Professor Information
Professor: Mrs. Rebecca J. McElyea
Department of Government
Office: Liberal Arts North #112
Office Hours: T/Th 2-3PM or by appointment
Online Office hours: Wed 9-11 via Skype @ rjackson_64 & Zoom
Phone: (936)468-1494
Email: Rebecca.McElyea@sfasu.edu

The best way to reach me is by email. During the week, I will return emails within 24 hours and on the weekend within 72 hours. Weekends begin at 5:00 pm on Fridays and conclude at 8:00 am on Mondays.

Notice on Emails to Your Instructor:

There are very important things that you must do when you email me.

- First, you need to check the syllabus to find out if your question has already been answered. Any emails sent with questions that have been answered in the syllabus will be responded with an attachment of the syllabus.
- Second, you must include your name and class for the course in which you are enrolled.
- Finally, I will only answer emails that originate from an official SFA email account. The university requires all communication between faculty members and students take place within university sponsored email servers.

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. Meets the state requirement for Texas Government.” General Bulletin, 2017-2018, p 337.

Course 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

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, you should be able to

- Critically evaluate political science theories and approaches to institutional arrangements of the U.S. and Texas political systems, to national public policy, and to state public policy
- Communicate your understanding and interpretation of institutional arrangements of the U.S. and Texas political systems, and as well as key domestic and foreign policy issues
- Understand social responsibility by examining national and / or state policy choices as they effect various regional, national, and global communities
- Understand, connect, and evaluate individual choices associated with national or state public policy options and / or theories and approaches to institutional design of political systems

Students are expected to go beyond rhetoric and ideology to develop critical thinking about the American political system. As a result, students are encouraged to ask questions and to challenge assumptions of class discussions while respecting the logical and reasoned positions of others.

**Required Reading:**

Good news: your textbook for this class is available for free online!

Your book is available in web view and PDF for free. You can also choose to purchase on iBooks or get a print version via OpenStax on Amazon.com.

You can use whichever formats you want. Web view is recommended -- the responsive design works seamlessly on any device. If you buy on Amazon, make sure you use the link on your book page on openstax.org so you get the official OpenStax print version. (Simple printouts sold by third parties on Amazon are not verifiable and not as high-quality.)

American Government from OpenStax, Print ISBN 1947172654, Digital ISBN 1947172662,
https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-2e
The Professor, through D2L or in-class, will post additional readings, usually as a supplement for Texas government course materials.

Note about page numbers: All reading assignments correspond to the page numbers as listed in the texts themselves. For example, Page 5 of an article may not necessarily correspond with Page 5 of a PDF, so take caution to ensure that you are reading the correct material.

Assessment:

Students are expected to read all content assigned as well as remain current regarding political events happening in both American and Texas politics throughout the duration of the course and should be able to comprehend and analyze both assigned text and current events.

You are expected to read the assigned material before class in order to participate actively and constructively in class. Your grade will depend on frequency and quality of your contribution to class discussions.

Also, it is important that we keep up with contemporary events. Doing so will provide relevant examples for our in-class discussion and enhance your awareness of important issues. The following list are some of the news sources you may use: BBC News, The Economist, The Financial Times, The New York Times, The Guardian, The Texas Tribune, Houston Chronicle, Dallas Morning News, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Austin American-Statesman, and Reuters.

Grades for Political Science 142 will be based on the completion of the following assignments: weekly in-class assignments, three exams, a Reflective Journal, a Policy Paper, and a presentation of your Policy Paper.

Assessment Weighting Information

The following are the weights given to your participation and discussions, exams, weekly in-class assignments, reflective journal, the Policy Paper, and the date each assignment is due:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Grade Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly in-class assignments</td>
<td>Semester-Long</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam One</td>
<td>Sept. 19, 2019</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam Two (Midterm)</td>
<td>Oct. 17, 2019</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</table>
Final grades will be granted on the following scale:
A=100%-90%
B=89%-80%
C=79%-70%
D=69%-60%
F=59% and below

Additional Assignment Information

Weekly In-class Assignments

Students should attend class and be prepared to discuss their opinions regarding material discussed in lectures, assigned readings, and current events taking place in Texas and the U.S. government. Students are NOT graded on the assumption that they will have a perfect understanding of Texas and American government, and are encouraged to ask questions, propose ideas that they are not certain are correct, and respectfully challenge and debate positions held by their classmates or the instructor.

Each week students will be assigned an activity to complete in addition to the assigned readings to reinforce course content.

Exams

You will take three exams during the semester. All exams consist of fifty (50) multiple-choice questions worth two (2) points each. Material for the exams comes from classroom discussions as well as the assigned readings from your textbooks. Class sessions will not cover all material from the assigned readings, but all assigned readings, regardless of whether the material is discussed in class, may be covered on the exams.

Make-up exams are given only under the most extreme circumstances (e.g., a serious illness or a death in the family).

- You must notify your professor ahead of time if you are going to miss an exam.
- You must provide written documentation to substantiate your absence.
- Failure to inform your professor of an absence prior to the exam or failure to provide adequate documentation will result in a score of zero points (0) on the exam.
- Your professor determines what constitutes adequate documentation to qualify for a make-up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Grade Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam Three</td>
<td>Nov. 19, 2019</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Journal</td>
<td>Semester Long</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Paper</td>
<td>Nov. 22, 2019</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Paper Presentations</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• During exams, cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off and stored away.
• For each exam, you must bring a Scantron and a pencil.

Reflective Journal

Each week students will write and reflect on the assigned readings, in-class discussions and lectures. Students should also include information about what they have learned and what they have observed in Texas and American government in the news. Journals can be hand written on kept in a word document file. This journal is NOT a summary of course material. It is focused on record your own learning processes. Answering and documenting your reactions to the readings and current events. A rubric will be posted in D2L for students to follow for more detail.

Policy Paper

This assignment requires students to critically analyze an existing policy in Texas or American government. The policy paper must provide the historical context that explains why this policy was implemented and why it continues to date, must fairly and critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the policy, and must ultimately conclude whether the chosen policy should continue as it is currently constituted, should alter it in some way, or should abandon it altogether in favor of another alternative. The policy paper must also provide a justification for focusing on this policy by citing literature indicating that its efficacy is in some way disputed by reliable sources.

Public Policy Writing Assignment:

For this assignment, each student will select a specific area of public policy, for example the issue of the national debt and budget deficit. You will develop a well-written essay on that public policy issue. Your assignment must include one or more graphic representations of some aspect of the material that you are discussing. A chart or a graph of data showing trends in the size of the national debt, spending priorities of the national government, etc. are examples. This assignment will directly assess your mastery of the Core Curriculum Objective(s) assigned to this course. For this semester, we will assess the Core Curriculum Objective of critical thinking skills.

As you address the points raised above, you must show Mastery of critical thinking by:
• Clear and concise definitions of key terms in the public policy selected, for example defining the national debt and budget deficit
• Correctly identifying and evaluating explanations for the public policy issue, for example identifying reasons for the national debt and budget deficit and evaluating explanations for the existence of the national debt and deficit.
• Recognition of context and assumptions, for example the context of causes of the national debt and budget deficit evaluated from multiple perspectives
• Evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the explanation(s) related to the public policy and the construction of a logical conclusion that demonstrate synthesis of multiple points of view. For example, a discussion of the advantages of solving the national debt through spending cuts, or by raising taxes, or by reforming entitlement programs with
clear reference to the complexity of the proposed solution. A similar discussion of the disadvantages associated with the selected solution must occur.

- Conclusions and related outcomes reflect informed evaluation of the topic.

**Policy Paper Topics, Length and Citation Information**

Topics must be sent for approval by the instructor by **September 10, 2019**. The Policy Paper should be no shorter than 2 pages and no longer than 3 pages (Times New Roman, Double Spaced, one-inch margins). All sources should be cited using either MLA, APA, or Chicago author/date style. Further specifications regarding the length and assessment guidelines for the presentation will be distributed at a later date in class and posted in D2L.

**General Education Core Curriculum Assessment**

**General Education Core Curriculum**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six core learning objectives listed at the front of this syllabus. SFA is committed to the improvement of its general education core curriculum by regular assessment of student performance on these six objectives. PSC 142: American Government: Structure and Functions is a general education core curriculum course and fulfills the Critical Thinking Skills general education core curriculum requirement.

During the semester, you will receive an assignment associated with general education core curriculum assessment. When you complete the assignment you will upload the assignment to the “Core Curriculum – Critical Thinking Skills” dropbox that you will find on your account in Brightspace by D2L. This dropbox is for core curriculum assessment only. Your course instructor may provide another set of instructions for submitting this assignment for your course grade.

If you have any questions, please see your instructor or contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at (936) 468-1038 or assessment@sfasu.edu.

The chart below indicates the core objectives addressed by this course, the assignment(s) that will be used to assess the objectives in this course and uploaded to the Critical Thinking Skills dropbox this semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>Date Due in D2L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking Skills</td>
<td>To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.</td>
<td>Policy Paper</td>
<td>Nov. 22, 2019</td>
</tr>
<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 in Fall 2019</td>
<td>Not Assessed in Fall 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy Paper Presentation

Students will be asked to give a presentation discussing either a historical event/policy or ongoing issue in Texas or American government. The presentation must outline the historical context in which your topic is situated, must explain why the topic is important and worth discussion, and must provide an accurate description of the topic. Further specifications regarding the length and assessment guidelines for the presentation will be distributed at a later date in class and posted in D2L.

Late Assignment Information

A detailed description of student expectations has been provided to you above. It is the student’s responsibility to turn in and complete fully all assignments by the deadlines listed above. Because dates have been provided to you in advance no late assignments will be accepted. This includes Weekly in-class assignments.

If you are going to be absent it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible to avoid penalties. You must inform me of your absence before missing class. No additional assignments will be assigned nor will missed assignments be accepted if a student fails to inform the professor of their excused absence ahead of the scheduled class period.

Semester Calendar
The following course calendar is meant to assist you in keeping up to date in our course. However, the instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course calendar and all other parts of the syllabus as needed.

Week One: 08/25/2019 – 08/31/2019
Readings: 
Assignment(s):
Course Introduction & Basic Concepts
Write first reflective journal

Week Two: 09/1/2019 – 09/07/2019
Readings: 
Assignment (s):
Texas, the Federal System and Congress
Chapter 11: Congress
Reflective Journal entry

Week Three: 09/08/2019 – 09/14/2019
Readings: 
Assignment (s):
U.S. Courts and Texas Judiciary
Ch. 13: The Courts
Reflective Journal entry
E-mail policy paper topic selection by Sept. 10, 2019

Week Four: 09/15/2019 – 09/21/2019
Readings: 
Assignment (s):
Review Congress, U.S. Courts and Texas Judiciary
Exam One Thursday, September 19, 2019
No journal entry

Week Five: 09/22/2019 – 09/28/2019
Readings: 
Assignment (s):
U.S. President
Chapter 12
Reflective Journal entry

Week Six: 09/29/2019 – 10/05/2019
Readings: 
Texas Governor & Texas Executive Branch
Ch. 14 State and Local Government
Assignment(s):

**Week Seven:** 10/06/2019 – 10/12/2019
Readings:
Assignment(s):

**Week Eight:** 10/13/2019 – 10/19/2019
Readings:
Assignment(s):

**Week Nine:** 10/20/2019 – 10/26/2019
Readings:
Assignment(s):

**Week Ten:** 10/27/2019 – 11/02/2019
Readings:
Assignment(s):

**Week Eleven:** 11/03/2019 – 11/09/2019
Readings:
Assignment(s):

**Week Twelve:** 11/10/2019 – 11/16/2019
Readings:
Assignment(s):

**Week Fourteen:** 11/17/2019 – 11/23/2019
Readings:
Assignment(s):

**Week Fifteen:** 11/24/2019 – 11/30/2019
Readings:
Assignment(s):

**Week Sixteen:** 12/02/2019 – 12/07/2019

**Week Seventeen:** 12/08/2019 – 12/14/2019

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**Technical Support Statements**

**Technical Support Center**

The Technical Support Center on campus provides technical support to the students, faculty, and staff of Stephen F. Austin State University. TSC provide telephone help desk
support to most of the campus as well as provide free computer repair for computers belonging to students of the university.

TSC hours are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday during the spring and fall semesters. TSC hours are the same during Maymester and summer sessions except we close at 5:00 p.m. on Fridays.

TSC can be reached at (936) 468-HELP (4357) or at tsc@sfasu.edu
TSC is located at 514 East Austin, north of the main SFA campus.

Student E-mail

SFA Student e-mail is hosted by Microsoft Office 365. For help with e-mail passwords, please contact the Help Desk at (936) 468-HELP (4357). If students forget their mySFA password and have not set up their myPassword profile, they must contact the Office of the Registrar at (936) 468-2501.

Academic Assistance Resource Center

AARC services begin Monday, January 28.

WALK-IN TABLE:
A walk-in table will be available in the AARC for Political Science 141 / Political Science 142. The current hours are as follows:
- Mondays 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.
- Tuesdays 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
- Wednesdays 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.
- Thursdays 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Schedules are subject to change and are continuously updated on the AARC WEBSITE.

ONLINE RESOURCES
The AARC has a wide variety of ONLINE RESOURCES available to students. If you have any suggestions to improve these resources, please let me know as these resources are continually updated.

WRITING ASSISTANCE
AARC Writing Program Director Kathy Bryson has many resources available to assist with writing assignments including
- the Online Writing Lab (available through D2L)
- a walk-in table available MTWR from 3:00 – 7:00 p.m. in the AARC
- in-class presentations to help students prepare for specific writing assignments
- a new service to Ask a Tutor online (also available to students through D2L)
  - Mon-Thurs, 9am - 2 pm
  - Sunday, 3-5 pm

University Policies and Additional Information
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/.

Important Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Begins</td>
<td>August 26, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Day to drop/Withdraw</td>
<td>October 23, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Holiday</td>
<td>November 23-December 2, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exams</td>
<td>Thursday, December 12 10:45 AM -1:15PM</td>
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</tbody>
</table>