**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.

**Requirements of the Course**

First, you are expected to come to class. Second, you are expected to read the assigned material before class. Third, you are expected to discuss the assigned readings in class. By “discuss” I mean to engage in active, in-depth, conversations with your classmates and me over the assigned readings. Finally, you are expected to stay informed on current political events by reading the paper, watching the news, browsing political websites, etc. It is sometimes easier to understand political concepts and theories when you can relate them to current political activities. Therefore, we will discuss current events in class as well.

*On Liberty:* Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion – “[T]he peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race … . If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error” (76).

Please feel free to voice your opinions. Opinions generate class discussions and class discussions generate knowledge and understanding. This class does not have to be boring but participation is needed to keep it from being so. Therefore, how boring this class is depends on you.

**Required Books**


I have included a link to this textbook on Amazon because it is offering the best price I have found.

Note: Outside readings will be assigned throughout the semester.
Grading Policy

Grades for this course will come from three sources: four exams (22.5% each) and current events (10%).

Examinations: Examinations will consist of 30 multiple choice questions worth two (2) points each and two essay questions worth 20 points each. The exams will only cover the material in each segment. You will not come to class to take the exams; they will be posted on D2L. The day of the exam, it will open at 11 AM and close at 12:15 PM. You will have 75 minutes to take each exam. Exams will cover reading, lecture, and movie material. You are responsible for each of these. Tentative exam dates are noted below.

Make-up exams will be given only in the case of documented illness, documented emergencies, or University related absences. Make-up exams may be more difficult than scheduled exams (e.g., essay). If you miss an exam, it is your responsibility to inform me as to the nature of your absence. If the absence is excused, we will schedule a time to take the make-up exam. No exams will be given early.

Current Events: As stated previously, you are expected to stay informed on current political events. Each Monday you will turn in a website print out of a current political event related to whatever topic we are covering in class for that week. For example: if we are discussing Congress, find an article discussing current congressional activities, print it out, and turn it in. Use reputable websites as your sources – The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNN, Fox News Channel, MSNBC, etc., for example. These will be simple completion grades. Meaning, as long as you turn it in on time, the story is current, and related to the subject we are discussing, you will receive a 100 for the week. Be prepared to discuss your article as well.

Attendance: Attendance will not be taken.

Policy on Academic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in many 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

General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes

In any given semester, one or more of the following Core Curriculum Objectives for political science/government Foundational Component Area may be assessed in this course.

- 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

Program Learning Outcomes

This course is a general education core curriculum course. No specific program learning outcomes for a political science major are addressed in this course.

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

Additional Points

• Be on time! If you arrive late for class, quietly take a seat at the back of the room.
• Be polite! Do not talk over your classmates or me.
• Turn off your cell phones, iPods, etc. If your cell phone goes off in class, you will be required to perform an embarrassing task in front of the class (hint: learn the words and motions to “I’m a Little Teapot”). If you are texting, your cell phone is on and chances are you are not paying attention in class. Therefore, texting is a punishable offense. If caught, you will be required to sing something in front of the class.
• I reserve the right to eject any student who violates these or other rules.

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy: 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/.
**Tentative Class Schedule**

Week 1  
Introduction

Week 2  
U.S. Congress (*KTR*, Chapter 6)

Week 3  
U.S. Congress (*KTR*, Chapter 6)

Week 4  
Texas Legislature (*TG*, Chapter 1)

**TEST 1**  
**Thursday, February 13**

Week 5  
President (*KTR*, Chapter 7)

Week 6  
President (*KTR*, Chapter 7)

Week 7  
Federal Bureaucracy (*KTR*, Chapter 8)

Week 8  
Spring Break!!

Week 9  
Texas Governor & Bureaucracy (*TG*, Chapters 2 & 3)

**TEST 2**  
**Thursday, March 19**

Week 10  
Federal Courts (*KTR*, Chapter 9)

Week 11  
Federal Courts (*KTR*, Chapter 9)

Week 12  
Texas Courts (*TG*, Chapters 4 & 5)

**TEST 3**  
**Thursday, April 9**

Week 13  
Domestic Policy (*KTR*, Chapter 14)

Week 14  
Foreign Policy (*KTR*, Chapter 14)

Week 15  
Local Government (*TG*, Chapter, 6)

Week 16  
Texas Policy (*TG*, Chapter 7)

**Test 4: Thursday, April 30**
Course Syllabus Appendix

General Education Core Curriculum

This course has been selected to be part of Stephen F. Austin State University’s core curriculum. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six objectives for all core courses: 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.

Assessment of these objectives at SFA will be based on student work from all core curriculum courses. This student work will be collected in D2L through LiveText, the assessment management system selected by SFA to collect student work for core assessment. LiveText accounts will be provided to all students enrolled in core courses through the university technology fee. You will be required to register your LiveText account, and you will be notified how to register your account through your SFA e-mail account. If you forward your SFA e-mail to another account and do not receive an e-mail concerning LiveText registration, please be sure to check your junk mail folder and your spam filter for these e-mails. If you have questions about LiveText call Ext. 1267 or e-mail SFALiveText@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 LiveText this semester, and the date the assignment(s) should be uploaded to LiveText. Not every assignment will be collected for assessment every semester. Your instructor will notify you which assignment(s) must be submitted for assessment in LiveText this semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment Title</th>
<th>Date Due in LiveText</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>Not assessed this semester</td>
<td>December 1, 2017</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>Writing Assignment #3</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical and Quantitative Skills</td>
<td>To include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.</td>
<td>Not assessed in Political Science 142</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>To include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.</td>
<td>Not assessed in Political Science 142</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.</td>
<td>Not assessed in Political Science 142</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
<td>To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.</td>
<td>Not assessed in Political Science 142</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 one or both of the two Core Curriculum Objectives assigned to this course: critical thinking and communication skills. To this end, your assignment, including the graphic representation, must address each of the following issues.

Mastery of critical thinking is demonstrated 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.
- Evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the explanation(s) related to the public policy and the construction of a logical conclusion. For example, discussing advantages of solving the national debt through spending cuts, or by raising taxes, or by reforming entitlement programs and discussing the disadvantages associated with the selected solution.

Mastery of communication is demonstrated by:
- Organization and clarity in writing.
- Content and accuracy of the information.
- Correct use of grammar and syntax as well as relevant sources.
- Use of appropriate sources for your assignment.
- Extent to which visual aids (such as charts and graphs) support your ideas.
- Extend to which visual aids are seamlessly integrated into your assignment.