Introduction to American Government: Structure and Function

Course Description
This course covers the legislative, executive, and judicial functions of American and Texas governments as well as the functions of local and county governments. The course also introduces students to public policy areas such as economic policy, social services, and foreign policy.

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 critical thinking and communication skills needed to succeed beyond college.

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

Grading
There will be three in-class exams and a final. Each is worth 50 points. Students will drop their lowest exam score 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 for each time they miss class, arrive late, leave early, sleep during class, or disrupt class by talking.

In addition, a total of 24 points will be based on 2 short homework exercises submitted through Desire2Learn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point System</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best 3 exams</td>
<td>A: 180+ points</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 exercises</td>
<td>B: 160-179 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>C: 140-159</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online evaluation</td>
<td>D: 120-139</td>
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<td>F: less than 120 points</td>
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Office Hours
Students may stop by my office anytime. However, I am most likely to be in my office during office hours:

- Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays: 9:30 – 11:30 AM
- Mondays and Wednesdays: 2:00 – 3:00 PM

Office hours end on the last day of classes. I will not hold regular office hours during finals week.

Attendance Policy
Students are required to attend class and attendance will be taken daily using a seating chart. I will deduct at least one point from the 25 points based on attendance for each unexcused absence. I will count you as absent if at any point during class time you are not in your seat, conscious, and reasonably quiet by the beginning of class. 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 submitted in a timely manner.

Exam Schedule
- Exam #1: February 13
- Exam #2: March 22
- Exam #3: April 26
- Test #4: May 8 at 10:30 AM
Course Outline & Readings

I. Introduction

II. Legislative Politics
    Congress
    The Texas Legislature
    Keeping the Republic, Chapter 6
    Lone Star Politics, Chapters 3 & 4

III. Executive Leadership
    The President
    The Texas Executive
    Keeping the Republic, Chapter 7
    Lone Star Politics, Chapter 5

IV. The Bureaucracy
    Federal Agencies
    State Agencies
    Keeping the Republic, Chapter 8
    Lone Star Politics, Chapter 6

V. The Legal System
    Federal Courts
    Texas State Courts
    Justice
    Keeping the Republic, Chapter 9
    Lone Star Politics, Chapter 7
    Lone Star Politics, Chapter 8

VI. Local Governments
    Lone Star Politics, Chapter 12

VII. Policy
    Economic Policy
    Keeping the Republic, page 472-486
    Lone Star Politics, Chapter 13
    Social policy
    Keeping the Republic, pages 453-472
    Lone Star Politics, Chapters 14 & 15
    Foreign policy
    Keeping the Republic, pages 486-496

VIII. Conclusion

Lecture notes and review sheets as well as additional information will be available online through Desire2Learn.
**Supplemental Instruction**
The SI group for this class will be led by Katie Mynatt.

**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. 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). I will be using D2L’s plagiarism detection capabilities to assist with enforcing this policy.

**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/).

**General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes**
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.