Introduction to American Government: Theory and Politics

Course Description
This course will introduce students to the origins, development, and constitutional structure of American and Texas government, as well as federalism, civil liberties and civil rights, and the role of local governments. Students will examine the roles of public opinion, organized interests, political parties, and elections in American and Texas politics. This course meets the legislative requirements for a course on the constitutions of the United States and Texas.

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 the reading and listening skills needed to succeed beyond college.

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;
- Examine the relationship between political behavior and political institutions, especially the interdependence of behavior and institutions;
- Think critically about American and Texas politics, especially the theoretical foundations of both systems;
- Discuss the foundations of the US and Texas Constitutions;
- Identify the key schools of thought regarding voting behavior and electoral processes;
- Explain the roles and functions of political parties, interest groups, and media in a democratic political system; and,
- Understand citizenship in the American political system more completely;

Required Texts
Growth of the American Republic, Second Edition by Earle Michael Young
The Great State of Texas by Earle Michael Young

Materials Needed Daily
- Pens/pencils, highlighters
- A variety of ink (optional)
- Large spiral notebook or binder
- Technology access
- Work ethic

Methods of Instruction
I have high expectations for students in this course. My goal is to provide you with the basic tools for a lifetime as a citizen. I also want to help students develop basic analytical and communications skills. Assessments will include reading and outlining/responding, discussions, quizzes, tests, essays, in-class activities, and presentations. Students will complete required reading of assigned chapters with exercises and quiz reviews, conduct case studies, work with teams, and analyze documents. Major assignments will be evaluated using a rubric.

Method of Evaluation:
This course will follow Palestine High School’s grading policy of 10 daily grades recorded each six weeks, accounting for 40% of the period average, and three major grades recorded each six weeks,
accounting for 60% of the period average. For grading periods in which there are only five weeks, the number of grades is reduced to 7 daily and 2 major.

**Expected Time Requirement for this Course**
Approximately five to six hours per week of time spent reading, reviewing, and completing assignments is recommended to complete this course.

**Desire2Learn (D2L)**
For D2L technical support, contact student support in the Office of Instructional Technology (OIT) at d2l@sfasu.edu or 936-468-1919. If you call after regular business hours or on a weekend, please leave a voicemail. For general computer support (not related to D2L), contact the Technical Support Center at 936-468-4357.

**Classroom Policies:**
**Attendance:** All students must be in compliance with the attendance laws concerning public schools of Texas. Any work missed can be made up. Students have however many days missed in order to complete and submit the makeup work upon their return. Include your absence date(s) and submission date with your work.

Being absent is **not an excuse for missed information or assignments**. Contact a classmate (or me) to find out what occurred in class if you are not able to attend. Pick up any missed material. Be responsible for all the material discussed in class on the days you were absent—and for the material for the next class period. Plan your absences wisely.

**Late Work:** Students should strive to turn in work on time. However, a 24-hour grace period is provided in which students may turn in late work for a 10-point grade penalty for each day that it is late.

**Devices:** Texting, looking at a cell phone, etc. when others are talking is so obviously not acceptable that it goes without writing out. **Phones should be kept in pockets, purses, or backpacks**—unless you are waiting for a notification during a family emergency (please tell me before class begins).

**University Policies:**
**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.² 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/4.1-student-academic-dishonesty.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/4.1-student-academic-dishonesty.pdf)
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/facultyandstaff/syllabus.asp
Course Outline

Week One, August 15-16
Introductions, expectations, and procedures

Week Two, August 19-23
Unit One: Political Values and the Constitution
Chapter 1: What is Government?; Chapter 2: What Are America’s Original Political Values?

Week Three, August 26-30
Chapter 3: What Happened at the Constitutional Convention?

Week Four, September 3-6
Chapter 4: How Does the Constitution Change?

Week Five, September 9-13
Chapter 5: What Are America’s Current Political Ideologies?
Unit Two: State and Individual Rights
Chapter 6: How Does Federalism Work?

Week Six, September 16-20
Chapter 7: How Has the National Government Grown in Power over the States?

Week Seven, September 23
Chapter 8: What Are My First Amendment Rights?

Week Eight, September 30-October 2
Chapter 9: How Does the Bill of Rights Protect Me?

Week Nine, October 7-11
Chapter 10: Have Americans Always Enjoyed Equal Rights?
Unit One: Political History of Texas: Chapter 1: Six Flags over Texas

Week Ten, October 14-18
Chapter 2: Texas Political History I; Chapter 3: Texas Political History II

Week Eleven, October 21-25
Chapter 4: Texas Political Culture and Demographics

Week Twelve, October 28-November 1
Unit Two: Texas Constitutions within the Federal System
Chapter 5: Texas Declaration of Independence; Chapter 6: Texas Constitution

Week Thirteen, November 4-7
Chapter 7: National and State Constitutional Powers

Week Fourteen, November 11-15
Chapter 8: Local Government

Week Fifteen, November 18-22
Unit Four: Political Process
Chapter 16: Who Are the American People and What Are Their Political Opinions?
Chapter 17: How Are American Elections Conducted?

Week Sixteen: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week Seventeen, December 2-6
Chapter 18: How Do You Run for President?; Chapter 19: What Do Political Parties Do?

Week Eighteen, December 9-13
Chapter 20: What Is the Role of the News Media in Our Democracy?

Week Nineteen, December 16-20: Finals Week