

POLS 3398 01 - Credit Hours: 3
Gulf Seminar
Syllabus - Spring 2026 Face to Face
College of Humanities and Social
Sciences - Political Science



Course Delivery Methods

Face to Face

T-Th 2:00pm-3:15pm

CHSS 00226

Instructor Information



Instructor: Jason Enia

Email: jason.enia@shsu.edu

Phone: 936.294.2202

Office Location: CHSS 290D

Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 12-1p; by appointment

Addition Information:

This seminar will be team-taught by a variety of instructors from across SHSU. But as I am the lead instructor on the course, you are welcome to contact me at any time with questions or concerns.

Course Description

Students analyze issues in the Gulf region from multidisciplinary perspectives, including physical science, social science, humanities, and the arts. Students focus on systems thinking, including issues of scale from local to global, to assess environmental, societal, economic, policy, and community-related challenges in the Houston metro area, Southeast Texas, and the broader Gulf region. Readings, discussion, and undergraduate

research methods are emphasized. Prerequisite: Junior standing and approval of the instructor.

Objectives/Outcomes

Upon Completing this Course, the student should be able to:

- **Objective**
Analyze complex regional challenges using systems thinking frameworks (e.g., feedback loops, stocks, and leverage points) to identify structural causes rather than just symptoms.
- **Objective**
Formulate a "Model of Change" that hypothesizes how specific policy or physical interventions can alter system outcomes.
- **Objective**
Synthesize diverse disciplinary perspectives—including environmental ethics, history, and physical science—to construct a holistic understanding of "wicked problems" in the Gulf Region.
- **Objective**
Design an operational roadmap for research or project implementation that accounts for logistical constraints, stakeholder needs, and timeline feasibility.
- **Objective**
Translate technical system dynamics and specialized research into accessible visual artifacts and narratives persuasive to non-expert audiences.

Required Texts and Materials

Title or Material: There are no readings to purchase for this course.

Additional Information:

All required readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Student-provided Technological Devices Policy

Students are responsible for having access to the necessary technology for coursework, including a reliable computer, internet connection, and required software. Some courses may have additional technology requirements. Lack of access will not excuse missed work.

Students must have reliable access to a computer (Windows 10/macOS 11 or later), a stable internet connection, and a supported web browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari). Tablets and mobile devices may not provide full functionality for some coursework. Access to Blackboard is essential, along with productivity software like Microsoft Office 365. Online and hybrid courses may require a webcam, microphone, and video conferencing tools (Zoom, Microsoft Teams). Some assessments may use online proctoring software (Respondus Lockdown Browser).

Student-Provided Technological Devices

Students are responsible for ensuring that their personal technological devices (e.g., laptops, tablets, mobile devices) meet the necessary hardware and software requirements for participation in this course. Failure to maintain a functional device will not be accepted as a valid excuse for incomplete coursework, missed deadlines, or inability to participate in course activities. SHSU Online and the university's IT department provide limited technical support for personal devices.

Assignments

Due Date	Assignment Name	Assignment Type	Points
1/29/26	PPM 1: The Problem Frame (Two-Part Deliverable) (8%)	PPM Assignments	100
2/26/26	PPM 2: The State of Knowledge Synthesis (2 pages) (8%)	PPM Assignments	100
3/24/26	PPM 3: The Leverage Point Logic Model (8%)	PPM Assignments	100

Due Date	Assignment Name	Assignment Type	Points
4/9/26	PPM 4: The Operational Roadmap (8%)	PPM Assignments	100
4/23/26	PPM 5: The Visual Artifact Draft (8%)	PPM Assignments	100
4/26/26	The Gulf Scholar Briefing (15%)	Final Project	100
5/5/26	The Project Plan (30%)	Final Project	100

Assessment Breakdown

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION (15%) This course operates as an active research incubator, not a passive lecture. Consequently, attendance is mandatory and will be recorded at every session. However, physical presence alone does not constitute participation. You are expected to arrive having read the assigned materials, ready to actively engage in the session. Your grade reflects the consistency and quality of your contribution to the collective intellectual environment of the seminar.

PROJECT PLAN MILESTONE (PPM) ASSIGNMENTS (40%) To ensure rigorous development and prevent the typical end-of-semester "crunch," the course is scaffolded around five Project Plan Milestone (PPM) assignments. These are not busy work; they are iterative drafts of specific sections required for your final project (e.g., The Problem Frame, The Logic Model, The Operational Roadmap). By completing these milestones on schedule, you are effectively authoring your final Project Plan piece-by-piece, receiving faculty feedback at critical junctures to refine your approach before the final submission.

FINAL PROJECT (45%) The capstone of the course is the development of a formal proposal for your larger Gulf Scholars Program project. This deliverable requires you to identify a "wicked problem" in the Gulf region, analyze its system dynamics, and propose a concrete intervention or research inquiry. The grade is split between the Project Plan (30%)—a comprehensive written proposal—and the Gulf Scholar Briefing (15%), a formal defense of your theory of change and visual artifact before the cohort.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all scheduled seminar meetings regularly and punctually. For campus-based courses, attendance is tracked through in-person participation, and excessive absences may impact academic performance and financial aid eligibility.

Students receiving federal aid must actively attend and participate in all enrolled courses. Failure to meet attendance requirements may result in a reduction or cancellation of aid. For more information, visit: <https://intranet.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/faculty-handbook/syllabus-guidelines>

Students Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, United States Tax Code.

A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time. For a complete listing of University policy 861001, see:

[Student Absences on Religious Holy Days](#)

Grading Scale

Your current grade will always be available on Blackboard. The final letter grade will be determined as follows per University policy:

Grading Scale

PERCENT (%) EARNED	LETTER GRADE	DENOTES
90-100	A	Excellent
80-89.5	B	Above Average
70-79.5	C	Average
60-69.5	D	Passing (NNSFD)

PERCENT (%) EARNED	LETTER GRADE	DENOTES
0-59.5	F	Failure

Make-Up & Late Work Policy

All assigned work must be completed and submitted by due date/times indicated. No late assignments will be accepted without advance permission from the seminar director, Dr. Jason Enia.

AI Use Policy for This Course

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a tool that, like any other, can be used ethically or unethically in academic work. The use of generative AI in this course is subject to the guidelines set by the instructor. Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to these guidelines, and failure to disclose AI use in assignments where it is restricted may constitute a violation of SHSU's Academic Honesty Policy.

Tentative Course Outline with Assessment Due Dates

Course sessions, session themes, session instructors, and due dates

WK	DATE	SESSION	THEME	INSTRUCTOR(S)	DUE
1	Tue, Jan 13	1	Welcome; seminar overview & mechanics; a tour of Gulf challenges	Enia, Guida	
	Thu, Jan 15	2	Thinking in terms of models; GSP and seminar project expectations	Enia	
2	Tue, Jan 20	3	What does it mean to think in systems?	Enia	
	Thu, Jan 22	4	The mechanics of thinking in systems: stocks, flows, feedback loops, etc.	Enia	PPM 1 part A (bring to class) (4%)
3	Tue, Jan 27	5	Working session: modeling project topics	Enia	

WK	DATE	SESSION	THEME	INSTRUCTOR(S)	DUE
	Thu, Jan 29	6	Working session: modeling project topics; transitioning to new perspectives	Enia	PPM 1 part B (submit via Bb) (4%)
4	Tue, Feb 3	7	Environmental writing	O'Brien	
	Thu, Feb 5	8	Environmental writing	O'Brien	
5	Tue, Feb 10	9	Environmental ethics	Baxter	
	Thu, Feb 12	10	Environmental ethics	Baxter	
6	Tue, Feb 17	11	Indigenous philosophy	Baxter	
	Thu, Feb 19	12	Indigenous philosophy	Baxter	
7	Tue, Feb 24	13	History	Stoops	
	Thu, Feb 26	14	History	Stoops	PPM 2 (submit via Bb) (8%)
8	Tue, Mar 3	15	Sociology of disaster	Miller	
	Thu, Mar 5	16	Sociology of disaster	Miller	
9	Tue, Mar 10		No class – Spring Break		
	Thu, Mar 12		No class – Spring Break		
10	Tue, Mar 17	17	Floods and coastal disasters	Guida	
	Thu, Mar 19	18	Floods and coastal disasters	Guida	

WK	DATE	SESSION	THEME	INSTRUCTOR(S)	DUE
11	Tue, Mar 24	19	Geology	Bradford	PPM 3 (submit via Bb) (8%)
	Thu, Mar 26	20	No class - Gulf Scholars Conference (Gainesville, FL 3/27-3/28)		
12	Tue, Mar 31	21	Trinity contaminants	Fujimoto-Strait	
	Thu, Apr 2	22	Nurdle	Fujimoto-Strait	
13	Tue, Apr 7	23	Energy systems	Pecen	
	Thu, Apr 9	24	Energy systems	Pecen	PPM 4 (submit via Bb) (8%)
14	Tue, Apr 14	25	Art	Ramsay	
	Thu, Apr 16	26	Art	Ramsay	
15	Tue, Apr 21	27	Art	Ramsay	
	Thu, Apr 23	28	Wrap up	Enia	PPM 5 (submit via Bb or in person as appropriate) (8%)
16	Tue, Apr 28	29	Final projects and discussion	Enia/GSP faculty	Gulf Scholar Briefing (15%)
	Thu, Apr 30	30	Final projects and discussion	Enia/GSP faculty	Gulf Scholar Briefing (15%)

WK	DATE	SESSION	THEME	INSTRUCTOR(S)	DUE
17	Tue, May 5				Final Project Plan (submit via Bb or in person if necessary) (30%)

SHSU Online 24/7 Blackboard Support Desk

Students have access to 24/7 technical support for all Blackboard-related needs through the SHSU Online Blackboard Support Desk. Whether assistance is needed with login issues, course access, troubleshooting errors, or navigating Blackboard tools such as discussions, assignments, and tests, the Support Desk is the primary resource for resolving Blackboard-related questions. Additionally, the Support Desk provides guidance on university resources and can help connect students with other departments and services as needed.

Support is available 24/7 via phone (936-294-2780) and email (blackboard@shsu.edu), ensuring students receive timely assistance. Additional resources, including FAQs and troubleshooting guides, can be found on the [SHSU Online website](#). If technical difficulties impact coursework or deadlines, students should promptly notify their instructor.

Notification of Course Evaluation Process

SHSU uses the IDEA System to evaluate faculty. Students are asked to complete an IDEA evaluation of the course and the instructor at the end of the semester. Participation is voluntary but highly encouraged.

Academic Honesty

The University expects students to engage in all academic experiences both in and out of the classroom with honesty. The University may initiate disciplinary proceedings in response to a student's alleged actions upon an instructor's finding of academic

dishonesty, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, abuse of resource materials on an exam, quiz, or other academic work, or the falsification of data. Any student engaging in academic dishonesty may be subject to academic penalties and may be referred to the Dean of Students's office for additional disciplinary action. More information can be found in Academic Policy Statement 810213, Academic Honesty. For more information, visit: <https://intranet.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/faculty-handbook/syllabus-guidelines>

Students with Disabilities Policy

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in class, register with SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and schedule a time to talk with a counselor. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: [Students with Disabilities Policy](#)

Financial Aid Eligibility Validation

Students who receive federal financial aid are required to actively engage in their academic courses, including at the beginning of the semester, as a condition of receiving federal aid. Federal regulations require SHSU to report whether a student has actively engaged in each of their courses or not. A student's lack of engagement in their courses may result in the student losing their eligibility for financial aid and having that aid

withdrawn by the federal government. More information on what qualifies as academic engagement may be found on the [Federal Aid Eligibility Validation \(FAEV\) website](#).

Pregnant and Parenting Students

Pregnant and parenting students fall under Title IX, which "prohibits educational institutions from discriminating against students based on pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from any of these conditions." For more information, visit: <https://intranet.shsu.edu/titleix/pregnancyparenting.html>

Classroom Rules of Conduct

Free discussion, inquiry, and expression are encouraged in this class. Classroom behavior that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of students to benefit from the instruction is not acceptable.

Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Students are prohibited from making offensive remarks or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior disruptive will be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.

Students are expected to read and abide by all rules and policies in the [Student Code of Conduct](#).