PSC 141.001
INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS
Fall 2017
McKibben 351
Mon. & Weds. 2:30pm - 3:45pm

Professor: Charles Gregory
Email: gregoryc2@sfasu.edu
Office: Liberal Arts North 106
Phone: (936) 468-2176
Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 12:30pm - 3pm

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, 2014-2015.

Text Books

• Required

• Recommended

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.

1Because this is a syllabus, it is a guide for how the semester will unfold. To be clear, I reserve the right to change ANY aspect of the course as necessary.
General Education Curriculum Objectives

This course has been selected to be part of Stephen F. Austin State University’s core curriculum. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six objectives for all core courses: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. SFA is committed to the improvement of its general education core curriculum by regular assessment of student performance on the six objectives.

Assessment of these objectives at SFA will be based on student work from all core curriculum courses. This student will be collected in D2L through LiveText, the assessment management system selected by SFA to collect student work for core assessment. LiveText accounts will be provided to all students enrolled in core courses through the university technology fee. You will be required to register your LiveText account, and you will be notified how to register your account through your SFA e-mail account. If you forward you SFA e-mail to another account and do not receive an e-mail concerning LiveText registration, please be sure to check your junk mail folder and you spam filter for these e-mails. If you have questions about LiveText call ext. 1267 or e-mail SFALiveText@sfasu.edu.

The chart below indicates the core objectives addressed by this course, the assignment(s) that will be used to assess the objectives in this course and uploaded to LiveText this semester, and the date the assignment(s) should be uploaded to LiveText this semester, and the date the assignment(s) should be uploaded to LiveText. Not every assignment will be submitted to LiveText every semester. Your instructor will notify you which assignment(s) must be submitted for assessment in LiveText this semester.
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 though written, oral and visual communication.

Empirical and Quantitative Skills
To include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.

Teamwork
To include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

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.

Course Requirements

Grading. Grades for this course will be based on three midterm exams, a final exam, and a short essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 – 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 – 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 – 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 – 59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exams (50 points each). The midterm exams and final exam will cover material from the lectures and the readings. The midterms will not be cumulative, but the final exam will be cumulative. There will be no make-up exams, unless the absence is excused. If you know
you will miss an exam for an excused absence, then you must make arrangements with me at least two days prior to the scheduled exam date to take the exam. If you miss the exam because you become suddenly ill, then you must contact me in a timely manner (within three days of the exam) to work out other arrangements. The following are acceptable excuses: illness with a doctor’s note, military duty, death in the family, or participation in approved university-sponsored events. The following are NOT acceptable excuses: forgetting to set your alarm, scheduled flights or trips, scheduled non-emergency doctor appointments, going to work, picking up relatives at the airport, chauffeuring a friend somewhere, etc.

**Short Essay (50 points).** Every student will write one short essay, which will be due on 27 November 2017. These essays must be between 225 and 315 words long and will be graded on the following criteria:

1. **Provide word count (5 points).** Essays must be between 225 and 315 words long, and word count must be clearly provided.

2. **Title your essay (5 points).** Good titles predict essay’s content, attract interest, and reflect tone or slant of the essay.

3. **Identify what they say (20 points).** Because writing is a response to a person or group, you must clearly state your own ideas as a response to others. This means you must clearly and concisely summarize the views you are responding to, and why you are responding (e.g., are they wrong?, do they overlook an important facet pertaining to the problem?, etc.).

4. **Respond to what they say by offering your own argument (20 points).** There are three primary ways to respond to others’ ideas: agree, disagree, or agree/disagree simultaneously. If you agree, it is important that you go beyond regurgitating the views you agree with. That is, you need to add something new to the conversation. If you disagree, you must offer a persuasive explanation for why you disagree. If you agree/disagree simultaneously, you must clearly identify what you agree with and what you disagree with. Moreover, you will need to provide a logical, cohesive argument to support your position.

5. **Demonstrate command of standard English (10 points).** Essays will demonstrate command of the following: proper grammar, cohesion, coherence, clarity, grace, and concision.

Please keep in mind that these are short essays, and because they are short essays, there is no room for fluff or filler. Also, you should focus on developing one or two key arguments.

Finally, if you do not turn in your essay on time and you want full credit for it, then you must turn it in within seven days of its original due date and you must present your

---

2If you are unfamiliar with these concepts, then you need to Google them or peruse the following books: Joseph M. Williams’s *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*; Gerald Graff’s and Cathy Birkenstein’s *They say, I Say*; Brandon Royal’s *The Little Red Writing Book*; Martha Kolln’s *Rhetorical Grammar*; or William Strunk Jr.’s and E.B. White’s *The Elements of Style*. If you have never written a response essay, I strongly recommend Gerald Graff’s and Cathy Birkenstein’s *They say, I Say*. 
argument to the class. If you turn in your essay late but are unwilling to present, it will be
docked half a letter grade (or five percent of the essay). So, if you get a 95 on your essay but
it was late, then your final grade will be a 90. After seven days, essays will not be accepted.

Class attendance. Class attendance is NOT mandatory, but I do take attendance each
class. At the beginning of each class I will pass around an attendance sheet, it is your
responsibility to sign it. If you do not sign it during class, sign it after class. If you choose
not to sign it, I assume you are not attending class.

Extra Credit. There is one guaranteed way to earn extra credit: GET PUBLISHED IN
A NEWSPAPER. That is, you can earn extra credit by writing a letter to the editor or an
editorial that gets published. Editorials will be worth more than letters, and the bigger the
newspaper, the more points you will receive. If you get an editorial published in the New
York Times or Wall Street Journal (national papers of record), you automatically get an A.

Technology

Using cell phones in class to talk, text, or read/write email is prohibited. If I observe you
using a cell phone during class, your final grade for the semester will suffer. Additionally, if
I observe you using a cell phone during class, I reserve the right to kick you out of class. If
you are asked to leave class and you refuse to leave, you will be dropped from the course.
Moreover, if an electronic device goes off in class, I reserve the right to adjourn class and
move on to the next chapter assigned.3

Academic Integrity

The following is taken from SFASU’s Policy Manual (2014), section on “Academic In-
tegrity” (A-4): 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 attempt-
ing 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. Ex-
amples 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.

3Material missed in lectures because of noisy electronics is fair game for the exam.
Please read the complete policy at the following website: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_academic_dishonesty.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_academic_dishonesty.pdf) All cases of academic dishonesty will be handled according to University policies and procedures (A-4.1). The consequences for academic dishonesty will be an “F” for the course. For details, students should refer to the SFA Policy Manual (2014) or the University’s General Bulletin, 2014-2015 section entitled “Academic Integrity” and other sources of University policy.

**Withheld Grades**

The following is taken from SFASU’s Policy Manual (2014), “Semester Grades Policy” (A-54): 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 semesters, 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/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**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.
# Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/28</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/30</td>
<td>Introduction continued</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/4</td>
<td>Power and Citizenship in American Politics</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>Power and Citizenship in American Politics</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11</td>
<td>The Politics of the American Founding</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>The Politics of the American Founding</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/18</td>
<td>Introduction to Texas</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/20</td>
<td>Texas Constitution</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/25</td>
<td>Federalism</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/27</td>
<td><strong>Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2</td>
<td><strong>Exam # 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/4</td>
<td>Public Opinion</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/9</td>
<td>Public Opinion</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>Parties &amp; Interest Groups</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>Parties &amp; Interest Groups</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/18</td>
<td>Texas Political Parties</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/23</td>
<td>Texas Organized Interests</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/25</td>
<td><strong>Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30</td>
<td><strong>Exam # 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1</td>
<td>Voting, Campaigns, &amp; Elections</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/6</td>
<td>Voting, Campaigns, &amp; Elections</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/8</td>
<td>Campaigns and Elections, Texas Style</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>Campaigns and Elections, Texas Style</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>The Media</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/27</td>
<td>The Media</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29</td>
<td><strong>Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/4</td>
<td><strong>Exam # 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/6</td>
<td><strong>Final Exam Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/15</td>
<td><strong>Final Exam</strong></td>
<td>10:30am-12:00pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

4This is a tentative schedule, and I reserve the right to change the schedule as necessary.