Purpose:

This course is the first of two required political science courses designed to be an introduction to American Politics. The focus of this first course is the inputs into the political process, and to some extent the political process itself. Although many of you are not majoring in political science, all of you will be affected by the political process. Hopefully by the end of this course you will not only be more informed about the political process, but also more interested and involved in it.


Collier, Ken, Steven Galatas and Julie Harrelson-Stephens. 2008. Lone Star Politics (LSP).
**Course Requirements:**
There will be three exams given during the semester as well as a cumulative final. You must complete three exams, each worth 33.33%. If you complete all four exams I will drop the lowest grade. Tests will cover material from the lecture and the reading. In addition, supplemental reading material may be periodically assigned during the semester.

There are **No Make-up exams** allowed. Instead, I drop one test grade. If you miss one exam that is the grade I drop. If you miss two exams, you get a ZERO on the second test. If you know you will miss an exam due to an excused absence (i.e. athletic trip, extended illness with documentation) you must make arrangements with me at least two days prior to the scheduled exam date to take the exam **early**.

**Grading:**
Course grades of 90 - 100 will be scored an A; 80-89 is a B; 70-79 is a C; 60-69 is a D; below 60 is an F.

If you think that an error has been made in calculating your grade, it is **your responsibility** to provide me with all of your work. To that end, it would be prudent to save anything that is handed back to you until you get your final grade report.

**Attendance:**
It has been my experience that poor attendance will result in a poor grade in the class. Thus, you are strongly encouraged to attend regularly. Please be on time to class and plan to stay, as entering a class late or leaving early is always disruptive and will result in you being counted absent.

**Participation:**
Participation in class discussions is strongly encouraged. As students, you will get the most out of this class if you engage in the discussions. I ask that you respect the diverse backgrounds and views of your fellow students, and employ common courtesies during class.

**Other policies:**
In addition, any cell phones, beepers or other electronic devices that ring/beep/click/ect. or any talking or behaviour that disrupts other students or your instructor will result in a **five point grade reduction on your next exam**.

Anyone having problems in this course is strongly encouraged to contact the instructor as early as possible. I will be happy to meet you and help you in anyway possible. I may be able to help you study more effectively or recommend other assistance. Remember, **I want you to do well in this class**!
Course Description: Origins and development of American and Texas government systems; federalism; civil liberties and civil rights; interest groups, political parties and elections. Meets the state requirement for American Government. This course meets the legislative requirements for a course on the Constitutions of the United States and Texas.

Program Learning Outcomes:
This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in this course.

General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes:
In any given semester, one or more of the following Social and Behaviour Science Exemplary Education Objectives (EEOs) may be assessed in this course:

- EEO#3: To use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories
- EEO#5: To analyze the effects of historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and global forces on the area under study.
- EEO#6: To comprehend the origins and evolution of U.S. and Texas political systems, with a focus on the growth of political institutions, the constitutions of the U.S. and Texas, federalism, civil liberties, and civil and human rights.
- EEO #8 - "To differentiate and analyze historical evidence (documentary and statistical) and differing points of view"
- EEO #9 - "To recognize and apply reasonable criteria for the acceptability of historical evidence and social research"
- EEO#11: To recognize and assume one’s responsibility as a citizen in a democratic society by learning to think for one’s self, by engaging in public discourse, and by obtaining information through the news media and other appropriate information sources about politics and public policy.
- EEO #12 - "To identify and understand differences in commonalities within diverse cultures"

Student Learning Outcomes:
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Examine the relationship between political culture and policy
- Describe the basic features of the U.S. and the Texas constitutions
- Understand the inputs into the political process (participation, parties, interest groups) and how these inputs theoretically and practically effect the political system
- Understand the concept and importance of federalism for the American political system
Academic Integrity (A-9.1)
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit. Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Students with Disabilities
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

The Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 restricts release of certain student information, such as grades. In accordance with the law, I will not be able to give grades out over the phone or e-mail. Please – DO NOT ASK. I will be happy to discuss your grades with you in person, during office hours or by appointment.

Class information, including changes of dates, review sheets, or other information will be posted on the class mycourses site.

This syllabus should be seen as a rough guide for the coming semester. I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus throughout the semester.
Course Schedule

I. Introduction
What is the definition of politics? What are the different political and economic systems? What is meant by democracy and to what extend is the US a democracy? What is the role of citizenship? What is political culture and how is it manifest in ideologies in America? What does the political culture in Texas look like?

Readings: KTR Chapter 1; LSP Chapter 1; The Declaration of Independence.

II. The U.S. Constitution
Why do you think the Articles of Confederation failed? Identify the major principles embodied in our Constitution. What is amendability?

Readings: KTR Chapter 2; The U.S. Constitution.

Exam 1: Monday September 27th

III. The Texas Constitution
Why did Texas have so many Constitutions? How does the Texas Constitution differ from the U.S. Constitution?

Readings: LSP Chapter 2

IV. Federalism
What is Federalism? How does Federalism differ from a Confederation? What are the advantages and disadvantages of a federalist system of government? How has Federalism evolved?

Readings: KTR Chapter 3

V. Voting, Campaigns and Elections
Who participates in our electoral process? What do presidential campaigns involve? In what ways do individuals choose to participate? What are some obstacles to participation? To what extent are election laws in Texas democratic? How does the long ballot impede participation?

Readings: KTR Chapter 12; LSP Chapter 7

Exam 2: Friday October 22nd
VI. Political Parties and Interest Groups
What is a political party? What is realignment? What are the characteristics of the American Party System? What are interest groups and how do they differ from political parties? What are direct and indirect lobbying?

Readings: KTR Chapter 11

VII. Parties and Interest Groups in Texas
How did parties evolve in Texas? How does the Texas Constitution attempt to limit party influence in state elections? To what extent do laws in Texas facilitate or limit interest group influence?

Readings: LSP Chapter 8

VIII. Public Opinion
Why does public opinion matter? What are types of polls used? How are our opinions formed? What are sources of division of public opinion?

Readings: KTR Chapter 10

Exam 3: Friday November 19th

IX. Civil Liberties
What are Civil Liberties? What rights are protected in the Bill of Rights? How has freedom of religion been protected throughout our history? Under what instances can freedom of expression be limited? What are the rights of criminal defendants?

Reading: KTR Chapter 4, the Bill of Rights

X. Civil Rights
Where are Civil Rights guaranteed? What is political equality? Why was Brown so important to Civil Rights? What civil rights issues remain prominent today?

Readings: KTR Chapter 5, the 13th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th Amendments

Monday December 13th, 10:30-12:30: Cumulative Final Exam in the regular classroom.