INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

PSC 142.001
Summer II 2018
Ferguson 372
Mon., Tues., Weds., & Thurs. 10:15am - 12:10pm

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Office Hours: Tues. 12:30pm - 2:30pm, Weds. 12:30pm - 2:30pm, & Thurs. 12:30 - 1:30

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.”

Text Books


General Education 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

1 Because this is a syllabus, it is guide for how the semester will unfold. To be clear, I reserve the right to change ANY aspect of the course as necessary.
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.

Course Requirements

Grading. Grades for this course will be based on 2 exams (50 points each), 8 quizzes (5 points each), 8 discussion questions (5 points each), and 1 paper (20 points).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>180 – 200</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>160 – 179</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>140 – 159</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>120 – 139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 – 119</td>
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Exams (50 points each). The midterm exam and final exam will cover material from the lectures and readings. The midterm exam will cover the U.S. Congress (Keeping the Republic, ch. 6), the Texas Legislature (Lone Star Politics, ch. 3 & ch. 4), the U.S. President (Keeping the Republic, ch. 7), and the Texas Governor (Lone Star Politics, ch. 5). The final exam will cover the U.S. Judiciary (Keeping the Republic, ch. 9), the Texas Judiciary (Lone Star Politics, ch. 7), the U.S. Bureaucracy (Keeping the Republic, ch. 8), and the Texas Plural Executive (Lone Star Politics, ch. 6). There will be no make-up exams, unless the absence is excused. If you know you will miss an exam for an excused absence, then you must make arrangements with me at least two days prior to the scheduled exam date to take the exam. If you miss the exam because you become suddenly ill, then you must contact me in a timely manner (within three days of the exam) to work out other arrangements. The following are acceptable excuses: illness with a doctor’s note, military duty, death in the family, or participation in approved university-sponsored events. The following are NOT acceptable excuses: forgetting to set your alarm, scheduled flights or trips, scheduled non-emergency doctor appointments, going to work, picking up relatives at the airport, chauffeuring a friend somewhere, etc.

Quizzes (5 points each). There will be 8 quizzes, and each quiz will consist of 5 questions. These quizzes will be administered through D2L, and you will be free to take them at your leisure. However, the 4 quizzes covering the U.S. Congress, the Texas Legislature, the U.S. President, and the Texas Governor will close 24 July 2018 at 11:30pm; and the 4 quizzes covering the U.S. Courts, the Texas Courts, the U.S. Bureaucracy, and the Texas Bureaucracy will close 9 August 2018 at 11:30pm. If you fail to complete a quiz before it closes, then you earn a zero for that quiz. That is, there will be no makeup quizzes.

Discussion Questions (5 points each). There will be 8 discussion questions posted on D2L. You are required to respond to the question posted on the discussion board and to
respond to at least one of your classmate’s responses. The initial response will be worth 4 points, and the response to a classmate will be worth 1 point. You must answer all parts of the discussion question and you must post a separate reply to a classmate in order to earn full credit for the discussion response.

Your initial response must be thorough and complete. This means you should expect to write 2-3 paragraphs that cover the following:

- **Identify what they say.** Because writing is a response to a person or group, you must clearly state your own ideas as a response to others. This means you must clearly and concisely summarize the views you are responding to, and why you are responding (e.g., are they wrong?, do they overlook an important facet pertaining to the problem?, etc.).

- **Respond to what they say by offering your own argument.** There are three primary ways to respond to others’ ideas: agree, disagree, or agree/disagree simultaneously. If you agree, it is important that you go beyond regurgitating the views you agree with. That is, you need to add something new to the conversation. If you disagree, you must offer a persuasive explanation for why you disagree. If you agree/disagree simultaneously, you must clearly identify what you agree with and what you disagree with. Moreover, your post must provide evidence supporting your position.

Your response to your classmates may be shorter, however respond to the concepts and ideas that your colleague has proposed, not to their writing style or just saying that you agree/disagree with them. If you agree/disagree, you may say so, but you must explain why. Moreover, you must use appropriate language. The discussion board may cover sensitive topics so be respectful to your fellow student’s opinions. A disrespectful response will lead to a zero for the discussion board assignment. Thus, I encourage you to think about your response and try to formulate an answer in the most objective way possible.

To be clear, the discussion board responses must be posted by the due date posted in the course schedule. If you fail to complete a discussion question before it closes, then you earn a zero for that discussion question. The schedule for the questions is as follows:

- **Congressional Question.** Closes on 18 July 2018 at 11:30pm
- **Texas Legislature Question.** Closes on 18 July 2018 at 11:30pm
- **U.S President Question.** Closes on 25 July 2018 at 11:30pm
- **Texas Governor Question.** Closes on 25 July 2018 at 11:30pm
- **2nd Congressional Question.** Closes on 26 July 2018 at 11:30pm
- **U.S. Judiciary Question.** Closes on 2 August 2018 at 11:30pm
- **Texas Judiciary Question.** Closes on 2 August 2018 at 11:30pm
- **2nd U.S. President Question.** Closes on 7 August 2018 at 11:30pm
Paper (20 points). Every student will write one short essay that addresses the following: Without question, the #MeToo has emboldened individuals who have been sexually assaulted or harassed to come forward, which has ultimately lead to the resignation of a number of individuals accused of inappropriate behavior (e.g., Harvey Weinstein, Matt Lauer, Al Franken). Given this, do you think Associate Justice Clarence Thomas, who was accused by Anita Hill of sexual harassment more than 25 years ago, should resign from the United States Supreme Court? Why or why not?

Essays must be turned in via Dropbox (on D2L) by 30 July 2018 at 10:15am, and they will be graded on the following criteria:

1. Provide word count (2.5 points). Essays MUST be between 175 and 225 words long, and word count must be clearly provided.

2. Title your essay (2.5 points). Good titles predict essay’s content, attract interest, and reflect tone or slant of the essay. (Example of a good title: More Guns, Less Crime by John R. Lott.)

3. Identify what they say (5 points). Because writing is a response to a person or group, you must clearly state your own ideas as a response to others. This means you must clearly and concisely summarize the views you are responding to, and why you are responding (e.g., are they wrong?, do they overlook an important facet pertaining to the problem?, etc.).

4. Respond to what they say by offering your own argument (5 points). There are three primary ways to respond to others’ ideas: agree, disagree, or agree/disagree simultaneously. If you agree, it is important that you go beyond regurgitating the views you agree with. That is, you need to add something new to the conversation. If you disagree, you must offer a persuasive explanation for why you disagree. If you agree/disagree simultaneously, you must clearly identify what you agree with and what you disagree with. Moreover, your essay must provide evidence supporting your position.

5. Demonstrate command of standard English (5 points). Essays will demonstrate command of the following: proper grammar, cohesion, coherence, clarity, grace, and concision.

Please keep in mind that these are short essays, and because they are short essays, there is no room for fluff or filler. Also, you should focus on developing one or two key arguments.

Essays must be turned in via Dropbox (on D2L) by 30 July 2018 at 10:15am, and it must be turned in as a word or pdf document. If the essay is not turned in via Dropbox or it is not turned in as a word or pdf document, it will not be graded and you will earn a zero.

If you are unfamiliar with these concepts, then you need to Google them or peruse the following books: Joseph M. Williams’s Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace; Gerald Graff’s and Cathy Birkenstein’s They say, I Say; Brandon Royal’s The Little Red Writing Book; Martha Kolln’s Rhetorical Grammar; or William Strunk Jr.’s and E.B. White’s The Elements of Style. If you have never written a response essay, I strongly recommend Gerald Graff’s and Cathy Birkenstein’s They say, I Say.
Class attendance. Class attendance is NOT mandatory, but I do take attendance each class. At the beginning of each class I will pass around an attendance sheet, it is your responsibility to sign it. If you do not to sign it during class, sign it after class. If you choose not to sign it, I assume you are not attending class.

Extra Credit. There is one guaranteed way to earn extra credit: GET PUBLISHED IN A NEWSPAPER. That is, you can earn extra credit by writing a letter to the editor or an editorial that gets published. Editorials will be worth more than letters, and the bigger the newspaper, the more points you will receive. If you get an editorial published in the New York Times or Wall Street Journal (national papers of record), you automatically get an A.

Technology

Use of cell phones in class, for talking, texting or reading/writing email is prohibited. If I observe you using a cell phone during class, your final grade for the semester will suffer. Additionally, if I observe you using a cell phone during class, I reserve the right to kick you out of class. If you are asked to leave class and you refuse to leave, you will be dropped from the course.

Academic Integrity

The following is taken from SFA’s Policy Manual and can be found in section 4.1 – STUDENT ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Abiding by university policy on academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members must promote the components of academic integrity in their instruction, and course syllabi are required to provide information about penalties for cheating and plagiarism as well as the appeal process.

All cases of academic dishonesty, both cheating and plagiarism, will be handled according to University policies and procedures (A-4.1 & A-6.3). 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. While these are not exhaustive lists, students who are curious should peruse SFA’s Policy Manual Specifically, you should focus on section 4.1 – STUDENT ACADEMIC DISHONESTY.

http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/
http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_academic_dishonesty.pdf
To be clear, I do not take academic dishonesty lightly, and the consequences for academic dishonesty will be an “F” for the course. No exceptions.

Withheld Grades

The following is taken from SFASU’s Policy Manual (2014), “Semester Grades Policy” (A-54): 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 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.

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/.

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 the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). 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.
## Course Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/10</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/11</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/12</td>
<td>Congress/TX Legislature</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 6/<em>LSP</em> Ch. 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/16</td>
<td>TX Legislature</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 3</td>
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<td>7/17</td>
<td>TX Legislative Process</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 4</td>
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<td>7/18</td>
<td>The Presidency</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 7</td>
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<td>7/19</td>
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<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 7</td>
</tr>
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<td>7/23</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 5</td>
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<td>7/25</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>7/26</td>
<td>Confirmation</td>
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<td>7/30</td>
<td>The Courts</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 9</td>
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<td>7/31</td>
<td>The Courts</td>
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<td>Texas Courts</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 7</td>
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<td>8/2</td>
<td>Texas Courts</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 7</td>
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<td>8/6</td>
<td>The Bureaucracy</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 8</td>
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<td>The Bureaucracy</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 8</td>
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<td>The Bureaucracy</td>
<td><em>LSP</em> Ch. 6</td>
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<td>8/9</td>
<td>Domestic and Foreign Policy</td>
<td><em>KTR</em> Ch. 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/10</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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*This is a tentative schedule, and I reserve the right to change the schedule as necessary.*