I. Introduction:

This is a graduate level course intended to familiarize students with questions, approaches and issues involved in the study of state court systems, including the politics and policy associated with these institutions. Our concerns during the semester will be far ranging, beginning with an introduction to state courts, we will proceed to the forces affecting the selection of judges to state courts, the institutions affecting judicial decision making, and an evaluation of policies affected by state courts. Throughout the semester our attention will be directed toward state courts of last resort, or state supreme courts, to understand the factors affecting state appellate courts. As institutions, state supreme courts provide an informative area of public law that differs greatly from studies of the federal courts.

A major advantage of studying courts in the states is the leverage one can gain on important theoretical questions that are central to the study of law and politics, not just state politics. At its best, the states offer the opportunity to ascertain with clarity the impact of such things as political and social context, public opinion, and institutional design on political and legal outcomes. Studies of the state courts offer answers to questions that may elude most other subfields in political science as they benefit from unique and important differences across the states. While single nation and single court studies make inferences from very limited quantities of data and observations, studies of state courts avoid the vexing problem of few comparative opportunities and allow a rich source of cross-state and institutional evaluation.

II. Required Text:

There are four books required for this class, which are available for purchase at the University Bookstore or through an on-line bookseller. If purchasing on-line, please use expedited shipping as readings will begin very quickly. Additionally, there are prepared readings available through the university library’s reserve service. We will use readings from this collection immediately.

5. Prepared Readings. UTA Libraries Online: Course Reserves. URL: http://library.uta.edu/reserves/reserves.jsp
III. Course Requirements:

1. Attendance and Participation – Attendance is mandatory! I expect all students to attend each class and to arrive on time prepared to discuss the current week's readings. Class participation should reflect careful thinking about the readings. Each student will be instructed to discuss one or two articles during several weeks of the semester. Students will be responsible for discussing those articles in class. Students are expected to come to class ready to discuss the week’s readings and will be graded on their understanding of the material for that week.

2. Weekly papers – Each student is required to write six full-length single-spaced one-page papers. Each paper should comment on the readings for the week, describing the key points and general conclusions of the week’s readings. Grades will range from above satisfactory to below satisfactory. Weekly papers are due at the beginning of class and late papers will not be accepted. Students are permitted to choose the weeks in which they will not write a paper.

3. Research Paper – Each student is required to write a semester research paper related to one of the central themes of the course (e.g., judicial selection, judge characteristics, judicial decisions, policymaking, etc.). Research should be independent and include the general components of a research design, including a research question, literature review, and several well-stated hypotheses. Some introductory quantitative analysis is also acceptable and encouraged. A research prospectus is due on March 4th. Failure to turn in the prospectus will result in a two grade penalty (20 points) on the final paper grade. Completed papers are due at the beginning of class on April 29th. Students are required to present their paper in class during the final two weeks of class. Presentations should include the general components of one’s research design paper. Late papers will not be accepted.

4. Examinations – There will be one final examination that will include two or three broad essay questions. All students will take the examination at the assigned time with no make-up exam allowed except for situations such as medical emergencies, deaths in the family, etc. In such situations the student is expected to contact the instructor as soon as possible and will be required to present proof in the case of a medical emergency. Failure to take an examination will result in a failing grade (0) for the examination.

IV. Grading:

1. Attendance and Participation – 15%
2. Weekly Papers – 20%
3. Research Design Paper – 40%
   a. Research Prospectus Due on March 4
   b. Final Research Design (30%) Due on April 29
   c. Class Presentation of Research Design (10%) on April 29 and May 6
4. Final Examination – 25%

The grading scale is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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</tbody>
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V. Class Schedule:

Week 1: January 21
Introduction to State Judicial Politics

Week 2: January 28

**General Perspectives of Judicial Behavior**

Week 3: February 4

**State Methods of Judicial Selection and Retention**

Week 4: February 11

**State Judicial Elections**

Week 5: February 18

**State Judicial Elections cont.**

Week 6: February 25

**Judicial Characteristics**


Week 7: March 4

**Court Agendas**


Week 8: March 11

**Agreement and Dissent**


Week 9: March 25

**Judge Voting/Case Outcomes**


Week 10: April 1

**Separation of Powers/Judicial Review**

Week 11: April 8
**Judicial Behavior: Policy Making**

Week 12: April 15
**Class Canceled – Paper Research**

Week 13: April 22
**Class Canceled – Paper Research**

Week 14: April 29
**Class Presentations**

Week 15: May 6
**Class Presentations**

**Final Examination:** May 13 from 8:15-10:45PM

**VI. Special Notes:**

1. Correspondence – Occasionally, students may be contacted about course changes and other events. Correspondence will be directed to university email addresses, rather than personal email addresses which is not permitted by the university. Failure by a student to check their university email may result in missing assignments and grade penalties (e.g., weekly paper discussion and assignments).

2. Cell Phones – Students are requested to turn off their cell phones prior to class. If a cell phone rings during class, that student is expected to leave class for the remainder of the period.

3. Academic Integrity - All students are expected to obey the civil and penal statutes of the State of Texas and the United States, the Regents’ Rules and Regulations of The University of Texas System, the rules and regulations of the University, and the orders or instructions issued by an administrative official of the University or U.T. System in the course of his/her duties, and to observe standards of conduct that are compatible with the University’s function as an educational institution. Any student found to engage in cheating, plagiarism, or collusion will be sanctioned.

4. Inclement Weather – If a class is canceled due to inclement weather, its subject will be delayed until the following class. Similarly, all tests and assignments canceled because of
inclement weather will be delivered during the following class. For information related to weather related class cancellations please call (972) 601-2049.

5. Students with Disabilities - Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to speak with the instructor during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential.

6. Diversity Policy – It is the policy of the University of Texas at Arlington that, to the extent provided by applicable laws, no person shall be denied employment or admission, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or subject to discrimination under, any program or activity which it sponsors or conducts on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, disabilities, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

7. Syllabus Changes – The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus at any time during the semester.