Introduction to American Government:
Structure and Functions

142: 002  9:30-10:45 Rm 471 in Ferguson

Ms. Megan Fleming
Office: 129 in LAN
Office Hours: MTWR 11am-1pm
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: Legislative, executive and judicial functions in American and Texas governments; public policy are such as finance, social services and foreign policy; Texas local and county governments.

Purpose: This course is designed to be an introduction to American and Texas Politics. The focus of this course is the government institutions and resulting implications for policy. As we go through the course, we will explicitly focus on comparing Texas institutions and policy output to U.S. institutions and policy output. All of you have been and will be affected by the political process. How much money you paid for this course, or the fact that this course is required are products of our government. Hopefully by the end of this course you will not only be more informed about the political process, but also more interested and involved in it.

Suggested Reading:
By The People
Brief Second or Third Edition
James A. Morone and Rogan Kersh
ISBN: 9780190216733
Grades

There will be four exams in the class. The first three exams are required, if you are satisfied with your course grade after the first three exams then you may choose not to take the final exam. The final exam will be cumulative. If you miss an exam for any reason then you must take the final exam. If you must miss two exams please see me as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made for you to take an early exam. Late exams are not permitted. If you take all four exams then your lowest exam grade will be dropped.

- Exam 1 - 15%
- Exam 2 - 15%
- Exam 3 - 15%
- Final (Optional) - 15%

**Exams are worth 45% of your entire grade!!**

There will also be quizzes over a few lectures and some reading assignments. These will be online and will open the day we finish a lecture. Specific dates can be found in the Course Outline.

- Quizzes - 10%

For the last 2 weeks of the course we will be doing an in-class simulation of the House of Representatives. You will have to work in groups of about 10 to pass legislation. This is a peer graded assignment.

- Simulation - 10%

You will turn in a 250 current event most every other Tuesday. 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 by 11:59.**

- Current Events - 25%

There will be an end of the Semester writing assignment for core curriculum purposes. This will be addressed in depth at a later time. Please do not worry about this until then.

- Writing Assignment - 10%

Extra Credit:

Before every exam a review will be posted to D2L. These reviews will be worth 2 points 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 the 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.**
**Attendance:**

I have realized that students who do not attend class make lower grades and do not understand the material as well. I highly encourage you to attend class, however there is no attendance policy. There will be a sign in sheet at the beginning of class however, so that when you fail I can say it was because you decided not to attend class. The choice is yours.

**Notes:**

Although there will be power points, I will not be posting these to D2L. This is to encourage you to take good notes during class. Actively taking notes and listening to the class lectures helps you better retain the information.

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**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.

**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

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, students will be able

- To describe the basic themes and concepts related to the study of American and Texas political institutions
- To examine the relationship between political behavior and political institutions, especially the interdependence of behavior and institutions
- To think critical thinking about American and Texas politics, especially the institutional framework of the system
- To discuss the salient features of political institutions as understood by political scientists
- To understand citizenship in the American political system more completely
Academic Integrity:

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)

If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing you will receive a zero on the assignment. Further action may be taken depending on the assignment. It is completely within my rights to refer you to the Dean of the college if deemed appropriate.

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/).

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). 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 iCare program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.
The following information is required by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost for inclusion in the syllabus for this course:

**General Education Core Curriculum**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six core learning objectives: 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.

By enrolling in PSC 142: American Government – Structure and Function you are also enrolling in a Core Curriculum Course that fulfills the Communication Skills – Written and Visual requirement. You will see this course on your Brightspace by D2L list.

At one point during the semester, you will receive an assignment that fulfills both the requirements of this course and the needs of Stephen F. Austin State University's Core Curriculum Assessment Plan with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. When you complete this one assignment, you need to upload the assignment to both your standard course dropbox determined by your Instructor and the “Core Curriculum” dropbox. The Core Curriculum dropbox will be identified by the Objective for which work is being collected. (Examples: Critical Thinking, Teamwork, Social Responsibility Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Personal Responsibility, Communication Skills-Written, Communication Skills-Written and Visual, and Communication Skills- Oral and Visual.) Please note that this only applies to the approved assignment. All other assignments should be submitted according to regular class operations. If you have any questions, please see your Instructor or the Office of Student Learning and Institutional Assessment.

When you complete the assignment mentioned above, you will upload the assignment to both the PSC 142 dropbox and the core objective dropbox.

Please note that this only applies to the specific assignment listed in the matrix below. All other assignments should be submitted according to regular class operations.

If you have any questions, please see your instructor or contact the Institutional Effectiveness Office at (936) 468-1130.

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 Brightspace by D2L Communication Skills – Written and Visual dropbox this semester, and the date the assignment(s) should be uploaded to the D2L Communication Skills – Written and Visual dropbox. Not every assignment will be submitted for core assessment every semester. Your instructor will notify you which assignment(s) must be submitted for assessment in the Brightspace by D2L Communication Skills – Written and Visual dropbox.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment Title</th>
<th>Date Due in Brightspace by D2L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas though written, oral, and visual communication.</td>
<td>Writing Assignment</td>
<td>5/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Outline

Section 1
- US Constitution *D2L Quiz* 1/29-1/31
  - Chapter 2
  - US Constitution
- Texas Constitutions
  - Summary of the Texas Constitutions
- US Legislature
  - Chapter 10
- Texas Legislature *D2L Quiz* 2/12-2/14

EXAM 1-2/14

Section 2
- US Presidency
  - Chapter 11
- Texas Executive *D2L Quiz* 2/26-2/28
- US Bureaucracy
  - Chapter 12
- Texas Bureaucracy

EXAM 2-3/12

Section 3
- US Judiciary
  - Chapter 13
  - Judicial Review
    - Federalist No. 78
    - Summary of Marbury V Madison
    - Against Judicial Supremacy in Constitutional Interpretation
- TX Judiciary *D2L Quiz* 3/28-3/30
- TX Local Government
  - Local Government in Texas

EXAM 3-4/9

Section 4
- US Domestic Policy
  - Chapter 14
- US Foreign Policy *D2L Quiz* 4/25-4/27
  - Chapter 14

**Writing Assignment DUE 5/2

FINAL: Thursday, May 16th, 8-10 am
CURRENT EVENT DUE DATES

Regular: 1/29, 2/12, 2/26, 3/26, 4/16
Make-up: 4/30

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 Tuesday 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 points 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: