

## **POLITICAL SCIENCE 231**

INTRODUCTION TO LOCAL POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

3 CREDIT HOURS

FALL, 2007-AB1 302- TTH 11:00-12:30

JIM CARTER AB1, 315B

EXT. 41461 [POL\\_JLC@SHSU.EDU](mailto:POL_JLC@SHSU.EDU)

OFFICE HOURS MWF 1:00-2:00; TTH 3:30-4:30

**TEXTS:** **Christensen, Terry and Hogan-Esch, Tom. Local Politics: A Practical Guide to Governing at the Grassroots. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is intended acquaint students with the role and practice of local governments in the United States.

Local government exists in a variety of forms across the United States. In this course we will examine the various types and structures of local governments including counties, school districts, special districts, cities, etc. Students will address the fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories necessary to develop a base upon which to build a more complete knowledge of local governments in the U.S.

In this course we will evaluate the role of local elected officials, appointed officials, the media, local interests groups, citizens, and neighborhoods as well as other participants in local politics. Students will learn to apply course materials to improve their analytical abilities, problem solving, and decision making.

The history and development of local governments will be addressed, the proper role and authority of city managers will be examined, the accountability of local government to citizens will be considered, the importance of media and communication and information shared between local governments and citizens will be analyzed. The Constitutional and legal authority of local government will be identified.

Students will also be encouraged to develop a clearer understanding of and commitment to personal values and to apply those values to their evaluation of and participation in local government.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

There will be three examinations. Each exam will be worth 25% of the grade in the course. The tests will be a combination of multiple choice and essay.

Each student will also select a research topic of some significance to local politics and government and provide three periodic written reports on the results of their examination of that topic. These three reports will be graded independently, even though they are on related subjects. Together the three projects will equal 25% of the course grade.

## **DETAILS OF RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT:**

1. Each student will identify an **“area of interest”** in local government. An area of interest can be a public office, for example city manager, sheriff, municipal judge, tax collector, etc., or it can be an area of public policy, for example water service, recreation, police, health, education, police practices, economic development, environmental protection, the nature and effect of media coverage on local politics, local elections, campaigns, voting practices.

Students will develop a twenty source bibliography related to their “area of interest” and will identify and explore the literature addressing their specific “area of interest.”

Students will turn in a two page exploratory essay along with their bibliography. The bibliography will consist of a variety of types of sources including journals, books, web-sites, etc.

2. Students will turn in a ten source annotated bibliography for the second assignment addressing literature on the same subject.
3. Students will describe the current status of their subject in the literature and point out areas of potential research interest in a three page essay.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** See Academic Policy Statement 800401. Any attendance policy in this class will be in compliance with that statement.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** See Academic Policy Statement 810213. Any actions taken with regard to academic dishonesty in this course will be in accordance with that statement.

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:** SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, please register with the SHSU Counseling Center and speak with me about how I can help you.

**RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AND HOLY DAYS:** See University policy 8161001. Any needs related to students religious requirements will be considered within the requirements of that statement.

**INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION:** Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

**CLASSROOM CONDUCT:** The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline is found at the following link  
<http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>.  
Any actions taken with regard to student conduct will be in accordance with that statement of policy.

**TENTATIVE READING ASSIGNMENT AND TOPICAL OUTLINE:**

WEEK 1      INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND  
POLITICS      C H—CH.1

WEEK 2      EVOLUTION OF CITIES AND GENERAL HISTORY  
CH—CH.2

WEEK 3      RURAL/URBAN/METROPOLITAN/MSA/CMSA/ETC.  
CH—CH.3

WEEK 4      LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS  
CH—CH.4

- WEEK 5      FORMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
CH—CH.5
- WEEK 6      REFORM POLITICS AND THE CITY MANAGER FORM OF GOVERNMENT  
CH—CH.6
- WEEK 7      LOCAL LEGISLATIVE BODIES  
CH—CH.7
- WEEK 8      LOCAL BUREAUCRACY  
CH—CH.8
- WEEK 9      LOCAL ELECTIONS AND CAMPAIGNS  
CH—CH.9
- WEEK 10     LOCAL INTEREST GROUPS  
CH—CH.10
- WEEK 11     COMMUNITY POWER  
CH.--CH. 11
- WEEK 12     LOCAL BUDGETING  
CH—CH. 12
- WEEK 13     LOCAL POLICIES  
CH—CH13.
- WEEK 14     THE FUTURE OF LOCAL POLITICS  
CH—CH.14
- WEEK

