I. INTRODUCTION

A. An introductory, survey course on various Texas government topics. This course includes study of the origin and development of the Texas constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.

B. Through this course, students will prepare for contemporary challenges by developing and demonstrating the following core objectives: critical thinking skills, communication skills, social responsibility, and personal responsibility.
   • Critical Thinking Skills: to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
   • Communication Skills: to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
   • Personal Responsibility: to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
   • Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

C. This course is a part of the core curriculum at Central Texas College. Please check your degree plan to determine the status of this course in your program of study.

D. Prerequisite(s): None
II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

A. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.
B. Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.
C. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.
D. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.
E. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.
F. Analyze the state and local election process.
G. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
H. Analyze issues, policies and political culture of Texas.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The instructional material identified for this course is viewable from www.ctcd.edu/books

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Reading Assignment: your instructor will discuss the role of reading assignments for the course.
B. Projects, Oral Reports, Case Studies, Book Reports, Research Papers: Your instructor will assign one of these items for you to complete as a part of the requirements for this course. He/she will provide specific instructions regarding content, format, timelines, etc.
C. Examinations: Your instructor will determine how many exams will be given during the course, their content, and when they will be administered. Make-up exams will be handled according to the policy of the individual instructor.
D. Class Performance: Your instructor will summarize and discuss CTC’s academic policies. You may refer to the CTC catalog for details. Your instructor will provide his/her policies on absences, make up work, etc.

E. Class Participation: Your instructor will explain how class participation affects your course grade, if applicable.

V. SEMESTER GRADE COMPUTATIONS

A. It is the student’s responsibility to complete the course requirements as defined within this syllabus.

B. Your instructor will explain how to compute your semester grade based upon:
   1. Examinations
   2. Written work
   3. Other measurable requirements (if any)

C. Grades are computed as follows:
   
   - Point/percentage-to-Grade Ratio
     90 - 100 A
     80 - 89 B
     70 - 79 C
     60 - 69 D
     < 59 F

   - The grading scale for each class is set by the instructor.

VI. ATTENDANCE AND WITHDRAWAL POLICY

A. Attendance: Class attendance is an essential element to the learning experience. In addition, CTC policy (effective Spring 2017) requires that instructors certify as attending and participating all students in the class the day after the census date. Students who fail to meet this attendance and participation requirement will be marked as “Never Attended” on the Census-Certification and dropped from the class.

B. Withdrawal: The instructor cannot administratively withdraw a student from class. All students whose attendance is certified on the Census-Certification Roll will receive a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F. [Final letter grades will depend on a student’s performance.]
Students who wish to withdraw from the class after the certification date should do so before the “last day to withdrawal.” This date is listed on the academic calendar in the schedule of classes available on the CTC website. It is the student’s responsibility to know all deadlines and procedures related to withdrawing from the class. When in doubt, contact the Registrar’s Office.

Appeals to the attendance and withdrawal policy must be made to the Registrar’s Office, not to the instructor.

VII. NOTES AND ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

A. Incomplete Grade: An “IP” grade may be assigned by an instructor if a student has made satisfactory progress in a course but encounters extenuating circumstances beyond his/her control. The instructor makes the final decision concerning the granting of the incomplete grade.

B. American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA): Disability Support Services (DSS) provides support services for students who have appropriate documentation of a disability. Students requiring classroom, academic or other accommodations are responsible for contacting DSS located on the central campus. This service is available to all students, regardless of location. This service is available to all students, regardless of location. Explore the website at www.ctcd.edu/disability-support for further information. Reasonable accommodations, in accordance with federal and state laws, will be given through the DSS office.

C. Instructor Discretion: The instructor reserves the right of final decision in course requirements.

D. Civility: Individuals are expected to be cognizant of what a constructive educational experience is and respectful of those participating in a learning environment. Failure to do so can result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

VIII. COURSE OUTLINE

The specific material within each unit and the ordering of the chapters will be at the instructor’s discretion. Upon successful completion of these units, the student will be able to:

A. Unit 1: The People of Texas, the Texas Constitution, and Texas in the Federal System

Unit Objectives:
1. Trace the evolution of the Texas economy and the changing population
2. Explain the origin and development of the Texas Constitution
3. Understand the foundations of the U.S. federal system
Learning Objectives:
1. Define political culture and explain how it has been influenced by the geography of Texas.
2. Explain how the Texas population has changed over time.
3. Describe the state’s shift from a rural society to an urban one.
4. Identify the major functions of state constitutions.
5. Analyze the major provisions of the Texas Constitution.
6. Describe modern efforts to change the Texas Constitution.
7. Trace the major changes in national and state power over time.
8. Describe the sources of, and tensions between, national and state power.

B. Unit 2: Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections, Interest Groups and the Legislature

Unit Objectives:
1. Describe the main functions and structure of state party organizations.
2. Describe the type of elections held in Texas and how the rules for voting affect turnout among different groups.
3. Define interest groups, and describe the major ways they try to influence Texas government.
4. Describe the organization and basic rules of the legislature.
5. Trace the process through which law is made in Texas.

Learning Objectives:
1. Trace the evolution of the party system in Texas.
2. Analyze how ideological divisions and demographic change affect Texas political parties.
3. Present the main features of election campaigns in Texas.
4. Determine which interest groups have the most and the least influence on Texas government.
5. Explain how ordinary individuals can influence Texas government.
6. Analyze how party leadership and partisanship affect power in the legislature.
7. Explain the politics of redistricting.

C. Unit 3: The Executive Branch, Local Government and Public Finance

Unit Objectives:
1. Describe the powers of the Texas governor and the limits of the governor’s power.
2. Explain the structure and role of local governments in Texas.
3. Describe the sources of revenue and pattern of spending in Texas.

Learning Objectives:
1. Identify the elected officials who make up the plural executive.
2. Explain the roles played by boards, commissions, and regulatory agencies.
3. Explain the importance, role and structure of county government in Texas.
4. Describe the major types of city government in Texas.
5. Understand the role of special districts in Texas government.
6. Explain the financial problems facing local government.
7. Understand the constitutional provisions that affect how the state budget is made.
8. Identify the major steps and players in making the state budget.

D. Unit 4: The Judiciary, Public Policy and Crime and Corrections

Unit Objectives:
1. Describe how the Texas court system is organized.
2. Identify the major classifications of crimes and the related punishments.
3. Describe the key steps and concepts in the policy-making process.

Learning Objectives:
1. Explain the difference between criminal and civil law.
2. Evaluate the process for selecting judges in Texas.
3. Describe the major issues facing education and healthcare policy in Texas.
4. Describe the state’s role in addressing poverty.
5. Describe prisons and corrections policy in Texas.
6. Explain why the Texas criminal justice system is controversial and proposals for reforming the system.