Political Science 141.007: American Government – Theory
Stephen F. Austin State University
Spring 2012

Course Meeting Time: M/W: 2:30-3:45
Course Location: LA 142
Instructor: Michael Tkacik
Office Location: McKibben, ED 381 (Honors School)
Office Hours: By appointment
Office Phone: 468-2813
E-mail: mtkacik@sfasu.edu
SI Leader: Christopher Graves
SI Meeting Times and Location: M/W: 5:00 – 6:00 pm, AV Area in AARC

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.” General Bulletin, 2011-2012, p. 358-9.

General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes:
In any given semester, one or more of the following Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Social and Behavior Science Exemplary Education Objectives (EEOs) covered by this course may be assessed:
#3 To use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.
#5 To analyze the effects of historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and global forces on the area under study.
#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.
#11 To recognize and assume one's responsibility as a citizen in a democratic society by learning to think for oneself, by engaging in public discourse, and by obtaining information through the news media and other appropriate information sources about politics and public policy.

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

Student Learning Outcomes:
By the end of the course, you should be able to:
1. to describe the basic themes and concepts related to the study of American and Texas political behavior;
2. to examine the relationship between political behavior and political institutions, especially the interdependence of behavior and institutions;
3. to think critically about American and Texas politics, especially the theoretical foundations of both systems;
4. to discuss the foundations of the US and Texas Constitutions;
5. to identify the key schools of thought regarding voting behavior and electoral processes;
6. to explain the roles and functions of political parties, interest groups, and media in a democratic political system; and,
7. to understand citizenship in the American political system more completely;

Requirements of the Course

You are expected to read the assigned material before class and to participate in class. You will gain more from the course (and earn a better grade) if you read and participate. It is assumed that students regularly read a major current newspaper such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, or the Financial Times.

I would further encourage you to critically examine the readings, lectures, and class discussions. One of the primary benefits arising out of a solid liberal arts education is critical thinking. You will never be penalized in this class for asking questions, for seeking clarification, or for disagreeing with my interpretation of some subject. Of course, this does not mean that you are free to invent your own answers on the exams.

Examinations: Examinations (except makeup exams) will consist of multiple choice and/or true/false questions. Each exam, including the final exam, covers a specific segment of lectures and readings, and each will have equal value in determining the final course grade. You need to bring a Scantron answer sheet (Form #882-ES) and a sharpened #2 pencil for each exam.

Tentative exam dates are noted below. The final exam will be given at the time and date specified in the official University calendar. Students should check the University schedule before planning any end-of-semester trips or activities since it will not be possible to change dates for the final exam.

Exams will cover both the reading and lecture material. You are responsible for each.

Grading Policy: Grades will be determined by three examinations, each counting 1/3 toward the final grade (100 points per exam). The following scale will be used for this course, based on a total of 300 points available for the semester.

\[
\begin{align*}
A &= 270-300 \text{ points} \\
B &= 240-269 \text{ points} \\
C &= 210-239 \text{ points} \\
D &= 180-209 \text{ points} \\
F &= \text{Less than 180 points}
\end{align*}
\]

Class Participation: Meaningful class participation is encouraged. This means participation about the topic at hand, illuminated by the readings. For students who regularly thus participate, I reserve the right to add up to ten (10) points to their aggregate point total (above). This may help the borderline student on occasion. These additional points, whether zero or ten or somewhere in between, are based entirely on my
discretion and depend upon exceptional participation.

Workbook Assignments: Workbook assignments may sometimes be assigned as homework. When assigned they will typically be worth five (5) points. At the end of the semester these points will be added to students aggregate point total (above). **Late assignments will not be accepted.** Assignments must be torn out of the Workbook (you may not use copied assignment sheets).

**Required Books**


**Acceptable Student Behavior:** Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

Some examples of inappropriate behavior include, but are not limited to:

1. arriving late for class;
2. talking while your classmates are talking or I am talking;
3. Distracting your classmates or me; and,
4. Using a cell phone (texting, talking, ringing, or otherwise) or other electronic device.

**Timeliness**

Please show up on time for class. I will shut and lock the door once class begins. You will not be permitted to enter once the door is shut.

**Academic Integrity:**

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.

All cases of academic dishonesty will be handled according to University policies and procedures (A-9.1). The consequences for academic dishonesty may range from a score of zero (0) on the assignment to an “F” for the course or even expulsion. For details, students should refer to the University’s General Bulletin, 2011-2012 section entitled “Academic Integrity” and other sources of University policy.

**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.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor of any accommodation approved by ODS.

For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

**Course Complaints**

Any college course complaints or problems should first be discussed with the course instructor for the particular course. Difficulties can usually be resolved there. If the complaint cannot be resolved, the next person to see is the appropriate department chairperson.

**Communication**
Each student must use their sfasu.edu (titan) email account. This is official SFA policy. You are deemed to have received any message sent to your sfasu.edu account. If you use another account, have your SFA email forwarded to that account. Make sure your sfasu.edu email does not go to a quarantine folder and/or is not interpreted as spam. All official communication in this class will occur through your sfasu.edu account.

Additional Points

**Absolutely no early exams will be given.** No make-up exams will be given unless documentary evidence is provided to show a medical emergency or other University accepted excuse. If given, the make-up exam may be more difficult and different in kind from the regularly scheduled exam. Thus, a make-up exam may (or may not) include essay questions. A make-up exam may also be cumulative in nature (as opposed to regularly scheduled exams, which will not be cumulative). It is clearly in your interest to take the regularly scheduled exams.

All make-up exams must be taken May 2, 2012 at noon. A room will be reserved so that all students can take the make-up exam at the same time; the place for exams will be announced in class.

You are strongly encouraged to take extensive class notes. One of your objectives should be the development of writing and note-taking skills. Therefore, please do not use any recording devices in this class. **My lectures are my legally protected work product.**

Grades will be available on Blackboard.

Do not arrive late for class.

Do not talk while your classmates are talking or while I am talking.

Do not otherwise distract your classmates or me.

Treat everyone in the class with respect and courtesy.

All students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior and use language appropriate for the classroom learning experience.

Cell phones and electronic devices should be turned off and put away during class time.

During tests no electronic devices will be permitted at your desk except a watch (not a cell phone that tells time, but a watch).

During tests please turn your baseball caps so they are facing backward.

Unless otherwise explicitly noted, all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified.

**I reserve the right to eject and/or lower the grade of any student who violates these or other rules.**
**Changes to Syllabus/Class**

I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO MODIFY ANY PORTION OF THE CLASS AND/OR SYLLABUS. SHOULD THE NEED ARISE, I WILL NOTIFY YOU BY EMAIL IN WRITING AT YOUR SFASU.EDU ACCOUNT.

### Tentative Assignments

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>General Introduction&lt;br&gt;What is Politics? (Dye, Chapter 1)</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>U.S. Political Culture (Dye, Chapter 2)</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Texas Political Culture (Dye, Chapter 19); (Workbook, Chapter 1)</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>U.S. Constitution (Dye, Chapter 3)</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Texas Constitution (Dye, Chapter 20); (Workbook, Chapter 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td><strong>TEST 1</strong></td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Federalism (Dye, Chapter 4)</td>
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<td>Week 7-8</td>
<td>Civil Liberties (Dye, Chapter 14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9-10</td>
<td>Civil Rights (Dye, Chapter 15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td><strong>TEST 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>U.S. Political Parties (Dye, Chapter 7)</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Texas Political Parties (Dye, Chapter 21); (Workbook, Chapter 6)</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>U.S. Elections (Dye, Chapter 8)</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Texas Elections (Dye, Chapter 21); (Workbook, Chapter 4)</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>U.S. Interest Groups (Dye, Chapter 9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Texas Interest Groups (Dye, Chapter 21); (Workbook; Chapter 7)</td>
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<td>Week 16</td>
<td><strong>FINAL EXAM (May 11, 2012) (10:30-12:30)</strong></td>
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### Other Information

Voter Registration: [http://www.votexas.org/](http://www.votexas.org/)