Introduction to American Government: Theory and Politics

141: 505- Online
Ms. Megan Fleming
Office: 129 in LAN
Office Hours: TR: 9-1, WF 4-5
Department of Government

Course Information:
1) If you have ANY questions about this course, please read the syllabus first, it can most likely be found in the document. If you have thoroughly read through the syllabus and still cannot find the answer email me on D2L.
   -Give me 24 hours to respond. This means that you will need to keep on top of things so you don’t have any last minute, and time sensitive, questions.
   -I do NOT check my email on the weekend, so do not expect a response until Monday.

2) I will accept late work, but only until the day after it is due. All late assignments will automatically have 30% deducted. Assignments are given in advance so there is no excuse for waiting until the last minute to get it done.

3) You can NOT take an exam after it has been given in class for any reason. You may take an exam early, and if you know you are going to be gone I would highly recommend this.

Course Description:
This course will introduce students to the constitutional structure of American and Texas government as well as federalism and the role of local governments. Students will also examine the roles of public opinion, organized interests, and political parties in American and Texas politics. This three-credit online course requires approximate 150 minutes of lecture instruction as well as at least six hours of out-of-class reading and studying each week in preparation for exams and completion of writing assignments/discussions.

Purpose:
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.

Suggested Reading:
By The People
Brief Fourth Edition
James A. Morone and Rogan Kersh

Required Readings for this course will be provided for you on D2L in the “Course Readings” module. You can find all of these listed in the Course Outline at the end of this document.
Assignments

There will be five exams in the class. The first four exams are required, if you are satisfied with your course grade after the first four exams then you may choose not to take the final exam. The final exam will be cumulative. These exams will cover both material from the readings and class lectures so it is important to take good notes. If you miss an exam for any reason then you must take the final exam. If you must miss two exams please contact me as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made for you to take an early exam. Late exams are only permitted in extraordinary circumstances.

**Exam 1** - 12.5%  
**Exam 2** - 12.5%  
**Exam 3** - 12.5%  
**Exam 4** - 12.5%  
**Final (Optional)** - 12.5%

**Exam Total**: 50% (Worth 12.5 points each)

Most Modules in the course will end with a quiz. These quizzes may cover the lectures, the reading(s) or an outside video or graphic. Modules quizzes may be taken 2 times, and the highest score will be accepted. The answers will come from a pool, so the questions will not be the same the second time you take the quiz. The quizzes are required if you do not complete them before the module closes you will receive a "0".

**Quizzes** - 10% (Worth 2 points each)

There will be 5 discussions in this class. To receive full credit for the discussions you must answer the discussion question and the respond to one or two other questions depending on the module. Each Discussion Assignment will come with a set of in-depth instructions that may be slightly different from previous Discussion Boards so please read carefully so that you receive all available points.

**Discussions** - 10% (Worth 2 points each)

You will turn in four, 250 word current event essays, on the assigned Mondays. Instructions and due dates for this assignment can be found on the last page of the syllabus. These current events **must** be submitted to the appropriate dropbox on D2L or turned in as a hard copy.

**Current Events** – 20% (Worth 5 points each)

There will be a writing assignment over the civil liberties for core curriculum purposes. There will be a handout on this assignment once we get to it.

**Writing Assignment** - 10% (Worth 10 points)

Periodically within modules there will be self-assessment quizzes, these are not for a grade, but they ARE REQUIRED. You will not be able to move on in the course without completing and passing the self-assessments. The purpose of these quizzes is to help you study and to make sure you are grasping the material.

**Self-Assessment** - Not Graded, but required
Extra Credit:
Before every exam a review will be posted to D2L. These reviews will be worth 1 point on top of your final grade, and they are completely optional. To receive credit for your review you MUST submit it to the appropriate dropbox on D2L, by 11:59pm the day of your exam, OR you may also turn in a hard copy before the exam to receive credit. There will also be Bonus questions on every exam. **Because there are multiple opportunities for extra credit no other extra credit will be offered.**

Notes:
I will be teaching from Power Points, however I will never post these power points for you so I suggest that you take notes for this course.

Program Learning Outcomes:
This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in this course.

Student Learning Outcomes:
By the end of the course, students will be able
1. To describe the basic themes and concepts related to the study of American and Texas political institutions
2. To examine the relationship between political behavior and political institutions, especially the interdependence of behavior and institutions
3. To think critical thinking about American and Texas politics, especially the institutional framework of the system
4. To discuss the salient features of political institutions as understood by political scientists
5. To understand citizenship in the American political system more completely

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
**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/.

**General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes:**
This course has been selected to be part of Stephen F. Austin State University’s core curriculum. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six objectives for all core courses: 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.
Course Outline: Part 1

Module 1: American Political Ideals
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings
  1. The Declaration of Independence
  2. Howard Zinn, “Some Truths are not Self-Evident,” The Nation, August 1, 1987
- Assignments
  Does the American Dream still exist? (Discussion Board)

Module 2: US Constitution
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings
  4. The Constitution of the United States of America
- Assignments
  Module Quiz

Module 3: Texas Constitutions
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings
- Assignments
  Texas Constitutions (Self-Assessment)

Module 4: Texas Political Culture
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings
  6. Stewart M. Powell and Rachel Jackson, “Texas political culture is a world of its own,” Houston Chronical, Oct. 19, 2013
- Assignments
  None

EXAM 1 - Opens September 19th at 12:00AM and Closes on Sept. 20th at 11:59PM
Course Outline: Part 2

Module 5: Federalism
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings
- Assignments
  Module Quiz

Module 6: Civil Liberties
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings
- Assignments
  Texas V Johnson (Discussion Board)
  Paper Assigned**

Module 7: Civil Rights
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings
- Assignments
  Does every group have full civil rights yet? (Discussion Board)

EXAM 2- Opens October 14th at 12:00AM and Closes on Oct. 15th at 11:59PM
Course Outline: Part 3

WA Rough Draft DUE Oct 18th at 11:59 PM

Module 8: Public Opinion
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings
- Assignments
  Module Quiz

Module 9: The Media
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings
- Assignments
  Hard News V Soft News (Discussion Board)

WA Final Draft DUE November 1st at 11:59 PM

EXAM 3- Opens November 5th at 12:00AM and Closes on Nov. 6th at 11:59PM
**Course Outline: Part 4**

**Module 10: Political Parties**
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings
  
- Assignments
  Party Identification (Self-Assessment)
  Module Quiz

**Module 11: Interest Groups**
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings

  
- Assignments
  Do Interest Groups help or hurt the public? (Discussion Board)

**Module 12: Campaigns and Elections**
- Lectures/Videos
- Readings

  
- Assignments
  Module Quiz

EXAM 4- Opens December 5th at 12:00AM and Closes on Ded. 6th at 11:59PM

**FINAL EXAM**- Opens December 11th at 12:00 AM and Closes on December 12th at 11:59 PM
**CURRENT EVENT DUE DATES**

**Regular:** 9/9, 9/23, 10/7, 10/21  
**Make-up:** 11/18

**Acceptable Sources**
- PBS
- BBC
- CSPAN
- Reuters
- Associated Press
- NPR
- Al Jazeera

Because Texas is for the most part a heavily Republican state it is very hard to find a consistently unbiased source that is based in Texas. This is because the articles are naturally right leaning or deliberately written to lean left or right. Because of this you should use the Acceptable Sources for both US and Texas articles. You will just have to search the site for articles specific to Texas.

**Instructions:**
1) Choose an article from one of the above sources. READ IT!
2) Your Current Event is a four part assignment. Neglect of one part will result in loss of points.
   a) Summarize your article. This should be about 100-150 words.  
      (Worth 1 point)
   b) What are your opinions of the article? Is there anything you agree or disagree with? Explain what the article means to you. This should be between 100-150 words.  
      (Worth 2 points)
   c) Explain why this is Relevant to our class? Be specific; refer back to the syllabus, or something that we have talked about. This should be between 50-75 words.  
      (Worth 1 point)
   d) You must cite your work you may use either citation format.  
      (Worth 1 point)

3) The Current Event should be at least 250 words. I will be counting, and points will be taken off if short.
4) Current Events are due on Monday nights, in the appropriate dropbox in D2L, by 11:59pm. Remember that Late assignments will only be accepted the day after it was due and it will automatically have 30% deducted.

**Citation References:**
Below are the two ways you may cite your sources. It does not matter which you choose to use.

**MLA Citation:**

**APA Citation:**