Political Science 141.013: American Government – Theory  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
Fall 2018

Course Meeting Time: T/TH: 11:00-12:15  
Course Location: Vera Dugas Liberal Arts North 142  
Instructor: Michael Tkacik  
Office Location: McKibben, ED 381 (Honors School)  
Office Hours: T/R: 12:15-1:15, MWF: 1:00-2:00 weekly, and by appointment (please make an appointment)  
Office Phone: 468-2813  
E-mail: mtkacik@sfasu.edu  
SI Leader: Chase Yackley  
E-Mail: ChaseYackley@gmail.com  
SI Meeting Times and Location: TBA

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, 2017-2018.

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.
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.

Requirements of the Course

I want to focus on “informed citizenship” this semester. There is a great deal of mistrust of the media. While some of it is justified, political entrepreneurs drive much of this. I want the class to be able to examine and reach defensible conclusions about the quality of information we consume, from both the traditional media and especially the other options available on the internet and elsewhere.

I also want to give all of you the opportunity to register to vote in Nacogdoches. Given that you will be spending at least 75% of your time in Nacogdoches, it makes a great deal of sense to register here. For those of you who have never registered and/or voted, I want to help you to register and vote, based on informed opinions. Those opinions will be informed by your values, but we want to make sure the information we use to underpin those opinions is legitimate.

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. No early exams will be given under any circumstances.

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
The following scale will be used for this course, based on a total of 300 aggregate points available for the semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>270-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>240-269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>210-239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>180-209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Less than 180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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 extra credit. 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).

*State Mandated Assessment Assignment*: There is currently no assessment assignment in this class.

**Required Books**

Christine Barbour and Gerald Wright, *Keeping the Republic* (Brief Edition) 978-1-4833-5289-3 (hereinafter, the Text). Does not need to be the most recent edition.

Alan Baily (Editor), *PSC 141 Workbook – Texas Government: Theory & Politics* (hereinafter, the “Workbook”).

**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 generally, the Student Conduct Code, policy 9 - http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student-conduct-code.pdf). 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 (also known as iCare). 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/or,
4. using a cell phone (texting, talking, ringing, or otherwise), tablet, or other electronic device (you may, of course, use a notebook or tablet for note taking purposes).
**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.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-integrity.pdf).

All cases of academic dishonesty will be handled according to University Policy Manual (4.1). 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, 2013-2014* section entitled “Academic Integrity” (46-7) and other sources of University policy.

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (5.5)**

At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic unit head, 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, except as allowed through policy [i.e., Active Military Service (6.14)]. 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.

For the entire policy on course grades, please see: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades.pdf).

**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/.

Please also see: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-accommodation-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf.

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 @jacks.sfasu.edu 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.

PLEASE NOTE: I will not respond to communication via D2L. Please email me at: mtkacik@sfasu.edu. I do not use D2L beyond a few “housekeeping” issues for class (such as posting the syllabus and grades).

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 in your interest to take the regularly scheduled exams.

All make-up exams must be taken Friday, December 7, 2018 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 D2L.

Do not arrive late for class.

Treat everyone in the class with respect and courtesy. While our political leaders may have lost all sense of decorum, I think civility still has a place in society.

All students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior and use language appropriate for the classroom learning experience.
Cell phones and electronic devices (except computers for note taking) 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 AT YOUR SFASU.EDU ACCOUNT.

**Tentative Assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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| Week 1 | General Introduction  
What is Politics? (Text, Introduction) |
| Week 2 | U.S. Political Culture |
| Week 3 | Texas Political Culture (Workbook, Chapter 1) |
| Week 4 | U.S. Constitution (Text, Chapter 1) |
| Week 5 | Texas Constitution (Workbook, Chapter 2) |
| Week 5 | TEST 1 |
| Week 6 | Federalism (Text, Chapter 2) |
| Week 7-8 | Civil Liberties (Text, Chapter 3) |
| Week 9-10 | Civil Rights (Text, Chapter 3) |
| Week 10 | TEST 2 |
| Week 11 | U.S. Political Parties (Text, Chapter 4 and 7) |
| Week 12 | Texas Political Parties (Workbook, Chapter 6) |
| Week 13 | U.S. Interest Groups (Text, Chapter 7) |
| Week 14 | Texas Interest Groups (Workbook, Chapter 7) |
Week 15  U.S. Elections (Text, Chapter 8)

Week 15  Texas Elections (Workbook; Chapter 4)

Week 16  **FINAL EXAM (December 13, 2018) (10:30-12:30)**

**Voting Information**