INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: STRUCTURE & FUNCTIONS
Political Science 142.009
T/Th 9:30 - 10:45 a.m., Ferguson 377
Spring 2019 (1.22.19 - 5.17.19)

Instructor: Katie C. McClain
Email: kmcclain@sfasu.edu
Office: Ferguson 478
Phone: 936.468.1494
Department: Government
Office Hours:
M/W 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
T/Th 11:00 - 12:00 p.m., 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.
or by appointment

SI Leader: Dakota Rankin
SI Meeting Time & Place: Mondays & Wednesdays from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.,
Lumberjack Landing, Room 139C

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.” General Bulletin, 2018-2019

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Objectives

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.

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 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.
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

Required Books


Course Requirements

Class Preparation

You are expected to review the assigned material before coming to class; doing so will help you understand the material. To fully understand the concepts covered in this course, you will likely need to review the assigned material more than once. A word of wisdom – keeping up with the course requirements throughout the semester helps you better comprehend the content being covered and improves your likelihood of success in a course.

I also strongly encourage you to stay informed of current political events, as relating current events to the class material will help you understand the information and concepts covered in this course. One resource available to you as a student at SFA which may be beneficial in this regard is a complimentary membership to the Wall Street Journal, which you may activate by visiting the following link: [WSJ.com/ActivateSchool](http://WSJ.com/ActivateSchool)

Attendance

Attendance is not mandatory. Having said that, I encourage you to attend regularly, as a strong correlation exists between your attendance and your performance in the course. For documentation purposes, I will take attendance each class. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet.

Participation

You are expected to arrive on time and be prepared to engage in critical evaluation of the topic of the day, contribute to class discussions, participate in any in-class activities, and make meaningful contributions to the learning experience. Please feel free to voice your
opinions (as long as you do not intentionally insult your fellow classmates). Opinions generate class discussions, which in turn generate knowledge and understanding.

**Use of Mobile Electronic Communications/Entertainment Devices in Class**

Unless otherwise indicated by the instructor, the use of mobile electronic communications/entertainment devices is prohibited and will be considered disruptive behavior. Please silence your phone when you arrive for class. Laptops will be permitted for taking notes; however, the instructor reserves the right to prohibit their use in the event that misuse occurs during class time.

**Email Communications with Instructor**

Email is the best way to reach me. I will do my best to respond to your emails in a timely manner (within 24 hours, with the exception of emails received during university holidays). With that being said, please do not wait until the last minute to send me time-sensitive questions.

To ensure emails do not get lost or mistakenly deleted, students are required to include the course code and general description of the email in the subject line for all emails sent to the instructor. [Example: PSC 142 – Writing Assignment Question] Email communications that do not follow this format may not be responded to timely or at all. Additionally, the body of each email should be written coherently with the question or issue described in a clear and thoughtful manner. If the answer to your question can be found in the syllabus, catalog, or course schedule, I will refer you to the appropriate resource. I will not respond to emails requesting a summary of material covered during a class meeting that the student missed. If you are absent and would like to discuss the material we covered in class, please plan to meet with a classmate or stop by my office.

**Grading Policy**

Grades will be determined by three (3) examinations (70%), two (2) writing assignments (10%), quizzes (10%), and presentations (10%). Thus, each component is a percentage (or weight) of your final grade. Within each component, grades will be averaged to calculate the overall percentage of your final grade associated with that component.

Grade Point Average (GPA) for this course is assessed using the following scale:

- A = 90 – 100%
- B = 80 – 89%
- C = 70 – 79%
- D = 60 – 69%
- F = Less than 60%

**Examinations (70 percent):** There will be three (3) unit examinations. Exams will not be cumulative. Exams (except make-up exams) will consist of multiple-choice, true/false, and/or short answer questions. Material for the exams comes from classroom discussions as well as the assigned readings. You are responsible for each of these. Class sessions do not cover all material from the assigned readings, but all assigned readings, regardless of whether the material is discussed in class, are incorporated into the exams.

Make-up exams will be given only in the case of documented illness, documented
emergencies, or university related absences. Make-up exams may differ in format from scheduled exams (e.g., part essay). In the event a student misses an exam, he or she will be responsible for informing the instructor as to the nature of the absence and providing the necessary documentation. Failure to do so will result in a score of zero (0) points on the exam.

Presentations (10 percent): There will be three group presentations during the semester. Each group will discuss a contemporary political issue and prepare a five (5) to six (6) minute presentation. Topics must be uploaded to the corresponding dropbox for instructor approval no later than one week prior to the date of the presentation. Each student’s individual research (links to newspaper articles, journal articles, etc.) must be submitted electronically to the corresponding dropbox prior to the start of class on the day of the presentation. Failure to do so will result in a ten (10) point deduction from the overall presentation grade.

Presentations should remain on topic. Having said that, creativity is encouraged. You may use a variety of techniques including debates, role-playing, game shows, editorial commentary, and explaining the topic from different perspectives or opposing viewpoints. Avoid descriptive presentations that involve reading your research and avoid using the same format for each presentation.

Grading will be based on a rubric, with the main emphasis on delivery, organization, and content. To assist in the accuracy of grading, the instructor has the right to record the presentations. In the event a student misses a group presentation, he or she will be responsible for contacting the instructor to schedule a make-up presentation. Failure to do so will result in a score of zero (0) points on the presentation.

Quizzes (10 percent): Timed quizzes will be administered on the Brightspace by D2L course page. These quizzes will review content from the assigned readings for the upcoming class and/or previous lectures. Quizzes will open at 12:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings and will close the following Saturday at 11:59 p.m. You will have ten (10) minutes to complete and submit a quiz, which may consist of multiple choice, true/false, and/or fill in the blank questions. Of the administered quizzes, the ten (10) quizzes with the highest grades will be used for determining the final grade for this course. There will be no opportunity to make-up or retake quizzes.

Writing Assignments (10 percent): There will be two writing assignments. Writing assignment prompts will be announced online on the Brightspace by D2L course page and in class at least three weeks prior to the assignment due date. Completed writing assignments must be submitted in the appropriate dropbox by the due date. Assignments should adhere to APA guidelines. Writing assignments will be evaluated using a rubric, with the main emphasis on the content, mechanics, conventions, and organization. Late assignments will not be accepted. Plagiarism will result in a score of zero (0) points for the assignment.

Extra Credit Opportunities: Extra credit opportunities may be available at the instructor’s discretion. Any extra credit opportunities will be announced the Brightspace by D2L course page and in class.
**Academic Integrity (University Policy 4.1)**

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](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

**Withheld Grades (University Policy 5.5)**

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/).

**Student Conduct (University Policy 10.4)**

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 full Student Conduct Code at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student-code-of-conduct-10.4.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student-code-of-conduct-10.4.pdf)). 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 Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

Technical Support
Brightspace by D2L:  http://sfaonline.sfasu.edu/; d2l@sfasu.edu; 936.468.1919
Technical Support Center: https://sfasu.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/Home/; helpdesk@sfasu.edu; 936.468.4357
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week / Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| Week 1 (1.22 - 1.26) | Introduction to Government & Politics  
*Barbour and Wright, Ch. 1* | Quiz #1 due by 1/26 at 11:59 p.m.               |
| Week 2 (1.27 - 2.2) | U.S. Congress  
*Barbour and Wright, Ch. 6* | Quiz #2 due by 2/2 at 11:59 p.m.               |
| Week 3 (2.3 - 2.9) | U.S. President  
*Barbour and Wright, Ch. 7* | Quiz #3 due by 2/9 at 11:59 p.m.               |
| Week 4 (2.10 - 2.16) | Federal Bureaucracy  
*Barbour and Wright, Ch. 8* | Quiz #4 due by 2/16 at 11:59 p.m.             |
| Week 5 (2.17 - 2.23) | U.S. Courts & Judiciary  
*Barbour and Wright, Ch. 9* | Quiz #5 due by 2/23 at 11:59 p.m.             |
| Week 6 (2.24 - 3.2) | End of Unit 1 | Presentation #1 on 2/26  
Exam #1 on 2/28 |
| Week 7 (3.3 - 3.9) | Texas Legislature  
*Baily, Ch.1* | Quiz #6 due by 3/9 at 11:59 p.m.  
Writing Assignment #1 due by 3/9 at 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 8 (3.10 - 3.16) | Texas Executive Branch & Bureaucracy  
*Baily, Ch. 2 & 3* | Quiz #7 due by 3/16 at 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 9 (3.17 - 3.23) | SPRING BREAK | |
| Week 10 (3.24 - 3.30) | Texas Courts and Judiciary  
*Baily, Ch. 4* | Quiz #8 due by 3/30 at 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 11 (3.31 - 4.6) | Texas Local Government  
*Baily, Ch. 5* | Quiz #9 due by 4/6 at 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 12 (4.7 - 4.13) | End of Unit 2 | Presentation #2 on 4/9  
Exam #2 on 4/11 |
| Week 13 (4.14 - 4.20) | Introduction to Public Policy; U.S. Public Policy  
*Barbour and Wright, Ch. 14* | Quiz #10 due by 4/20 at 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 14 (4.21 - 4.27) | U.S. Public Policy  
*Barbour and Wright, Ch. 14* | Quiz #11 due by 4/27 at 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 15 (4.28 - 5.4) | U.S. Public Policy; Texas Public Policy  
*Barbour and Wright, Ch. 14  
Baily, Ch. 6 & 7* | Quiz #12 due by 5/4 at 11:59 p.m.  
Writing Assignment #2 due by 5/4 at 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 16 (5.5 - 5.11) | Texas Public Policy; End of Unit 2  
*Baily, Ch. 6 & 7* | Quiz #13 due by 5/11 at 11:59 p.m.  
Presentation #3 on 5/9 |

**FINAL EXAM: Thursday, May 16, 2019, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m.**

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The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course schedule, as necessary. Any changes will be communicated in class and on the Brightspace by D2L course page.