Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you. -Pericles (430 B.C.)

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.

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.


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.
Course Requirements:
To succeed in this course you need to keep up with the reading and the lecture. Keep in mind that you need to allow time for class and time to study. In a ‘live’ class you would spend three hours a week in class and one to two hours a day studying. An online course is no different. You should put aside time to read or listen to the lecture, then read the textbook that corresponds to that module and fill out the relevant review sheet. If you do this with every unit as you go, then studying the review sheet prior to the exam will be much more effective. The schedule is designed so that you will have a module due every Tuesday (except the welcome module). The due dates and times are not negotiable, so you won’t want to leave any assignments to the last minute, in case you have last minute computer problem. I have posted a review sheet and reading assignment that you can start working through immediately to help you focus for the exams. Please let me know if you have any problems or concerns.

There will be four exams given during the semester, each worth 20%. The final 20% of your grade will come from your participation in the course discussions, quizzes, and other course activities. The regular exams will consist of approximately 50 multiple-choice. Questions. Tests will cover material from the lecture and the reading. In addition, supplemental reading material may be periodically assigned during the semester. The exam time limits will be stated on each exam and strictly enforced.

If, for any reason, you miss one exam, you may replace it with a comprehensive final at the end of the semester. The comprehensive final will be approximately twice as long as the regular course exams. (If you do not miss an exam, you will take a non-comprehensive fourth exam that covers the last three modules).
Daily Grade:
Discussions will take place throughout the course and can be accessed either through the associated learning module or the Discussion tool. In a discussion, you must post your own response to the prompt and, if required, respond to other students. "I agree" is not a response to another student that will merit points; this may be how you feel, but it doesn't require much depth of thought on your part. Responses must be substantive and reflect critical thought and engagement with the course material. Feel free to reply to other students' postings with oppositional points of view, but you must speak respectfully. While I give you specific guidelines about what is required in each discussion, discussion grades will represent both breadth and depth of your participation.
As with a discussion in a live class, excellent participation in discussions comes from listening (in this case reading) each of the comments and responding to several classmates’ comments. Reading and responding to only one or two classmates represents below average participation.

Please remember that the discussion board is an academic environment and should be treated as such; proper grammar, spelling, and syntax are expected. Though your postings should be have sufficient length to properly answer each question, your grade will be based not only the length of your postings but on your active participation and the content of your messages. Note that while you may not fully understand each module’s content, the discussion board is a good way to help yourself and your fellow students to make sense of complex concepts. Thoughtful, appropriate questions about the content carry value and reflect critical thought.

In addition to discussions, some modules include quizzes over the lecture and reading material. The quizzes are designed to help test your basic understanding of the module’s content. Be sure to complete the reading and relevant portion of the study guide prior to taking the quiz for each module.

Success in this course:
Study skills are developed with practice. It is unlikely that you can merely read an assigned chapter and fully absorb all the concepts contained in that chapter in one sitting. Rather, it is often the case that to truly understand new material, you have to read it more than once, spend time contemplating the material, and even discussing it with your peers or in the SI group. Success is significantly more likely if you keep up with the course requirements throughout the semester, rather than cramming the requirements in a day or two before the exam. The course has an SI session twice a week where concepts and themes from the class are covered.
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 any way possible. I may be able to help you study more effectively or recommend other assistance. Do not wait until the end of the semester to ask for help, when so much of your grade is already completed. Ask for help as soon as you know you need it. Remember, I want you to do well in this class!

Other policies:

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 D2L 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.

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.

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/

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

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.