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.

Required Texts
Understanding American Government, by Charles L. Taylor
Governing Texas, second edition by Anthony Champagne and Edward Harpham

Grading and Assignments
Scale
A 90-100
B 80-89
C 70-79
D 60-69
F below 60

Grade and Breakdown by per cent
Unit exams (3) 70%
Daily Quizzes (8) 10%
Thought papers (1) 10%
Participation 10%

Description of Assignments
Unit exams
The professor will give three unit exams—approximately every five weeks. Students will receive primarily multiple choice with identification and short essay questions

Daily quizzes
Eight daily quizzes will be given during the semester for the purpose of keeping students organized in preparation for their unit exams. The professor will use short-answer questions.

Thought paper
Students will write a thought paper over a contemporary problem that Texas currently confronts.
This paper includes an introductory paragraph with a very clear thesis sentence at the conclusion of the first paragraph.

Students will provide a roadmap regarding how the researcher reached the point of view taken (in class discussion, websites, journal articles, relevant books, periodicals)

Each student will provide a counterview paragraph that takes a view that challenges the thesis. If a student prefers liberalism over conservatism, for example, their paper should demonstrate a scholarly openness by briefly discussing the virtues of conservatism.

The concluding paragraph should summarize the position taken but then an analysis of why this paper and its focus is significant.

**Attendance Policy**

Students are **required** to attend class and attendance will be taken daily using a seating chart. I will deduct *at least* one point from the 25 points based on attendance for each unexcused absence. I will count you as absent if at any point during class time you are not in your seat, conscious, and reasonably quiet by the beginning of class. Sleeping, talking or other disruptive or disrespectful behavior will count against you. Please find another class if you consider this an inconvenience. Absences may be excused with a valid, documented excuse submitted in a timely manner.

**Exam Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam #1</th>
<th>February 21</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam #2</td>
<td>March 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #3</td>
<td>May first week</td>
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**Course Outline**

**Unit One**

Week one – Cultures, land regions, natural resources of Texas and population trends, along with Texas problems of drunk driving and traffic control.

Week two deals with contemporary problems in Texas.

Week three deals with legislative tools and maneuvering, both in Texas and the United States government.

Week four examines much of the leadership in the Texas legislature and the organizational structure existing in state and local governments.

Week five examines the legislative branch in Texas as seen in the governor’s office and that of the United States Congress

EXAM ONE TAKES PLACE AROUND THE CONCLUSION OF WEEK FIVE

**Unit Two**

Week six deals with economic trends driving the Texas economy.

Week seven examines financial and national economic trends and the role of government impacting upon our exchange of money
Week eight examines the Texas constitution, significant events that impacted it and shaped office the Texas governor.

Week nine provides abroad historic, political and structural overview of the President of the United States.

Week ten - first part of week - a class review of executive leadership at both the state and national level.

Week ten - second part of week includes the second unit exam.

Unit three

Week eleven examines state agencies such as the Department of Human Services, Texas rehabilitative and assistive Services, mental health organizations and education agencies such as the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Week twelve examines federal departments such as defense, state, justice, interior and human services.

Week fourteen focuses upon the criminal justice system in Texas and the court system dealing with both criminal and civil issues.

Week fifteen - FINAL EXAM

**Required Reading**

Unit one

Chapter one - Governing Texas

Chapter seven — the Texas Legislature — Governing Texas

Chapter six — lobbying and Interest Groups in Texas — Governing Texas

Chapter nine — Constitutional Powers and overview of Congress — Understanding American Government

Unit Two

Texas Executive Branch — chapter eight — Governing Texas

The American Presidency — chapter 10 — Understanding American Government

Interest Groups and Political Parties — chapter seven — Understanding American Government — chapter 10

Public Finance in Texas — chapter eleven — Governing Texas

Unit Three

The Texas Judiciary — chapter nine — Governing Texas

Crime and Corrections Policy in Texas — chapter 13 — Governing Texas

The Supreme Court and the American Judiciary — chapter 12 — Understanding American Government

The Bureaucracies — Chapter 11 — Understanding American Government
Lecture notes and review sheets as well as additional information will be available online through Desire2Learn.

**Exam Policy**

Students will be allowed to make up missed exams due to: a death in the family, illness, school-sponsored conferences or competitions, mandatory court appearances, or similar unavoidable conflicts. Students must provide documentation before exams can be made up.

Students are expected to be on time for exams. Students arriving after the first student finishes their exam will not be allowed to take the exam. Students may not leave the room during the exam. All electronic devices must be turned off and put away.
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/.

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

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 critical thinking and communication skills needed to succeed beyond college.

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 you are also enrolling in a Core Curriculum Course that fulfills the Critical Thinking Skills and Communication Skills requirement. You will see this course on your 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 & Quantitative Skills, Personal Responsibility, Communication Skills-Written, Communication Skills-Written & Visual, and Communication Skills- Oral & Visual.) Please note that this only applies to the approved assignment. All other assignments should be submitted according to regular class operations.
When you complete the assignment mentioned above, you will upload the assignment to both the course dropbox and the core assessment 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 at Office of Student Learning and Institutional Assessment 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 D2L dropbox this semester, and the date the assignment(s) should be uploaded to the D2L 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 D2L dropbox.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment Title</th>
<th>Date Due in D2L</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking Skills</td>
<td>To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.</td>
<td>Not assessed in Spring 2019 semester</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<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 Spring 2019 semester</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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</tbody>
</table>