“it is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence,” as “[t]he danger to society is not merely that it should believe wrong things, though that is great enough; but that it should become credulous, and lose the habit of testing things and inquiring into them; for then it must sink back into savagery” (Clifford, 1879, pp. 185-186)

"Introduction to American Government Part One," is a critical consideration of the foundational concepts, principles, theories and dynamics under-girding American government, politics and democracy. Classes blend conventional lectures with controversial films, critical thinking
exercises, games, scientific investigations and student participation. Each session fuses philosophy and science into a coherent paradigm through interactive, thoughtful, open-minded and largely irreverent polemical discussion and debate. Students explicate the meaning and implications of fundamental concepts such as "democracy," "constitutionalism," "power," "justice," "government," "politics," "authority," "legitimacy," federalism and "political socialization." They question and inquire into the evidence warranting and confirming the values, structures, goals and processes of American government. They argue and evaluate the system’s success in meaningfully establishing an effective democracy that genuinely embodies, secures and promotes democratic values; and they investigate not only the national level but the state and local levels by inquiring into the Texas state counterparts to federal structures, process, values and goals.

Accordingly,

- Students are responsible for employing all of the material gleaned from all of the readings assigned for each class and all previous classes (whether or not covered explicitly in class), in current discussions and in all of the papers.

- If you are inclined to reading cursorily the night before class, participating off-handedly, superficially or in light of what you think I might want to hear, answering classroom queries in single words, whipping off clever ideas that make little-to-no sense and having the professor accept them “because the ideas are good,” please be informed that I draw no distinction between the quality of one’s ideas and the quality of their verbal and written expression, and I will not suffer rote or cursory recitations of reading materials, mindless or uninformed participation, unreflective notions or inarticulate, trite, banal, hackneyed, trivial or clichéd expressions (e.g., “Well, it all depends,” “Everyone’s different,” “Whose to judge,”) . I am absolutely not kidding.

- Do not neglect to familiarize yourself with The Syllabus Explained, The Rules of Engagement and the Administrivia riders each of which is hereby incorporated into this syllabus and available along with it on D2L.

Course Objectives

- To analyze, criticize and evaluate demonstrably the concepts, principles, theories and practices of our republican form of democracy as evident at both the federal and state levels
- To analyze, criticize and evaluate demonstrably the cogency and efficacy of federalism, civil liberties, civil rights, interest groups, political parties and elections at the state and federal levels, illuminating how they work and how they impact our lives
- To develop demonstrably your ability to suggest cogent, positive alternative concepts, principals, practices and desired outcomes where appropriate

Requirements and Grading

Your overall grade will be based upon:
1. Quizzes (25%)
2. Group Quizzes (25%)
3. Workbook Assignments (10%)
4. Thought pieces on the assigned readings and the workbook material (40%)

5. Class participation (X%); student grades will be raised but not lowered to reflect the quality of a student’s contributions in class. Demonstrating a firm and timely grasp of the reading, asking hard questions, pursuing reasoned argument in an intellectually responsible way and being generous in attending to the ideas of others will all be rewarded liberally.

Tentative Schedule

The outline below will be followed at the discretion and direction of the instructor. The instructor reserves unequivocally the rights to add, subtract, rearrange, reassemble, orchestrate in experimental ways, augment and/or dispose of the required readings, writings and exercises, and to alter the pace of assignments at any time.

Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1-4</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Classroom discussion and PowerPoint Presentations</td>
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<td>1. Fundamental concepts and principles</td>
<td>Read, 1. <em>Ten Things That Political Scientists Know That You Don’t</em></td>
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<td>2. The purposes and functions of politics</td>
<td>2. <em>On Power</em></td>
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<td>3. <em>On Political Power</em></td>
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<td>4. <em>Propaganda Techniques</em></td>
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<td>5. The excerpt from <em>The Rhetoric of Reaction</em></td>
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<td>6. <em>Essential Elements of a Democracy</em></td>
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<td>7. The excerpt from <em>The Prince</em></td>
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<td>8. <em>On the Foundations of Republican Government</em></td>
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<td>9. Federalism</td>
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<td>10. Pluralism, Structuralism, Elitism</td>
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<td>11. Suggestion: Watch <em>Deliverance</em></td>
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<td>Fundamental Principles of Democracy</td>
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Week 5-6  Power, Justice and the Constitution Classroom discussion and PowerPoint

Read 1. Justice: Contemporary Philosophers

2. How Does the Constitution Establish justice?

Week 7-8 Praxis: Politics and Economics Classroom discussion and PowerPoint Presentations

Read 1. *The Mobility Myth* 

2. *Why we’re in a New Gilded*
| Week 9-10       | American Political Culture: Shared fundamental values, attitudes and beliefs  
|                | 1. Political Subcultures  
|                | 2. The Texas Political Culture | Classroom discussion and PowerPoint  
|                | Read,  
|                | 1. Basic Belief Systems  
|                | 2. American Political Culture  
|                | 3. Political Ideology: Liberals and Conservatives  
|                | 4. The Paranoid Style in American Politics  
|                | 5. Metaphor, Morality and Politics  
|                | 6. Religion and Decision-Making in American Politics  
|                | Suggestions:  
|                | • Watch I ♥ Huckabee’s  
|                | • Watch Ghost World  
|                | Read “The Crooked Ladder.” |
| 11-End         | Politics, Culture, Economics and the Constitution | Read  
|                | 1. Political Culture and Public Policies Among the States  
|                | 2. Political Culture and State Economic Policies |