Political Science 141 is the first of two required courses which are an introduction to American and Texas government and politics. This course meets the state requirement for American Government,” and the “legislative requirements for a course on the Constitutions of the United States and Texas.” As such, we will cover the “origins and development of American and Texas government systems; federalism; civil liberties and civil rights; and interest groups, political parties and elections.” –excerpted from General Bulletin, 2017-2018.
Texts:

*Introduction to American Government* Bundle book 1: *Keeping the Republic (7th Brief Edition)*, Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright


-you also need four Scantrons (882-E) and pencil for the exams. (Please do not get 882-E “Compatible.”)

**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.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, you should be able

- To describe the basic themes and concepts related to the study of American and Texas political behavior
- To examine the relationship between political behavior and political institutions, especially the interdependence of behavior and institutions
- To think critically about American and Texas politics, especially the theoretical foundations of both systems
- To discuss the foundations of the US and Texas Constitutions
- To identify the key schools of thought regarding voting behavior and electoral processes
- To explain the roles and functions of political parties, interest groups, and media in a democratic political system
- To understand citizenship in the American political system more completely

**General Education Core Curriculum**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six core learning objectives: 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.
**Course Requirements:**

There will be **four exams** given during the semester: three regular exams, plus a final exam. Tests will cover material from the lecture, textbooks, and any supplemental reading material assigned during the course. I will drop the lowest of the four exam grades and average the top three. If you miss an exam, that exam will be the grade dropped. For this reason, there will be no make-up exams. If you miss two exams, you will get a grade of zero on the second exam. However, if you know you are going to miss an exam due to an excused absence (e.g., an athletic trip or illness with documentation), you may take the exam early if you give me at least two days prior notice. If you took the first three exams and have an A average, you may skip the final exam; except for the day of the final exam, you still must attend classes or be counted absent (see “Attendance”).

*There will be no extra credit assignments* I expect you to spend your time studying for the four major exams; these determine your final semester grade.

**Grading Policy:**

A = 90-100  
B = 80-89  
C = 70-79  
D = 60-69  
F = below 60  

If you think there was an error in calculating your grade, please let me known ASAP.

**Attendance:**

After three unexcused absence, I will start deducting points from your next exam grade. If you are late, I may count you as tardy or absent, depending on how late you are; two tardies will count as one absence. In addition, if you leave early, I will count you as absent. If you have documented extenuating circumstances, please let me know, ahead of time if possible. I understand that there may be a valid reason for your absence or tardiness; I only ask that you be honest with me, and I will be fair with you.

**Other Policies:**

Please turn off and **put away** your cell phones and other electronic devices that may make a noise. If I see you using your cell phone, I will deduct points from your next exam. Do **not text, talk, or disrupt the class.** **Do not wear earphones or ear buds.** If you do, I may not make a big deal out of it; I will just quietly deduct points from your next exam grade. If you continue, more drastic action may be taken. I also reserve the right to reduce your next exam grade by five points for any disruptive behavior.

I will never belittle a student. I want my classes to be based on mutual respect, and I encourage you to inform me of any problem you may have involving my class.
Contacting Me:

Please feel free to meet with me during office hours if you are having any problems with the course. If you have a problem seeing me due to your academic or work schedule, I will make every effort to make an appointment at another time. It would be best to contact me by email.

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/).

In accordance with the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, I will not be able to give out grades over the phone or email. I can discuss your grades with you in person during office hours or by appointment.
Course Schedule (Exam dates are tentative and subject to change with advance notice):

Introduction: Politics and Political Culture

Politics: Who gets What, When, and How
Political Culture
Political and Economic Systems
Democracy
Concept and Role of Citizenship
Political Ideologies
Political Culture of Texas
Readings: Keeping the Republic, Chapter 1
Lone Star Politics, Chapter 1
“The Declaration of Independence,” KTR, Appendix 2 (pgs. 291-293)

American Founding

The United States Constitution

Constitutional Government
The Declaration of Independence
Articles of Confederation
Constitutional Convention
Major Principles Embodied in U.S. Constitution
Amending the Constitution
Ratification
Readings: Keeping the Republic, Chapter 2
Federalist Papers, No. 10 (Madison)
“The United States Constitution,” KTR, Appendix 3 (pgs. 294-300)

*Exam 1: Monday, September 17*
The Texas Constitution

Texas Constitutions

Compare United States and Texas Constitutions

Readings: *Lone Star Politics*, Chapter 2

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Federalism

Constitutional Government (revisited)

Federal System of the United States

Federalism vs. Confederation

Evolving Ideas of Federalism

Readings: *Keeping the Republic*, Chapter 3

*Federalist Papers, No 51* (Madison)

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Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Electoral Process and Who Votes

How Individuals Participate

Obstacles to Participation

Presidential Campaigns

Electoral College

Election Laws and Democracy in Texas

Long Ballot in Texas

Readings: *Keeping the Republic*, Chapter 8

*Lone Star Politics*, Chapter 3

*Exam 2: Monday, October 15*
Political Parties and Interest Groups

Political Parties Defined
Role of Political Parties in a Democracy
Characteristics of the American Party System
Roles, Formation, and Types of Interest Groups
Lobbying: Direct and Indirect
Interest Groups

Readings: Keeping the Republic, Chapter 7
Federalist Papers, No. 10 (review again)

Parties and Organized Interests in Texas

Development of Political Parties in Texas
Texas Constitution and the Limitation on Party Influence
Role of Primaries in Texas Elections
Elections in Texas
Interest Groups in Texas
Lobbying and Lobby Regulation in Texas
Reading: Lone Star Politics, Chapters 4

Lone Star Politics, Chapter 5
Public Opinion

Role of Public Opinion in a Democracy

Influences on Political Opinions

Political Socialization

Polls: Measuring and Tracking Public Opinion

Types of Polls

Accuracy of Polls

Sampling Procedures and Accuracy

Readings: Keeping the Republic, Chapter 6

*Exam 3: Wednesday, November 7*

Civil Liberties

Civil Liberties Defined

Rights Recognized in Constitution (Body of Document)

The Bill of Rights

Applying Bill of Rights to the States

Freedom of Religion

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of Assembly

Freedom of the Press

Right to Keep and Bear Arms

Rights of Criminal Defendants

Other Rights in Constitution/Amendments

Readings: Keeping the Republic, Chapter 4

“The Bill of Rights,” KTR Appendix 3 (pgs. 300-301)
Civil Rights

Political Inequality and Political Equality

Civil Rights and Constitutional Amendments

*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*

The Civil Rights Movement

Rights Denied on Basis of Race and Ethnicity

Civil Rights Issues of Today

Readings: *Keeping the Republic*, Chapter 5

Constitutional Amendments 13, 14, 15, 19, 24, 26 *KTR* Appendix 3 (pgs. 302-305)

*SFA Final Exam Schedule*

*Final (Exam 4): Monday, December 10, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.*