UTA account, please visit the UTA [*helpdesk*](https://webapps.uta.edu/oit/selfservice/index.php) for information on setting up the account. You may also call the OIT Help Desk at 817-272-2208 or e-mail them at [*helpdesk@uta.edu*](mailto:helpdesk@uta.edu).

**Course Requirements**

**Learning Progress Activity (LPA)**

At the end of each week you will complete a brief learning activity that is designed to prompt your thinking on the subject under discussion. You will respond in **Blackboard** to a statement which will be provided. Your response should be a minimum of 50 words and substantive. These learning activities are due at 11:59p.m. CT each Friday. The combined Learning Progress Activities are worth **15% of your final course grade**.

**Unit Exams**

During this course you will take **3 unit** exams that may cover information presented in the course Current Event discussions, lectures and/or textbook. **Exams will be taken via Blackboard**. These exams must be completed by the dates listed in your syllabi. All unit exams will contain a total of 50 multiple choice or true/false questions. You will have **50 minutes** to complete the exams. These exams will be weighted equally and count for **45% of your final course grade**

**Final Exam**

At the conclusion of the course, you will take a **final exam**. The final exam is comprehensive in nature containing questions from all three unites. The final exam contains a total of 100 multiple choice or true/false questions. You will have **120 minutes** to complete the exam. The final exam is worth **25% of your final course grade**.

You must take all exams without the aid of your notes, books, or other aides and are expected to adhere to the University policy on Academic Dishonesty (see below). Anyone suspected of cheating will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

**NOTE:** All assignments and exams are due by 11:59 p.m. CT on the due date listed below. Missed assignments will only be allowed to be made up with documentation of a medical emergency.

**Assignment Weightings**:

Pre-test 15%

Learning Progress Activities (LPAs) 15%

Unit Exams 3 45%

Final Exam 25%

**Grading Scale**:

A 90-100%

B 80-89%

C 70-79%

D 60-69%

F 59% and below

**Course Evaluation**

After you have finished taking all the unit exams, you should complete a course evaluation form.  The link to the form will be emailed to you.  Your comments on this form are anonymous. This assessment will only be available until the final exam completion date. Please make plans to do the assessment before that time - your opinion is important!

**Instructor’s Policies**

Even though I will not meet with you in a traditional classroom, I want you to know that I am available to answer your questions or to talk to you about the course. You may reach me in a variety of ways. For example, you may e-mail from within Blackboard. I will make every effort to get an answer to your questions within 24 hours. You should also feel free to text or call me on my cell phone (214.507.5151) during normal business hours. I will make every effort to respond to text or calls within 4 hours. **Be sure to identify which course and section (Example: POLS 2311-011) you are enrolled in. Failure to do so may delay a response.**

Incompletes: No incompletes will be given except on the basis of a doctor’s certification that you are medically unable to complete the course.

**Technical Difficulties**

Technical difficulties are no excuse for not completing the course on schedule. Plan your work schedule to allow you sufficient time to complete all course requirements. Do not wait until the due date to complete your work. While technical difficulties are rare, they do occur. In case of a technical problem that prohibits you from completing an assignment you must provide me with a timely submission of the helpdesk ticket #. You can reach the Blackboard 24/7 Support Desk at 1.855.308.5542.

**Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form at the University of Texas at Arlington. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University.

“Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the 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.” (Regents’ Rules and Regulations, Series 50101)

I reserve the right, at any time, to require a student to take or re-take any or all exams in a proctored environment. If I deem this necessary, the student is responsible for making the proctoring arrangements, subject to my approval. This policy applies to any and all assignments required in this course.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

If you are a student who requires accommodations in compliance with the ADA, please consult with me at the beginning of the semester. Student Services at UT Arlington include the Office for Students with Disabilities (located in the lower level of the University Center) which is responsible for verifying and implementing accommodations to ensure equal opportunity in all programs and activities.

**Privacy Policy**

The University of Texas at Arlington complies with the requirements of the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. To learn more about this law please visit *<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>*

**TEKS**

If you are enrolled in this course as a high school student seeking dual credit for both college and high school, resources and activities to help you prepare for your high school assessments can be found by clicking the “Resource” link on the main page and then selecting “TEKS Preparation Material.” All the activities located at this site are optional and have no bearing on your grade in the course, however, you are encouraged to complete these activities so that you will be properly prepared for your high school assessments.

**Miscellaneous**

You are responsible for being aware of current University deadlines and policies as detailed in the University Calendar and the current Undergraduate Catalog. If you have any questions regarding any of these policies, please contact me.

**Class Schedule**

Below you will find an outline of topics and the required readings. All assignments must be completed by the dates indicated. All exams are due by 11:59p.m. C.S.T on the dates listed below. You are free to work at a quicker pace than noted in the schedule, but you must adhere to these minimum deadlines. Do not wait until just before the due date to complete your exams since you will find it difficult to complete the coursework. My advice is to start early in the course and work at a steady pace. You will find this course much more enjoyable if you make it part of your regular schedule.

**Last Day to Drop:** March 28, 2014

**Note:** Some students have had technical problems with Internet Explorer. On the other hand, there have been very few issues by students using Firefox as their internet browser. It is highly recommended that you use Firefox.

It is also recommended that you use a wired rather than wireless connection, especially when taking an exam (if possible).

**Course Topics, Assignments, and Due Dates**

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| **Week** | **Due Dates** | **Reading and Graded Assignments** |
| **1** | 1/13 | Introduction |
|  | 1/15 | Chapter 1 – The Environment of Texas Politics   * Political Behavior Patterns |
|  | **1/17** | * Political Behavior Patterns (Continued)   **Learning Progress Activity #1 - Due by 11:59p.m.** |
| **2** | **1/20** | **Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday** |
|  | 1/22 | * Searching for New Economic Directions * Meeting New Challenges |
|  | **1/24** | Chapter 2 – Federalism and the Texas Constitution   * The American Federal Structure   **Learning Progress Activity #2 – Due by 11:59p.m.** |
| **3** | 1/27 | * The Texas Constitution * Constitutional Amendments and Revision * The Texas Constitution |
|  | 1/29 | Chapter 3 – Local Governments   * Local Politics in Context * Municipal Governments |
|  | **1/31** | * Counties * Special Districts and Metropolitan Areas   **Learning Progress Activity #3 – Due by 11:59p.m.** |
| **4** | 2/3 | Chapter 4 – Political Parties   * Party Structure * Political Ideology |
|  | 2/5 | * An Overview of Texas Political History * Electoral Trends |
|  | **2/7** | **First Exam** |
| **5** | 2/10 | Chapter 5 – Campaigns and Elections   * Political Campaigns * Racial/Ethnic Politics |
|  | 2/12 | * Women in Politics * Voting |
|  | **2/14** | * Primary, General, and Special Elections   **Learning Progress Activity #4 – Due by 11:59p.m.** |
| **6** | 2/17 | Chapter 6 – The Politics of Interest Groups   * Interest Groups in the Political Process * Types of Interest Groups |
|  | 2/19 | * Interest Group Activities |
|  | **2/21** | * Power and Regulations in Interest Groups   **Learning Progress Activity #5 – Due by 11:59p.m.** |
| **7** | 2/24 | Chapter 7 - The Legislature   * Legislative Framework |
|  | 2/26 | * The Legislators |
|  | **2/28** | * Legislative Organization * Learning Progress Activity #6 – Due by 11:59p.m. |
| **8** | 3/3 | * Legislative Operations |
|  | 3/5 | * Influences Within the Legislative Environment |
|  | **3/7** | **Second Exam** |
| **9** | **3/10-14** | **Spring Break** |
| **10** | 3/17 | Chapter 8 – The Executive   * Overview of the Governorship * Informal Powers of the Governor |
|  | 3/19 | * Executive Powers of the Governor |
|  | **3/21** | * Legislative Powers of the Governor * Judicial Powers of the Governor * The Plural Executive   **Learning Progress Activity #6 – Due by 11:59p.m.** |
| **11** | 3/24 | Chapter 9 – Public Policy and Administration   * State Agencies and State Employees |
|  | 3/26 | * Education |
|  | **3/28** | * Education (Continued**)**   **Learning Progress Activity #7 – Due by 11:59p.m.** |
| **12** | 3/31 | * Health and Human Services |
|  | 4/2 | * Economic |
|  | **4/4** | * Environmental Issues * Homeland Security Policies   **Learning Progress Activity #8 – Due by 11:59p.m.** |
| **13** | 4/7 | Chapter 10 – Laws, Courts, and Justice   * State Law in Texas |
|  | 4/9 | * Courts, Judges, and Juries |
|  | **4/11** | * Judicial Procedures   **Learning Progress Activity #10 – Due by 11:59p.m.** |
| **14** | 4/14 | * Correction and Rehabilitation |
|  | 4/16 | * Problems and Reforms |
|  | **4/18** | Chapter 11 – Finance and Fiscal Policy   * Fiscal Policies   **Learning Progress Activity #11 – Due by 11:59p.m.** |
| **15** | 4/21 | * Revenue Sources |
|  | 4/23 | * Budgeting and Fiscal Management |
|  | **4/25** | * Future Demands |
| **16** | 4/28 |  |
|  | 4/30 |  |
|  | **5/2** |  |
|  | **5/7** | **Comprehensive Final Exam (8-10:30a.m.)** |