Introduction to American Government: Theory and Politics

Course Description
This course will introduce students to the constitutional structure of American and Texas government as well as federalism and the role of local governments. Students will also examine the roles of public opinion, organized interests, and political parties in American and Texas politics.

Course Objectives
This course is designed to introduce students to the qualitative and quantitative analysis of U.S. and Texas politics. The course will help students develop the capacity to reflect and act upon political and social issues in order to increase meaningful participation in democratic society. The course assignments also help students develop the reading and listening skills needed to succeed beyond college.

Required Texts
Keeping the Republic, Seventh Brief Edition by Christine Barbour and Gerald Wright.

Course Requirements and Grading
I have high expectations for students in this course. My goal is to provide you with the basic tools for a lifetime as a citizen. I also want to help students develop basic analytical and communications skills.

There will be three in-class exams (September 27, October 25, and November 29) and a final given during finals week (December 13 at 10:30 AM). Each is worth 50 points. Students will drop their lowest exam score (including any missed exam) and use the scores from their best three exams.

Class attendance will count for as much as 25 points. A seating chart will be used to take attendance. Students not in their seats will be counted absent. Students will lose at least one point (two points the last week of class) for each time they miss class, arrive late, leave early, sleep during class, or disrupt class by talking.

A total of 24 points will be based on 2 short written exercises submitted through Desire2Learn. These short writing assignment will be graded based the content and clarity of your answers. Late assignments will be marked down. No assignment will be accepted more than two weeks after its due date.

There may be extra-credit opportunities available during the semester. These will be announced in class and any extra credit assignment available to one student will be available to all students.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point System</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best 3 exams</td>
<td>50 points each</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 exercises</td>
<td>12 points each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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<td>Course evaluation</td>
<td>1 point</td>
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<td>A: 180+ points</td>
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<td>B: 160-179 points</td>
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<td>C: 140-159 points</td>
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<td>D: 120-139 points</td>
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<td>F: less than 120 points</td>
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Office Hours
Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays: 9:00-10:50 AM
Tuesdays & Thursdays: 9:00-10:50 AM
Mondays-Thursday afternoons: 2:00-3:00 PM
or by appointment

Supplemental Instruction
The SI group for this class will be led by Candace Corley (corleycr@jacks.sfasu.edu) and will meet Mondays / Wednesdays from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. in Lumberjack Landing Room 139H.
**Attendance Policy**

Students are required to attend class and attendance will be taken daily using a seating chart. Students are expected to be in their seat by the beginning of class. I will count you as absent if at any point during class time you are not in your seat, conscious, and reasonably quiet. Sleeping, talking or other disruptive or disrespectful behavior will count against you. Please find another class if you consider this an inconvenience.

Absences may be excused with a valid, documented excuse. All excuses must be submitted in a timely manner.

**Exam Policy**

Students will be allowed to make up missed exams due to: a death in the family, illness, university-sponsored conferences or competitions, mandatory court appearances, or similar unavoidable conflicts. Students must provide documentation before exams can be made up. Students are expected to be on time for exams. Students arriving after the first student finishes their exam will not be allowed to take the exam. Students may not leave the room during the exam. All electronic devices must be turned off and put away.

**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](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/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**Desire2Learn (D2L)**

For D2L technical support, contact student support in the Office of Instructional Technology (OIT) at d2l@sfasu.edu or 936-468-1919. If you call after regular business hours or on a weekend, please leave a voicemail. For general computer support (not related to D2L), contact the Technical Support Center at 936-468-HELP (4357) or at helpdesk@sfasu.edu.
General Education Core Curriculum

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 these six objectives.

Assessment of these objectives at SFA will be based on student work from all core curriculum courses. This student work 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 your 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 your 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. 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment Title</th>
<th>Date Due in LiveText</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.</td>
<td>Not assessed in Fall semester</td>
<td>Not assessed in Fall semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
<td>To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.</td>
<td>Not assessed in Fall semester</td>
<td>Not assessed in Fall semester</td>
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Additional course information and readings can be found online through Desire2Learn.
Course Outline

I. Understanding U.S. politics: *How the system is rigged and why that is not always bad.*
   - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 1
   - Lone Star Politics, Chapter 1

II. The Constitutional Arrangement: *What are the basic rules of government?*
   A. The US Constitution: *Who made the rules?*
      - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 2
      - Federalist #10
   B. Electoral College: *Did the Founders “rig” the system?*
   C. The Texas Constitution: *How does the Texas Constitution shape the state today?*
      - Lone Star Politics, Chapter 2
   D. Federalism: *How do the federal, state, and local governments interact?*
      - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 3

III. The role of the people: *What should citizens do?*
   A. Public Opinion: *Should we care what public opinion polls say?*
      - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 10
      - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 12
   C. Campaigns & Elections: *Why are campaigns so annoying?*
      - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 12
      - Lone Star Politics, Chapter 9

IV. Other Actors in the Political System
   A. Organized Interests: *What’s so special about special interests?*
      - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 11
      - Lone Star Politics, Chapter 11
   B. Political Parties: *What is the party establishment? Will it go away?*
      - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 11
      - Lone Star Politics, Chapter 10
   C. Media: *Does the media manipulate us or do we manipulate the media?*
      - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 13

V. Liberty and Equality: *What’s the state of freedom today?*
   A. Civil Liberties: *Freedom! Hell, yeah!! What? There are limits?*
      - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 4
   B. Civil Rights: *Who gets equality and how?*
      - Keeping the Republic, Chapter 5

VI. Conclusion: *The American Citizen Today*