Introduction to American Government: Theory and Politics

Stephen F. Austin State University
Spring 2018 (1.16.18 – 5.11.18)

Instructor: Lee W. Payne
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Office: Liberal Arts North 138
Department: Department of Government

Course Description

Origins and development of American and Texas government systems; federalism; civil liberties and civil rights; interest groups, political parties, and elections.

Requirements of the Course

You are expected to read the assigned material before working on the module’s material; doing so will help you understand the material. You should also stay informed of current political events by reading the paper, watching the news, browsing political websites, etc. Relating current events to the class material may help you make sense of the material.

Required Books


I have included a link to this textbook on Amazon because it is offering the best price I have found.

Grading Policy

Examinations: Examinations (except makeup exams) will consist of 50 multiple-choice and/or true/false questions. There will be three exams. The exams will only cover the information in each five-module unit. Exams will cover reading and lecture material. You are responsible for each of these. Exam time limits will be strictly enforced. After 60 minutes the exam will lock and you will not be allowed to answer the remaining questions.

Make-up exams will be given only in the case of documented illness, documented emergencies, or University related absences. Make-up exams may be more difficult than scheduled exams (e.g., part essay). If you miss an exam, it is your responsibility to inform me as to the nature of
your absence and to provide the necessary documentation. If the absence is excused, we will schedule a time to take the make-up exam. No exams will be given early.

**Grading Policy:** Grades will be determined by the three examinations. The exams will count for 33.3%. These grades will be averaged to calculate your final grade.

- A = 90 – 100%
- B = 80 – 89%
- C = 70 – 79%
- D = 60 – 69%
- F = Less than 60%

**Online Policies & Information**

**Faculty-to-Student & Student-to-Student Interaction:** My communication with you will be done entirely via D2L (including email and discussion). Please feel free to ask any questions, now or at any point in the semester, by posting to the “General Questions – Student Questions” area of the discussion board (if it is a question that you think will be of interest to the entire class) or to me directly (using D2L mail or the “General Questions – Instructor Questions”). All course-related email should be sent via D2L; in case of emergency, you may email me at paynelee@sfasu.edu. (Please note that D2L mail is NOT your Titan account; D2L mail is self-contained within this course.)

**D2L Support:** If you have problems with D2L, or have a question, call 936.468.1919. I have also provided a link to the OIT website in the “Getting Started” module.

**Technical Information:** If you need help navigating D2L, visit OIT's D2L Student Support & Tutorials page immediately. Specifically, make sure your browser settings are appropriate for D2L. (View video on browser settings [here](#).)

The technical nature of the course demands preparation on your part. Students should submit all discussion postings, assignments, exams, etc. early enough to account for technical difficulties. In the event of a technical catastrophe (e.g. the university's main fiber optic line gets severed, a hurricane floods telecommunications hubs in Houston, the D2L server goes down, etc.—all of these things have happened before during my courses!), please do not flood the Department of Government with phone calls. I will communicate with the class as soon as is technically possible.

SFA Online's [Student Services](#) page offers a variety of support. Students who have technical difficulties with D2L should email the Student Help Desk at sfaonline@sfasu.edu (from your SFA or personal email account) or call the Help Desk at 888.357.3278 or 936.468.1919 (available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) The SFA Online staff are true professionals and will do their best to help you. Though you may be frustrated by technological difficulties when you call them, please remember to extend to them the utmost of respect and courtesy. For general computer and Internet issues that are not D2L-related, visit the Technical Support Center.

**Attendance:** Attendance will not be taken.
**Policy on Academic Dishonesty**

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)

**General Education Core Curriculum Objectives**

In any given semester, one or more of the following Exemplary Educational Objectives for the political science/government Foundational Component 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

- 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

**Additional Points**

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy:** 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/).
<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>Critical Thinking Skills</td>
<td>To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.</td>
<td>Not assessed this semester</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas though written, oral, and visual communication.</td>
<td>Not assessed this semester</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empirical and Quantitative Skills</td>
<td>To include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.</td>
<td>Not assessed this semester</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>To include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.</td>
<td>Not assessed this semester</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.</td>
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