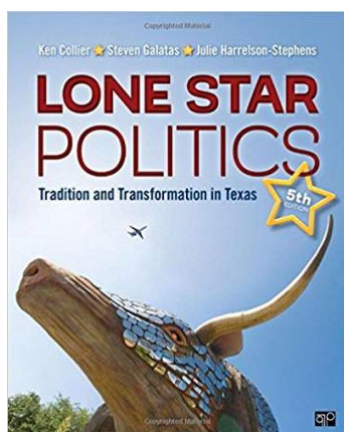


State Government
PS 2306-W01, Summer 2020
Location: LH 309

Professor: Jessica Velasco
Virtual Office Hours: By appointment
Office Location: LH 203
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). Companion site: <https://edge.sagepub.com/collier5e/student-resources>

Course description

This course will cover the state government of one of the most unique states in the country, Texas. You will learn about the historical foundation of Texas politics, the structure of the Texas government, and the interaction between the state, local, and national governments. You will also learn about the way Texas approaches all sorts of governmental functions in a way that is distinctly...Texas.

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 how national, state, and local governments interact
4. Critically analyze information to discern its meaning and validity
5. 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:

Introduction Post	10 points
Syllabus Quiz	20 points
Chapter Quizzes (20 x 10)	200 points
Weekly Assignments (100 x 5)	500 points
Weekly Discussion Board (25 x 5)	125 points
Final Exam	145 points
Total	1000 points

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

INTRODUCTION POST: By Saturday at 11:59 p.m. of the first week, you need to post an introduction to the discussion board. More information is on Blackboard. The introduction post is worth 10 points.

SYLLABUS QUIZ: By Saturday at 11:59 p.m. of the first week, you need to complete the syllabus quiz on Blackboard in the Week 1 folder. You will have ONE attempt. The quiz is worth 20 points.

CHAPTER QUIZZES: There will be 10 online reading quizzes this semester to assess your understanding of the reading material. All quizzes are located in the folder for each appropriate chapter. Each quiz is 10 multiple-choice questions and is worth 20 points. Quizzes are due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m. each week. NOTE: You can attempt the quizzes as many times as you want, and the top score will be used.

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS: Each week, after you have completed reading and reviewing the materials on the folder for each chapter, you will complete a weekly assignment. The instructions for each weekly assignment are in Blackboard in each week’s folder. For Weeks 2-5, the assignments are due by Saturday at 11:59 p.m. For Week 6, the assignment is due by Friday at 11:59 p.m., as that is when the summer course ends. Each weekly assignment is worth 100 points.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION BOARD: Even though we are on online class, I would like to have some sort of class interaction. Each week, starting with Week 2, you will need to post a discussion question related to the readings and materials by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m. You are then to respond to the post of one other student by Saturday at 11:59 p.m. (except during Week 6, when the final response is due by Friday at 11:59 p.m.). Each discussion board is worth 25 points. Please see the information at the end of the syllabus for more information about discussion board questions, responses, and expected behavior.

WEEKLY LECTURE/QUESTION TIME: On 3 p.m. of Monday of each week, I will be online to provide an OPTIONAL live lecture and question time. These lectures will be recorded and posted for those who cannot make it.

EXAM: The final exam will be available all day on August 6-7 on Blackboard. It will be due by Friday at 11:59 p.m. You will have two hours from the time you start to finish. It is worth 145 points.

COURSE POLICIES

BASIC CLASS EXPECTATIONS: It is important that you understand that summer courses only last 5.5 weeks, but we must still cover the same amount of material that we cover in a 16-week course. To finish the work, you will likely be spending several hours each day. Don't let yourself fall behind. Please see the sample weekly schedule for an idea of how to manage the work for each week.

Since this is an online course, it is also expected that you have reliable internet service and that you check your university email at least once a day. It is also recommended that you set up course notifications in Blackboard to receive a text alert when I post announcements, grades, or other course-related items. See instructions in Blackboard for setting up notifications.

OTHER COURSE RESOURCES: There are several resources on the course Blackboard page. You are expected to review and familiarize yourself with the items in Blackboard in the first week of class. NOTE: Please post general, course-related questions to the discussion board forum I have set up for this. Typically, if one student in the class has the question, others do as well. Please allow 24 hours for a response, and then feel free to email me or call me directly with your question.

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 policy on academic dishonesty in the SRSU Student Handbook, as all violations will be taken seriously and handled through the university judicial process. **In addition, please note that I will be using plagiarism detection software for all written assignments. All assignments should be INDIVIDUAL efforts by you.**

LATE WORK: Given that all assignments are accessible from the beginning of the term, the occurrence of late work should be rare, except in cases of emergencies. Prompt and clear communication will assist with any accommodations and exceptions.

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).

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.

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.

DISTANCE EDUCATION STATEMENT: Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as Smarthinking, library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

BLACKBOARD TECHNICAL SUPPORT:

SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support Online Support Desk Contact Info:
Toll Free: 888.837.6055. **Email:** blackboardsupport@sulross.edu

W	Dates	Topics & Readings	Due or To Do:
1	July 1-4	Syllabus, Chapter 1 (Texas History/Beginnings)	Post an introduction and complete your syllabus quiz by Saturday at 11:59 p.m. OPTIONAL: Live lecture/question time at 3 p.m. on Wednesday
2	July 5-11	Chapter 2 (Texas Constitutions) & Chapter 3 (Texas Legislature)	Discussion board question & quizzes due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.; Weekly assignment & DB response due by Saturday at 11:59 p.m. OPTIONAL: Live lecture/question time at 3 p.m. on Monday
3	July 12-18	Chapter 4 (Legislative Organization & Process) & Chapter 5 (Texas Governors)	Discussion board question & quizzes due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.; Weekly assignment & DB response due by Saturday at 11:59 p.m. OPTIONAL: Live lecture/question time at 3 p.m. on Monday
4	July 19-25	Chapter 6 (Plural Executive and TX Bureaucracy) & Chapter 7 (Texas Judicial System)	Discussion board question & quizzes due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.; Weekly assignment & DB response due by Saturday at 11:59 p.m. OPTIONAL: Live lecture/question time at 3 p.m. on Monday
5	July 26-August 1	Chapter 9 (Campaigns & Elections) & Chapter 10 (Political Parties)	Discussion board question & quizzes due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.; Weekly assignment & DB response due by Saturday at 11:59 p.m. OPTIONAL: Live lecture/question time at 3 p.m. on Monday
6	Aug 2-7	Chapter 11 (Organized Interests) & Chapter 12 (Local Government) FINAL EXAM	Discussion board initial post & quizzes due by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.; Weekly assignment & DB response due by Friday at 11:59 p.m. OPTIONAL: Live Lecture & Final Review at 3 p.m. on Monday The final exam will be available all day on August 6-7 on Blackboard. It will be due by Friday at 11:59 p.m.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Asking good questions is an important skill. In some weeks, you will be asked to create a discussion question for your classmates.

--A good discussion question meets the following criteria:

- Is clear and easy to understand
- Has appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Allows your classmates the opportunity to apply or critically think about a concept from the readings or to discuss an issue that is relevant to the topics for the week
- Is open-ended, allowing for a 2-3 sentence response. Adding a “why or why not” follow up question is appropriate
- Encourages deeper exploration of course topics
- Helps bring in new knowledge to the learning environment

--A good discussion question DOES NOT

- Ask for specific answers that can be easily found in the book or online (you’re not testing your classmates)
- Promote a certain opinion (e.g. Why should we do away with the electoral college?)
- Duplicate questions from other sources
- Reword a quiz question
- Present inaccuracies (e.g. Why does the President get to serve six terms?)

Responding to Discussion Questions

When you respond to discussion questions, you need to respond to questions that are good discussion questions. Please refer to the list above. **Also, PLEASE make sure to include the full question you are responding to in your response post.** When I grade the discussion board, I do not grade by thread, I grade by person. In addition, all students must adhere to the basic ground rules below.

GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION BOARDS

SOURCE: Center for Teaching and Learning. (2020). Sample discussion board ground rules. Retrieved from <https://ctl.wiley.com/sample-discussion-board-ground-rules/>

- **Ask questions.**
If you find something confusing or want to know more, do not hesitate to ask questions. Make sure to post your questions in the appropriate thread.
- **Participate.**
Do not hide in the background; it is not fair to lurk and let others do all the work. Contribute to discussions to get as much as possible from the course and to maintain your participation grade.
- **Do not dominate a discussion.**
Share your knowledge, but not to the point of excluding others. If you have something to offer, please share it, but allow everyone to contribute equally to a discussion.
- **Be intellectually rigorous.**
Do not excuse sloppy or illogical thinking. Challenge yourself and one another.
- **Be tactful.**
Be critical of ideas, but remember there are other people involved. Be tactful and kind. You can hurt the feelings of a person reading your post.

- **Forgive other students' mistakes.**
Do not correct others, even if you follow the rules of netiquette and use good manners. Just because you do not agree with a student's post does not mean that he or she is wrong. Instead, offer a different perspective to encourage further discussion.
- **Read the whole thread before posting.**
Read all the posts in a thread before responding so you don't repeat what others have already said. Try to contribute clarifying information or a new idea to a discussion.
- **Be concise.**
Do not waste people's time by posting basic, repetitive information. Make your point clearly and quickly.
- **Reread and check your posts.**
Practice professionalism. Be mindful of how you look online; others will likely judge the tone and quality of your writing. Reread your posts and edit for clarity and mechanics.
- **Cite your sources.**
If you use a source, cite it properly. Give credit where credit is due. Include links where appropriate.
- **Maintain confidentiality.**
Respect your classmates' privacy. Do not repeat the personal information that others share.
- **Report technical problems.**
If the platform is not working properly, please let me know as soon as possible

SAMPLE SCHEDULE FOR READING AND ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: You are, of course, welcome to approach your work for the course in the manner that suits you. However, I just wanted to provide this as a possible guide for those of you who need some guidance on how to tackle the work each week.

Sunday	Read over the assignment for the week to get an idea of what you will need to do so you can think about it as you read. Then, read a chapter. Also, as you read, jot down ideas for your discussion question.
Monday	Review/view chapter materials on Blackboard for the chapter you read on Sunday, and then take the quiz for that chapter. Attend the optional virtual lecture/question time if you can.
Tuesday	Read over the assignment for the week again so you can think about it as you read. Then, read the other chapter. Also, as you read, jot down ideas for your discussion question.
Wednesday	Review/view chapter materials on Blackboard for the chapter you read on Tuesday, and then take the quiz for that chapter. Also, post your discussion question.
Thursday	Work on your assignment.
Friday	Work on your assignment. If you finish, post the assignment and a solid response to one of your classmate's questions.
Saturday	Rest! Relax! Woohoo for breaking the work into chunks!!