

PLSC 2306-State and Local Politics

Summer 2 2014

Basic Information

Name of Instructor: Kendra Stephens, M.A.

Office telephone: (432) 208-2399

(Between 8 AM and 5 PM)

Course dates: July 14 – Aug 14, 2014

Course credits: 3 semester hours

Location: This course is a full Web course and is conducted in Blackboard

Course Description

Course prerequisites: There are no course prerequisites although it may be helpful to have taken PLSC 2305, HIST 1301, and HIST 1302.

Course description: An examination of state and local political institutions and processes. Satisfies the state requirement in Texas government.

Purpose: The course is designed to fulfill the three-hour "General Education" requirement in state and local government, with a focus on Texas.

Objectives/outcomes: The general course goals include developing and enhancing student ability--

*to examine social institutions and processes across a range of historical periods, social structures, and cultures,

*to analyze the effects of political, economic, cultural, historical, and global factors on political structures and policy outcomes across states and localities,

*to comprehend the origins and evolution of U.S. and Texas political systems, with a focus on the growth of political institutions, the constitutions of the U.S. and Texas, federalism, civil liberties, and civil and human rights,

*to analyze, critically assess and develop creative solutions to public policy problems, and

*to recognize and assume responsibilities as a citizen in a democratic society (including engaging in public discourse using information from the news media and other appropriate sources).

Method of instruction: posted lectures, assignments, discussions.

Materials

Required Materials: Tx.Gov by Maxwell/Crain/Santos ISBN: 978-1-2591596-0-2

This is the only textbook for this course. Many of your test questions will be coming from the book.

Optional materials: For your own protection, please keep copies of all assignments, preferably in a folder or notebook. This is an optional back-up system.

If you will be using public computer labs, a set of headphones will keep you out of trouble. These are also optional.

Course Activities:

There are four (4) units to this course. Each unit will have:

- a. Two (2) to five (5) textbook chapters of reading
- b. 1 assignment (4 total for the class)
- c. 1 web-based discussion (4 total for the class)
- d. 1 test (4 total for the class)

Readings: Reading the assigned textbook chapters for each unit is essential for success. You need to read closely and comprehend what you read because test questions generally come from the textbook. Read over each chapter more than once. If you do not understand what you have read, then post a question on the Q & A. I will generally answer questions in a format that is available to all students. Also you should read the lecture notes for each chapter carefully.

Assignments: there are four (4) in all. Each unit's assignment should be single-spaced with double-spaces between paragraphs. Each assignment has its grading rubric attached. See #5 of the **Policies and Procedures** to see how you should name your submissions.

Discussions: Discussions are an essential part of this course. There will be four (4) discussions, one for each unit. To participate in the Discussions, go to the **Discussion Board** button and post your comments there. Support your comments with at least two (2) websites. You must also read other students' posts and respond to at least **two other students'** responses for full points. All discussion posts must be made by the date on the schedule to receive full credit. Each discussion has its own rubric, which will be attached. See #5 of the **Policies and Procedures** to see how you should name your submissions.

Tests: There are four (4) tests this semester. They are non-cumulative, meaning that each exam covers only the material for that section. **There is no comprehensive mid-term or final test.** Each test is multiple-choice and true/false in format.

Course Assessment:

<i>Course Activity</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Grade</i>
Assignment 1	100	5
Assignment 2	100	5
Assignment 3	100	5
Assignment 4	100	5
Test 1	100	15
Test 2	100	15
Test 3	100	15
Test 4	100	15
Discussion 1	100	5
Discussion 2	100	5
Discussion 3	100	5
Discussion 4	100	5
Total	1200	100

Grading Scale:

90 and above	A
80 to 89	B
70 to 79	C
60 to 69	D
Less than 59	F

Student Individual Messages:

Students in this class must use the **E-Mail** button to send individual messages to the instructor or to other students.

Policies & Procedures:

1. Course Content Structure:

As stated above, the course is divided into four (4) units.

Each Unit covers:

- a. 2 to 5 textbook chapters;
- b. 1 online discussion topic;
- c. 1 assignment
- d. 1 online test

You should read the textbook section first and then review the online lecture. The lectures will be summaries, elaborations of the textbook material, and links to related information on the Web. After you have completed reviewing the lecture, you should then log into the **Discussion Board** and post answers to the discussion question posted by the instructor. You should support your comments by at least two (2) different websites. You must also read other students' posts and respond to at least two other students' responses. Discussion posts must be made by the date on the schedule to receive full credit. Then you should do the Assignment. You should also complete the Test.

2. Grading and Feedback:

All the course activities will be graded one week after the set due date. You can check your grades by going to **GradeBook**. If there is any discrepancy in the grade, you must contact me immediately. I will provide individual feedback or a general feedback in the performance of the course activity.

3. Cheating/Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty:

Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, 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 such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor) or the attempt to commit such acts.

"Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to the appropriation of, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, other expression and media, and presenting that material as one's own academic work being offered for credit.

NOTE: Students found plagiarizing or cheating will receive a zero on the course activity which could cause failure in the class and/or suspension or dismissal from the college.

4. Discussions Participation:

Each discussion is worth 100 points.

For each discussion, you must respond to the question directly and, second, you must read the other students' posts and reply to at least **two other students' responses**. You must ensure that the responses to the questions are meaningful, reflective, refer to personal experience and support your course readings. You will be asked to support your statements with two (2) websites. Avoid posts that are limited to "I agree" or "great idea," etc. If you agree (or disagree) with a post then say why you agree by supporting your statement with ideas from the readings or by bringing in a related example or experience.

You are responsible for reading all of the messages that are posted in the online discussion. Not reading messages is the equivalent of sleeping in class.

Use a person's name in the body of your message when you reply to his/her message. It helps to keep all of us oriented. It helps us maintain a clearer sense of who is speaking and who is being spoken to. As we begin to associate names with tone and ideas, we come to know each other better.

Change the subject line when you introduce a new topic. The value of this tip will become apparent as the number of messages grows.

5. Submission and Naming Convention of Course Activities:

Keep in mind the following standards/practices for naming and submission of assignments:

- a. All course activity files that will be submitted to the instructor should bear the name as follows:

First and last name + the number of the Assignment or Discussion

Example: *Jane Doe Assignment 3*

- b. Be sure to put your name at the top of each page header
- c. Always keep a copy of all the work you submit so that you won't need to re-do it if it should get lost in cyberspace.

6. Make-Up/Late Submission Policy:

All course activities must be submitted before or on set due dates. If the student is unable to abide by the due dates, it is her/his responsibility to contact the instructor immediately. There will be a 10% deduction for each day of late submission of the assignment.

8. Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

Americans with Disabilities Act: Students with disabilities that are admitted to The University of Texas of the Permian Basin may request reasonable accommodations and classroom modifications as addressed under Section 504/ADA regulations. Students needing assistance because of a disability must contact the Director of Programs Assisting Student Study (PASS) Office, 552-2630, no later than 30 days prior to the start of the semester.

The definition of a disability for purposes of ADA is that she or he (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantively limits a major life activity, (2) has a record of such an impairment or, (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

Students who have **provided all documentation** and are eligible for services will be advised of their rights regarding academic accommodations and responsibilities. The University is not obligated to pay for diagnosis or evaluations nor is it obligated to pay for personal services or auxiliary aids.

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with the instructor, or if you need special arrangements in the case the building must be evacuated, please inform the instructor immediately. It is best to contact the instructor after class or during office hours.

9. Course Incomplete/Withdrawal/Grade Appeal:

All students are required to complete the course within the semester they are signed up. Incomplete grades for the course are rarely given and will only be granted if the student has complete at least half/75% of the course with a grade of 'C' or better and provides a valid, documented excuse for not being able to complete the course on time and has contacted prior to the scheduled last class to request an extension. The student will sign a contract that includes the incomplete course activities and the new due dates.

10. Netiquette:

Anything you type in the Discussion Board is public - which means that every student in this class (including your instructor) will see what you write. Please pay attention to the language you use and adhere to the following guidelines:

- 1) Do not post anything too personal;
 - 2) Do not use language that is inappropriate for a classroom setting or prejudicial in regard to gender, race, or ethnicity;
 - 3) Do not put all caps in the postings (it is considered shouting)
 - 4) Be courteous and respectful to other people on the list
 - 5) Do not overuse acronyms like you would use in text messaging. Some of the list participants may not be familiar with acronyms.
 - 6) If the posting is going to be long, use line breaks and paragraphs
 - 7) Fill in the Subject Line
 - 8) Write your full name at the end of the posting
 - 9) Be careful with sarcasm and subtle humor; one person's joke is another person's insult.
- .NOTE:** If you do not adhere to the guidelines for any posting, you will lose the points that would have been granted, and the instructor reserves the right to remove your posting and to deny you any further posting privileges.

11. Attendance and Class Participation:

Regular and active participation is an essential aspect of this online course. The expectation of the instructor is that students will log on a minimum of three times every seven days. It is critical that you read all of the lecture and assignment materials as well as all of the public discussion materials. Your full participation ON A WEEKLY BASIS is not only a requirement; it is also an essential aspect of the online course process. All students are expected to do the work assigned, notify the instructor when emergencies arise, and make up assignments no later than the due dates.

12. Tracking:

The Blackboard course platform have a tracking feature. This feature quantifies how often students access different tools, pages, features, links, discussions, etc. in your course.

13. Absenteeism:

All the course activities have set dates to be completed and submitted. After the due dates the activities will not be available for the students. Thus, if you are ill for a prolonged time and cannot complete the activities, you must contact me and update the situation. You are expected to log into the course every week.

If I am going to be out because of ill health, attending a conference, etc you will be notified through Announcements.

Hardware/Software Requirements:

Computer:

PC Configuration - A CPU with 1 GHz processor, 256 MB RAM and Windows XP operating system

Mac Configuration - A CPU with 300 MHZ (G3), 256 MB RAM and Mac OS X 10.2 or newer operating system

Peripherals: You will need external speakers to be able to listen to audio files (if present in the course).

Anti-virus software is highly recommended for students and instructors. Online courses involve much file sharing, which increases your risk of computer virus infection. Anti-virus software will help protect your computer in case of exposure to a computer virus.

Other software: There may be audio/video files in the course for which you will need [Windows Media Player](#) or [QuickTime](#) or [Real Player](#).

Internet connection:

Recommended - Cable modem, DSL, or intranet (T-1); or 128 KBPS modem

Note: Corporate or academic security firewalls may block some course content, such as chat or streaming media. Accommodations for access can usually be arranged if you contact your network administrator, though local security policies ultimately dictate what is allowed. 56 K modem or better

Technical Information:

[24/7 Technical Help](#)

[Browser Test](#)

[Browser Configuration](#)

[Download Plug-ins](#)

Supported Browser: Firefox 3.6 or higher for PC; and Safari 4.0 - 5.1 for Mac

[Download Firefox](#)

[Download Safari](#)

Unsupported Browsers:

America Online (AOL), Prodigy, Juno, MSN, Yahoo and other Internet Service Providers (ISPs), provide their own internal and proprietary web browsers. These browsers may not be compatible with online courses.

Preparation for Computer Emergencies:

Computer Crash

Not having a working computer or a crashed computer during the semester will NOT be considered as an acceptable reason for not completing course activities at a scheduled time. NOTE: Identify a second computer before the semester begins, that you can use when/if your personal computer crashes.

Server problems

When the Blackboard server needs downtime for maintenance, the Blackboard administrator will post an announcement in your course informing the time and the date. If the server experiences unforeseen problems your course instructor will send an [email](#).

Complete Loss of Contact

If you lose contact with me completely (i.e. you cannot contact me via Blackboard or email), you need to call me at my office and explain the reason you cannot contact me and leave me a way to contact you.

Lost/Corrupt/Disappeared files

You must keep/save a copy of every project/assignment on an external disk or personal computer. In the event of any kind of failure (e.g., Blackboard/WebCT server crash or virus infection, students own computer crashes, loss of files in cyberspace, etc) or any contradictions/problems, I may/will request you to resubmit the files. In other words, if you submit a document to me, and I either do not receive it (lost in cyberspace) or it is corrupted when I open it, it is incumbent upon you to resend it to me, corrected, with little or no "downtime" in regard to the timeline for submission.

End-of-Course Evaluation & Instructor Evaluation:

Every student must complete an end-of-course evaluation/survey provided by OC. During the last few weeks of class, you will receive an announcement through email notifying you that the Course/Instructor Survey is available. There are three options to access the survey.

1. You may follow the link in the email to complete the survey using the same credentials to access your courses here.
2. When entering Blackboard you will see a list of surveys for you to complete
3. A button on the right hand menu bar will lead you to the survey from inside your course.

The survey is anonymous and your responses are confidential. Your feedback is critical to us and to your instructor as we strive to improve our offerings, and our support of you, the students.

Disclaimer & Rights:

Information contained in this syllabus was to the best knowledge of the instructor considered correct and complete when distributed for use in the beginning of the semester. However, the instructor reserves the right, acting within the policies and procedures of UTPB, to make changes in the course content or instructional techniques without notice or obligation. The students will be informed about the changes, if any.

