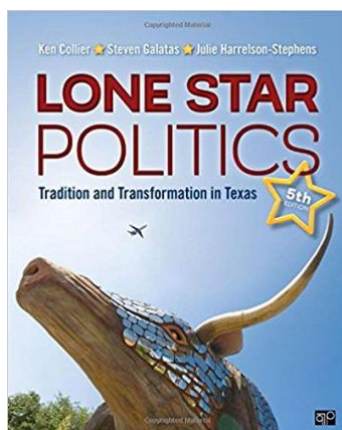


State Government
PS 2306-001, Spring 2020
Location: LH 309

Professor: Jessica Velasco
Office Hours: MW, 2:30 – 5 p.m. & by appointment
Office Location: LH 203
Telephone: 432-837-8742
Email Address: jessica.velasco@sulross.edu



Required Text:

Ken Collier, Steven Galatas, and Julie Harrelson-Stephens, *Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas* (CQ Press, 5th edition, 2016).

Course description

This is an introductory course covering state politics and Texas public policy. This class will cover the historical foundation of Texas politics, the structure of the Texas government, and the most salient policy issues in Texas today, as well as the diversity of state government approaches across the country. Additionally, the interaction between the state, local, and national government will be explored.

Course learning outcomes:

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Explain how the history, geography, and political structure of Texas have affected and continue to affect governance and policy implementation in the state
2. Describe the distinctive features of each of the three branches of Texas government compared to other states and how each feature impacts outcomes for the state and its citizens
3. Discuss the key policy issues facing Texas today
4. Discuss how national, state, and local government interact
5. Critically analyze information to discern its meaning and validity
6. Express your political opinions in ways that enhance understanding, while also learning to listen and understand different viewpoints

Program Learning Outcomes (Political Science):

The graduating student will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of significant theoretical approaches of political science through written work and oral communication.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze domestic and international political processes in written work and oral communication.

- Demonstrate the ability to develop arguments about global equity and equality issues in politics through written work and oral communication.

Marketable skills for Political Science:

- Students can effectively communicate ideas and information verbally, visually, and in writing
- Students can distinguish between credible/relevant information and information lacking credibility/relevance
- Students can identify critical and common institutions of political decision-making and policy-making across different nation-state settings
- Students can engage with social and political problems and use critical thinking to develop logical solutions

Texas Domain III Competency 19:

The teacher understands and applies social science knowledge and skills to plan, organize, and implement instruction and assess learning.

Texas Domain III Competency 23:

The teacher understands and applies knowledge of concepts of government, democracy, and citizenship, including ways that individuals and groups achieve their goals through political systems.

GRADING

Grades in this class will be determined by the number of points you earn by the end of the course. The point distribution is listed below:

Attendance & Participation	330 points
Reading quizzes	150 points
Weekly questions	100 points
Mid-term exam or Census Video	100 points
Final Exam	150 points
Local Government Issue Presentation	120 points
“Setting Up for Success” Points	50 points
Total	1000 points

A	900-1000 points
B	800-899 POINTS
C	700-799 POINTS
D	600-699 POINTS
F	BELOW 600 POINTS

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:

You receive points for each class you attend **and participate in**. If you enter the room after I have already finished taking attendance, it is your responsibility to come to me **immediately after class** to request notation of your attendance. If you are not in class by the time I have finished taking attendance, you will be considered tardy and will lose part of your attendance points for the day.

QUIZZES: There will be 10 online reading quizzes this semester to assess your understanding of the reading material. All quizzes are located in the “Quizzes” folder for the course in Blackboard. **Quizzes will be available until Monday at 9 a.m. in the week in which they are due.** Each quiz is 10 multiple-choice questions and is worth 15 points. We will go over all quiz answers in class on Monday after they are due. NOTE: You can attempt the quizzes as many times as you want, and the top score will be used.

WEEKLY QUESTIONS: Each week, after you have completed the assigned reading and quiz for the week, you must post 3 discussion questions for that week to the discussion board for the appropriate chapter. These are due at the same time as quizzes, on Monday at 9 a.m. You will be required to do this

for each chapter that has a quiz. Each set of questions is worth 10 points. You are to come up with these questions on your own from the reading, and they must be questions that promote discussion, not simple answers. You will not be able to see the questions of others until you have posted your own. Also, you are expected to use appropriate spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

EXAMS: There will be two exams, the mid-term and final. Questions will come from classroom discussions, course readings, reading quizzes, and your posted discussion questions. The final exam is comprehensive and required. The mid-term exam is required unless you opt to do the census video assignment (described below).

CENSUS VIDEO: This can take the place of the mid-term exam and will be due on the same day as the mid-term (see course calendar). Up to TWO people may work on this assignment together, but no more than two. The assignment is to make a video that promotes Census 2020. The video needs to be 2-5 minutes and must cover the following: why we have the census, why the census is important, what the consequences are for not participating, how to fill out the census form, and important dates and deadlines. All videos will be viewed by the Brewster County Complete Count Committee and may be used for local promotion. **All videos must follow all applicable laws and student rules and regulations.**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUE PRESENTATIONS: Early in the semester, you will be paired up with a few of your classmates to put together a presentation on an issue facing local governments. You will be given an assigned topic. However, you and your group partners may propose an alternative topic for my approval. You will be analyzing the extent of the issue and how local governments are dealing with it, and then you will be making suggestions for how to best move forward. The presentations will take place at the end of the semester (see the course calendar). More information about the presentations will be provided during the first group day and on Blackboard. This assignment is worth 120 points, which includes being present for the group days and taking part in the presentation.

“SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS” POINTS: To get all of these points, you need to do the following: 1) post an introduction to Blackboard by the end of the first week (see Blackboard for more information), 2) buy your text book (I will check sometime in the first few weeks), 3) set up course alerts in Blackboard, and 4) complete the syllabus quiz before the second class. Each item is worth 10 points except the syllabus quiz, which is worth 20 points.

CITIZENSHIP POINTS: It is well-established in higher education studies that students who engage in campus activities outside of the classroom do better inside the classroom. At the beginning of class sessions, I will announce options for citizenship points. All activities are worth 10 points each. These are NOT required activities. However, you may earn up to 30 citizenship points that I will add to your course total at the end of the year. **In order to receive these points, you MUST follow the instructions for citizenship points listed in Blackboard, and you must submit them by the deadline (April 20, 9 a.m.). Please use a DIFFERENT LINK each time you submit. These are extra points, and I will not add any points after the deadline.**

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE: A key element in the development of critical thinking and solid, educated opinions is involvement in discussion and debate. Therefore, I expect all students to attend all classes and to participate actively in activities and discussion during every class session. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class, and unexcused absences will have a negative impact on your final grade. If you are involved in a university-sponsored activity that will result in a class absence, you must notify me BEFORE the approved absence to ensure that I can make the necessary accommodations. “Excused absences” are those that have approved documentation (e.g. certified doctor’s excuses that specifically

cite the class date, time, and reason for the missed day). With that said, DO NOT SCHEDULE DOCTOR, DENTIST, CHIROPRACTOR, OR ANY OTHER TYPE OF APPOINTMENTS DURING THIS CLASS.

PREPARATION FOR CLASS: In order to participate fully in class discussion and activities, it is necessary for you to complete the appropriate class readings. Reading for each class is expected to be done **prior to the class next to which the pages are listed**. This will help us have more meaningful class discussions. In addition to completing the assigned readings before each class, please also make sure to bring your text, a writing utensil, paper, your name card, and a good attitude to every class.

OTHER COURSE RESOURCES: On the course Blackboard page, there is a “Chapter Outlines” link that has a PowerPoint summary of each chapter. Feel free to print these out and bring them to class if that helps you. There is also a student companion website the publisher provides:
<https://edge.sagepub.com/collier5e/student-resources>

CLASSROOM DEMEANOR: I expect the environment during class to be conducive to learning. Please make sure to turn off all personal communication devices and remove any earbuds/earphones when class begins. Interruptions caused by these devices may result in your dismissal from class. If you feel that you need special consideration due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., your wife may go into labor soon, you anticipate a family emergency, etc.), see me beforehand. **In addition, lap tops and tablets are no longer allowed in my class.** If you feel you need special accommodations, please contact the Counseling & Accessibility Office, and they can assist you with other notetaking options.

Many political issues tend to be emotionally charged. It is highly unlikely in a class this size that everyone will share your personal values, beliefs, and opinions. Believe it or not, this is a good thing! The presentation of varying perspectives will help all of us to learn. HOWEVER, this can only be accomplished if ideas, beliefs, and opinions are presented in a way that is conducive to productive, adult conversation. We must all also provide every person, regardless of opinion, his/her opportunity to share.

I will frequently ask students in the class to pair up, and I will also break you into groups for different activities and discussions. It is expected that you follow pairing instructions and contribute to the group. This is part of your participation grade.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Doing and/or taking credit for someone else’s work, presenting the ideas and work of others as your own, and/or not citing your sources when you utilize the ideas of others are all violations of academic integrity. It is your responsibility to read and understand the university’s stance on academic dishonesty in the SRSU Student Handbook, as all violations will be taken seriously and handled through the university judicial process. **Please note that I will be using plagiarism detection software for all written assignments. Also, with the exception of the census video and the issue presentations, ALL other assignments should be INDIVIDUAL efforts.**

MISSED EXAMS: It is expected that you take exams on scheduled exam dates. If you need to miss an exam due to an official, university-sponsored function, you will need to provide official documentation and schedule a time to complete the exam BEFORE the scheduled exam date. If some other emergency arises that results in your need to miss an exam, expedient communication and appropriate documentation will assist in my willingness to let you take a make-up exam.

LATE WORK: Given that all assignments, aside from the exams, are accessible from the beginning of the term, the occurrence of late work should be rare, except in cases of emergencies. If you are going to

be out on a university excused absence on the day an assignment is due, you must submit BEFORE you leave.

STRUGGLING IN THE CLASS? It's okay! Talk to me ASAP. Be prepared to answer questions about the amount of time you spend outside of class reading and preparing for class and assignments. Please also make sure you have reviewed all materials on Blackboard (including your syllabus). Also, don't forget that we have all kinds of support resources on campus!

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: It is Sul Ross State University policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such accommodations because of a physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact the ADA coordinator for Program Accessibility located in FH 112 or call 837-8691.

UNDECIDED or UNSURE about YOUR MAJOR? Political Science may be for you! Hopefully this class and the assignments will help open you up to the various career possibilities in political science, and I would be happy to discuss this with any interested students.

Calendar (subject to change)

W	Date	Topic	Reading	Due or To Do:
1	1/13 1/15 1/17	Course Introduction Texas beginnings Chapter 1 continued	No reading	Take the syllabus quiz by Wed., and post an introduction to Blackboard by Friday at 9 a.m.
2	1/20 1/22 1/24	No Classes-MLK, Jr. Holiday Texas Constitution Chapter 2 continued	Chapter 2	Ch. 2 Reading Quiz and questions due by Monday at 9 a.m.
3	1/27 1/29 1/31	Texas Legislature Chapter 3 continued Chapter 3 continued	Chapter 3	Ch. 3 Reading Quiz and questions due by Monday at 9 a.m.
4	2/3 2/5 2/7	Legislative Org & Process Chapter 4 continued Chapter 4 continued	Chapter 4	Ch. 4 Reading Quiz and questions due by Monday at 9 a.m.
5	2/10 2/12 2/14	Texas Governors Chapter 5 continued Chapter 5 continued	Chapter 5	Ch. 5 Reading Quiz and questions due by Monday at 9 a.m.
6	2/17 2/19 2/21	Plural Exec & Bureaucracy Chapter 6 continued GROUP DAY	Chapter 6	Ch. 6 Reading Quiz and questions due by Monday at 9 a.m.
7	2/24 2/26 2/28	Texas Judicial System Chapter 7 continued Chapter 7 continued	Chapter 7	Ch. 7 Reading Quiz and questions due by Monday at 9 a.m.
8	3/2 3/4	GROUP DAY Mid-term review		Study for mid-term or submit Census video by Friday at 9 a.m.

	3/6	MID-TERM		
9	3/9 3/11 3/13	Spring Break Spring Break Spring Break		
10	3/16 3/18 3/20	Texas-sized Justice Chapter 8 continued Chapter 8 continued	Chapter 8	No quiz or questions due this week
11	3/23 3/25 3/27	Campaigns & Elections Chapter 9 continued Chapter 9 continued	Chapter 9	Ch. 9 Reading Quiz and questions due by Monday at 9 a.m.
12	3/30 4/1 4/3	Political Parties Chapter 10 continued Chapter 10 continued	Chapter 10	Ch. 10 Reading Quiz and questions due by Monday at 9 a.m.
13	4/6 4/8 4/10	Organized Interests Chapter 11 continued SRSU Holiday—no class	Chapter 11	Ch. 11 Reading Quiz and questions due by Monday at 9 a.m.
14	4/13 4/15 4/17	Local Government in TX Chapter 12 continued Chapter 12 continued	Chapter 12	Ch. 12 Reading Quiz and questions due by Monday at 9 a.m.
15	4/20 4/22 4/24	PRESENTATIONS PRESENTATIONS PRESENTATIONS		*Citizenship points due by 4/20, 9 a.m.
16	4/27 4/29	PRESENTATIONS Review for Final Exam		Study for final and submit course evaluation
17		FINAL EXAM Tuesday, May 5, 8-10 a.m.		