POLITICAL SCIENCE 142.020
INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS
(T 6:45 p.m. – 9:15 p.m., FERGUSON 371)
Stephen F. Austin State University
Fall 2018 (8/17/18 – 12/14/18)

Instructor: Katie C. McClain
Email: Desire2Learn Only
Office: Ferguson 478
Department: Government

Office Hours:
W/Th: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Online M-F: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Telephone: 936.468.1494

Course Description

“Legislative, executive and judicial functions in American and Texas governments; public policy areas such as finance, social services and foreign policy; Texas local and county governments.” General Bulletin, 2017-2018, p. 337.

Requirements of the Course

You are expected to read the assigned material before coming to class; doing so will help you understand the material. You should also stay informed of current political events by watching the news, browsing political websites, following politicians and political parties, interest groups, etc. on social media, and so forth. Relating current events to the class material may help you make sense of the material.

Required Books

ISBN: 9781483352893

NOTE: As I have opted to not require a book for Texas government, additional readings will be required. These will be available on the Desire2Learn (D2L) course page no later than one week prior to class during which the related content will be discussed, as defined in the class schedule below.

Course Objectives

General Education Core Curriculum Objectives
In any given semester, one or more of the following Core Curriculum Objectives for the political science / government Foundational Component Area may be assessed.

- Critical Thinking Skills – creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information
- Communication Skills – effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
- Social Responsibility – intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to effectively engage in regional, national, and global communities
- Personal Responsibility – the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

**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:

- Critically evaluate political science theories and approaches to institutional arrangements of the U.S. and Texas political systems, to national public policy, and to state public policy
- Communicate your understanding and interpretation of institutional arrangements of the U.S. and Texas political systems, and well as key domestic and foreign policy issues
- Understand social responsibility by examining national and / or state policy choices as they effect various regional, national, and global communities
- Understand, connect, and evaluate individual choices associated with national or state public policy options and / or theories and approaches to institutional design of political systems

Students are expected to go beyond rhetoric and ideology to develop critical thinking about the American political system. As a result, students are encouraged to ask questions and to challenge assumptions of class discussions while respecting the logical and reasoned positions of others.

**Classroom Policies**

**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 on any class assignment or exam; (2) falsifying or inventing of any information, including citations, on an assignment; (3) helping or attempting to help other student(s) in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were one’s own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to: (1) submitting an assignment as one's own work when it is at least partly the work of another person; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source; (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper or presentation without giving the author credit.

Please read the complete policy: [Student Academic Dishonesty, policy 4.1](#)

**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 [Student Code of Conduct, policy 10.4](#)). 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. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

**Attendance and Participation**
You are expected to attend class and arrive on time. A strong correlation exists between your attendance and your performance in the course. Thus, attendance is required for this course. Moreover, regular attendance makes a clear and distinct statement about your personal responsibility; habits developed during your time at SFA carry over to the postuniversity world of employment. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Students who have not arrived to class at the time that attendance is taken will be counted absent. You may miss class up to three (3) times without penalty. **Students who miss more than three class meetings may face a five (5) percent deduction from their final grade for the course for each additional absence.** Absences shall be excused for documented emergencies or official university events (also documented) only.

You are expected to come to class prepared to engage in critical evaluation of the topic of the day. At a minimum, you must complete the assigned readings before the start of class on the day that the reading is scheduled. In addition, you should be prepared to contribute voluntarily to class discussions, participate in any in-class activities and experiential learning exercises, and make meaningful contributions to the learning experience.

**Desire2Learn/Email**
I prefer you contact me via D2L’s self-contained email. I will check D2L’s self-contained email regularly and will use this as the primary mechanism for communication with the class. If you have any questions regarding D2L email, please let me know.

Please use descriptive subject lines on your emails and refrain from using test message acronyms. I will not respond to emails asking questions the answers to which can be found in the syllabus, catalog, or course schedule or emails requesting a summary of material covered during a class meeting that a student missed.

**Grading Policy**
Grades will be determined by three (3) examinations (70%), two (2) writing assignments (10%), quizzes (10%), and discussions and presentations (10%). Thus, each component is a percentage (or weight) of your final grade. Within each component, grades will be averaged to calculate the overall percentage of your final grade associated with that component.

Grade Point Average (GPA) for this course is assessed using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 – 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 – 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 – 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Less than 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussions and Presentations (10 percent):** There will be four discussions and presentations during the semester. During the second class meeting, groups will be assigned. On the days indicated in the tentative course schedule below (unless otherwise announced on D2L and in class), thirty (30) minutes of class time will be allotted for you to meet with your
group to discuss a contemporary political issue and prepare a five (5) to six (6) minute presentation. Topics for each group will be announced online via D2L and in class one week in advance of each discussion and presentation. Presentations should remain on topic. Having said that, creativity is encouraged; you may use a variety of techniques including debates, role-playing, game shows, editorial commentary, and explaining the topic from different perspectives or opposing viewpoints. Avoid descriptive presentations that involve reading your research.

Each presentation will be evaluated on a twenty-five (25) point scale (for a total of 100 points, which will then be weighted in the calculation of your final grade for the course, as defined above; the opportunities for extra points on discussions and presentations defined below may result in this component of the grade exceeding the ten percent weighting in the event that the student attains more than 100 total points). Grading will be based on a rubric, with the main emphasis on delivery, organization, and content. To assist in the accuracy of grading, the instructor has the right to record the presentations.

**Extra points (for groups):** After each group gives their presentation, students will cast an individual ballot to vote on the best group presentation based on delivery, organization, and content. Students cannot vote for their own group’s presentation. The instructor will cast an equal number of votes as the number of student votes. The members of the group with the most votes will receive five (5) extra points on that presentation’s evaluation. The members of the group with the second most votes will receive three (3) extra points on that presentation’s evaluation. In case of a tie for first, the groups will divide eight (8) points equally and no points will be awarded to second place. In case of a tie for second, the groups will divide three (3) points equally. In all cases, the instructor will round up.

**Extra points (for students):** Two (2) extra points for each discussion and presentation will be awarded to a student who:
- Submits his or her individual research on the topic (articles from newspapers, journals, blogs, etc.) electronically via the corresponding D2L dropbox prior to the start of class on the day of the presentation; and
- Participates in the voting process at the end of class

**Quizzes (10 percent):** Timed quizzes will be administered on the D2L course page and will review content from the assigned readings for the upcoming class and/or previous lectures. Quizzes will open at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday mornings and will close at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesdays. Once open, you will have five (5) minutes to complete and submit a quiz, which may consist of multiple choice, true/false, and/or fill in the blank questions. Of the administered quizzes, the ten (10) quizzes with the highest grades will be used for determining the final grade for this course. There will be no opportunity to make-up or retake quizzes.

**Writing Assignments (10 percent):** There will be two writing assignments. Writing assignment prompts will be announced online via D2L and in class at least three weeks prior to the assignment due date as listed in the tentative course schedule below (unless otherwise announced on D2L and in class). Completed writing assignments must be submitted in the appropriate course dropbox by the due date indicated in the tentative course schedule below. Writing assignments will be evaluated using a rubric, with the main emphasis on the content, mechanics, conventions, and organization. Late assignments will not be accepted.

**Examinations (70 percent):** There will be three (3) unit examinations. Exams will not be cumulative. Exams (except make-up exams) will consist of multiple-choice, true/false, and/or short answer questions. Material for the exams comes from classroom discussions as well as
the assigned readings. You are responsible for each of these. Class sessions do not cover all material from the assigned readings, but all assigned readings, regardless of whether the material is discussed in class, are incorporated into the exams. Unless otherwise announced on D2L and in class, exams will be administered on the dates indicated in the tentative course schedule, below.

Make-up exams will be given only in the case of documented illness, documented emergencies, or university related absences. Make-up exams may differ in format from scheduled exams (e.g., part essay). If you miss an exam, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor as to the nature of your absence and to provide the necessary documentation. Failure to inform the instructor or provide adequate documentation will result in a score of zero points (0) on the exam.

**Extra Credit Opportunities:** Extra credit opportunities may be available at various times throughout the semester at the instructor’s discretion. Any extra credit opportunities will be announced on D2L and in class.

**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, visit the [Disability Services website](#)

**Technical Support**
D2L: [http://sfaonline.sfasu.edu/](http://sfaonline.sfasu.edu/); d2l@sfasu.edu; 936.468.1919
Technical Support Center: helpdesk@sfasu.edu; 936.468.4357

**Use of Mobile Electronic Communications/Entertainment Devices in Class**
Unless otherwise indicated by the instructor, the use of mobile electronic communications/entertainment devices, including, but not limited to, cell-phones, blackberries, tablets, and ipods is prohibited and will be considered disruptive behavior. Please silence your phone when you arrive for class. Laptops will be permitted for taking notes; however, the instructor reserves the right to prohibit their use in the event of misuse for personal or recreational activities occurs during class time.

**Withheld Grades**
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.
Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1 (Aug 28) – Introduction to Course; Background and Basic Concepts
Barbour and Wright, Ch. 1

Week 2 (Sept 4) – US Congress
Barbour and Wright, Ch. 6
Quiz #1 due by 5:00 p.m.

Week 3 (Sept 11) – US President
Barbour and Wright, Ch. 7
Quiz #2 due by 5:00 p.m.

Week 4 (Sept 18) – US Courts & Judiciary
Barbour and Wright, Ch. 9
Discussion & Presentation #1
Quiz #3 due by 5:00 p.m.

Week 5 (Sept 25) – Federal Bureaucracy
Barbour and Wright, Ch. 8
Quiz #4 due by 5:00 p.m.

Week 6 (Oct 2) – Exam #1

Week 7 (Oct 9) – Texas Legislature
Readings/materials will be provided on D2L
Discussion & Presentation #2
Quiz #5 due by 5:00 p.m.

Week 8 (Oct 16) – Texas Executive Branch & Bureaucracy
Readings/materials will be provided via D2L by Oct 9
Quiz #6 due by 5:00 p.m.
Writing Assignment #1 due by Saturday, Oct 20 at 11:59 p.m.

Week 9 (Oct 23) – Texas Local Government
Readings/materials will be provided via D2L by Oct 16
Quiz #7 due by 5:00 p.m.

Week 10 (Oct 30) – Texas Courts & Judiciary
Readings/materials will be provided via D2L by Oct 23
Quiz #8 due by 5:00 p.m.

Week 11 (Nov 6) – Exam #2

Week 12 (Nov 13) – US Public Policy
Barbour and Wright, Ch. 14
Discussion & Presentation #3
Quiz #9 due by 5:00 p.m.

Week 13 (Nov 20) – Thanksgiving Holiday
Week 14 (Nov 27) – US Public Policy
Barbour and Wright, Ch. 14
Quiz #10 due by 5:00 p.m.
Writing Assignment #2 due by Saturday, Dec 1 at 11:59 p.m.

Week 15 (Dec 4) – Texas Public Policy
Readings/materials will be provided via D2L by Nov 27
Discussion and Presentation #4
Quiz #11 due by 5:00 p.m.

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, Dec 11, 6:45 – 9:15 p.m.
Course Syllabus Appendix

The following information is required by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost for inclusion in the syllabus for this course:

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.

By enrolling in PSC 142: American Government – Structure and Function you are also enrolling in a Core Curriculum Course that fulfills the Communication Skills – Written and Visual requirement. You will see this course on your Brightspace by D2L list.

At one point during the semester, you will receive an assignment that fulfills both the requirements of this course and the needs of Stephen F. Austin State University's Core Curriculum Assessment Plan with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. When you complete this one assignment, you need to upload the assignment to both your standard course dropbox determined by your Instructor and the “Core Curriculum” dropbox. The Core Curriculum dropbox will be identified by the Objective for which work is being collected. (Examples: Critical Thinking, Teamwork, Social Responsibility Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Personal Responsibility, Communication Skills-Written, Communication Skills-Written and Visual, and Communication Skills- Oral and Visual.) Please note that this only applies to the approved assignment. All other assignments should be submitted according to regular class operations. If you have any questions, please see your Instructor or the Office of Student Learning and Institutional Assessment.

When you complete the assignment mentioned above, you will upload the assignment to both the PSC 142 dropbox and the core objective dropbox.

Please note that this only applies to the specific assignment listed in the matrix below. All other assignments should be submitted according to regular class operations.

If you have any questions, please see your instructor or contact the Institutional Effectiveness Office at (936) 468-1130.

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 the Brightspace by D2L Communication Skills – Written and Visual dropbox this semester, and the date the assignment(s) should be uploaded to the D2L Communication Skills – Written and Visual dropbox. Not every assignment will be submitted for core assessment every semester. Your instructor will notify you which assignment(s) must be submitted for assessment in the Brightspace by D2L Communication Skills – Written and Visual dropbox.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment Title</th>
<th>Date Due in Brightspace by D2L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.</td>
<td>Writing Assignment #2</td>
<td>November 27, 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>