Introduction to American Government: Structure and Function

Course Description
This course covers the legislative, executive, and judicial functions of American and Texas governments as well as the functions of local and county governments. The course also introduces students to public policy areas such as economic policy, social services, and foreign policy.

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:

• Identify the three branches of government and their functions;
• Understand how individuals are elected or selected by the people for representation at the various branches;
• Recognize the structure of inter-institutional and governmental relationships;
• Identify and discuss important trends in American and Texas public policies;
• Understand why our government acts differently toward other nations.
• Gain the ability to critically analyze issues facing American and Texas government.

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

Listen/watch the news and be abreast with current events from various sources.

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. 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 the phone cubby or your backpack**—unless you are waiting for a notification during a family emergency (please tell me before class begins).

Work Ethic: Students will lose points for sleeping during class or disrupting the class agenda. Please find another class if you consider this an inconvenience.

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. 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)

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades 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. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.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, January 7-10
Introductions, expectations, and procedures
TX Unit Two: The Texas Federal System
Chapter 7: National and State Constitutional Powers

Week Two, January 13-17
Chapter 8: Local Government
TX Unit Three: Three Branches of Texas Government
Chapter 9: Texas Legislative Power

Week Three, January 21-24
Chapter 10: Texas Legislative Process

Week Four, January 27-31
US Unit Three: The Three Branches of Government
Chapter 13: What Are the Powers of Congress?
Week Five, February 3-7
Chapter 14: How Does a Bill Become a Law?

Week Six, February 10-13
Chapter 11: The Texas Governor

Week Seven, February 17-21
Chapter 12: Texas Executive Department

Week Eight, February 24-28
Chapter 11: What Are the President’s Constitutional Powers?
Chapter 12: What Are the Keys to a Successful Presidency?

Week Nine, March 2-6
Chapter 13: Texas Judicial System

Week Ten, March 9-12
Chapter 15: What Does the Supreme Court Do?
TX Unit Four: The Texas Political Process
Chapter 14: Voting and Participation

Week Eleven, March 16-20: Spring Break

Week Twelve, March 25-27
Chapter 15: Political Parties
Chapter 16: Political Campaigns

Week Thirteen, March 30-April 3
Chapter 17: Taxing and Spending

Week Fourteen, April 6-9
US Unit Five: Public Policy
Chapter 21: What Do Interest Groups Do?
Chapter 22: How Is Public Policy Made and Implemented?

Week Fifteen, April 14-17
Chapter 18: Public Policy Process in Texas

Week Sixteen: April 20-24
Chapter 23: What Is the US Economic Policy?
Chapter 24: How Does the Government Make the Budget?

Week Seventeen, April 27-May 1
Chapter 25: What Is America’s Foreign and Defense Policy?

Week Eighteen, May 4-8
Research and presentations

Week Nineteen, May 11-15
Research and presentations

Week Twenty, May 18-22
Finals week