INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT  
Political Science 2305.014  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
Fall 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Meeting Time:</th>
<th>T/TH: 11:00-12:15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Location:</td>
<td>Miller Science 234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor:</td>
<td>Michael Tkacik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Location:</td>
<td>McKibben (EDU) 381(Honors School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Hours:</td>
<td>M-F: 1:00pm - 5:00 pm, and by appointment (please make an appointment in any event)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Phone:</td>
<td>468-2813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mtkacik@sfasu.edu">mtkacik@sfasu.edu</a> (this is the best way to reach me)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI Leader:</td>
<td>Ron McGrath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Mail:</td>
<td>ronmcgrath370@gmail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI Meeting Times and Location:</td>
<td>M/W (4:00-5:00), Landing Room C</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Course Description

Course includes development of the U.S. Constitution, structure and powers of the national government, including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, federalism, political participation, the national election process, public policy, civil liberties, and civil rights.

Course Hour Credit Justification

In compliance with SFA Policy 5.4, you are expected to spend 150 minutes each week attending class. In addition, you should spend 300 minutes each week in preparation for class. This time includes reading and reviewing material from your assigned readings, as well as reviewing notes from class, working on class assignments, and studying for exams.

Text and Materials

The text is: Martin Saiz and Jennifer L. De Maio, The Land is Your Land: Introduction to American Government and Politics, Version 1.1 (Flatworld, 2021) (the “Text”)

I may assign outside readings throughout the class.

Course Requirements

I want to focus on “informed citizenship” this semester. There is a great deal of mistrust of the media and even our fellow citizens today. While some of the mistrust of the media is justified, political entrepreneurs drive much of it. I want the class to be able to examine and reach defensible conclusions about the quality of information we consume, from both the traditional media and especially the other options available on the internet and elsewhere.
I also want to give all of you the opportunity to register to vote in Nacogdoches. Given that you will be spending at least 75% of your time in Nacogdoches, it makes a great deal of sense to register here. For those of you who have never registered and/or voted, I want to help you to register and vote, based on informed opinions. Those opinions will be informed by your values, but we want to make sure the information we use to underpin those opinions is legitimate.

You are expected to read the assigned material before class and to participate in class. You will gain more from the course (and earn a better grade) if you read and participate. It is assumed that students regularly read a major current newspaper such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, or the Financial Times. If surfing the internet is more your speed, pick out something credible such as the British Broadcasting System (www.bbc.com), PBS (https://www.pbs.org/newshour/), CSPAN (https://www.c-span.org/), the Associated Press (https://apnews.com/), Reuters, (https://www.reuters.com/), or National Public Radio (https://www.npr.org/sections/news/).

I would further encourage you to critically examine the readings, lectures, and class discussions. One of the primary benefits arising out of a solid liberal arts education is critical thinking. You will never be penalized in this class for asking questions, for seeking clarification, or for disagreeing with my interpretation of some subject. Of course, this does not mean that you are free to invent your own answers on the exams.

Grading Policy

Examinations: Examinations (except makeup exams) will consist of multiple choice and/or true/false questions. Each exam, including the final exam, covers a specific segment of lectures and readings, and each will have equal value in determining the final course grade. You need to bring a Scantron answer sheet (Form #882-ES) and a sharpened #2 pencil for each exam.

Tentative exam dates are noted below. The final exam will be given at the time and date specified in the official University calendar. Students should check the University schedule before planning any end-of-semester trips or activities since it will not be possible to change dates for the final exam. No early exams will be given under any circumstances.

Exams will cover both the reading and lecture material. You are responsible for each.

Grading Policy: Grades will be determined by three examinations, each counting 1/4 toward the final grade (100 points per exam). The following scale will be used for this course, based on a total of 400 aggregate points available for the semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>360-400</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>320-359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>280-319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>240-279</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Less than 240</td>
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Class Participation: Meaningful class participation is encouraged. This means participation about the topic at hand, illuminated by the readings. For students who regularly thus participate, I reserve the right to add up to ten (10) points to their aggregate point total (above). This may help the borderline student on occasion. These additional points, whether zero or ten or somewhere in between, are based entirely on my discretion and depend upon exceptional participation.
State Mandated Assessment Assignment: There is currently no assessment assignment in this class.

Attendance Policy

I have no attendance policy. You’re an adult. Make adult decisions.

However, if you’re not in class, you won’t have the opportunity to participate. Moreover, a significant portion of the test material comes from lecture. If you skip class, you’ll miss that lecture and may struggle with the related test questions. I will not provide my lecture notes to you. There are no “Power Point” notes. You’ll have to ask someone who was in class for their notes.

Please show up on time for class. I will shut and lock the door once class begins. You will not be permitted to enter once the door is shut.

Academic Integrity (4.1)

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/student-academic-dishonesty-4.1.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.
Course Objectives

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:

- Better understand how government affects their lives;
- Have learned about federal political systems;
- Understand the structure and functions of the three branches of the federal government (Legislative, Executive, and Judicial) and the bureaucracy;
- Gain greater interest in contemporary political issues;
- Become knowledgeable about public policies (domestic and foreign);
- Develop the ability to critically analyze information;
- Understand the role of public opinion, political parties, interest groups, campaigns and elections, and the media in American politics.

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 GOVT 2305: Federal Government you are also enrolling in a Core Curriculum Course that fulfills the Core Curriculum / General Education Objectives of Communication Skills (Visual and Written), Critical Thinking, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility.

The chart below indicates: (a) The core objectives that are required to be taught in this course per the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), (b) How the required core objectives will be addressed.

During the semester, you will receive assignments 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. If you have any questions, please see your Instructor or the 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 associated with this course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment Titles</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas though written, oral, and</td>
<td>1) Not assessed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information</td>
<td>1) Not assessed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
<td>To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to effectively engage in regional, national, and global communities</td>
<td>1) Not assessed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making</td>
<td>1) Not assessed</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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/).

Mental Health and Wellness

SFA values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support students' mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

*On-campus Resources*

*Counseling Services:*

[www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices](http://www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices)
Rusk Building, 3rd Floor (936) 468-2401

*SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic:*

[www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp)
Human Services, Room 202 (936) 468-1041
**Crisis Resources:**

Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1 (800) 392-8343  
Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1 (800) 273-TALK (8255)  
Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

**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 generally, the Student Conduct Code, policy 9 - [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student-conduct-code.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student-conduct-code.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 Early Alert Program (also known as iCare). This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

Some examples of inappropriate behavior include, but are not limited to:

1. arriving late for class;
2. talking while your classmates are talking or I am talking;
3. distracting your classmates or me; and/or,
4. using a cell phone (texting, talking, ringing, or otherwise), tablet, or other electronic device (you may, of course, use a notebook or tablet for not taking purposes).

**Course Complaints**

Any college course complaints or problems should first be discussed with the course instructor for the particular course. Difficulties can usually be resolved there. If the complaint cannot be resolved, the next person to see is the appropriate department chairperson.

**Communication**

Each student must use their @jacks.sfasu.edu email account. This is SFA policy. You are deemed to have received any message sent to your sfasu.edu account. If you use another account, have your SFA email forwarded to that account. Make sure your sfasu.edu email does not go to a quarantine folder and/or is not interpreted as spam. All official communication in this class will occur through your sfasu.edu account.

PLEASE NOTE: I will not respond to communication via D2L. Please email me at: mtkacik@sfasu.edu. I do not use D2L beyond a few “housekeeping” issues for class (such as posting the syllabus and grades).
Additional Points

Absolutely no early exams will be given. No make-up exams will be given unless documentary evidence is provided to show a medical emergency or other University accepted excuse. If given, the make-up exam may be more difficult and different in kind from the regularly scheduled exam. Thus, a make-up exam may (or may not) include essay questions. A make-up exam may also be cumulative in nature (as opposed to regularly scheduled exams, which will not be cumulative). It is in your interest to take the regularly scheduled exams.

All make-up exams must be taken Friday, December 3, 2021 at noon. A room will be reserved so that all students can take the make-up exam at the same time; the place for exams will be announced in class.

You are strongly encouraged to take extensive class notes. One of your objectives should be the development of writing and note-taking skills. Therefore, please do not use any recording devices in this class. My lectures are my legally protected work product.

Grades will be available on D2L.

Do not arrive late for class.

Treat everyone in the class with respect and courtesy. While our political leaders may have lost all sense of decorum, I think civility still has a place in society.

All students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior and use language appropriate for the classroom learning experience.

Cell phones and electronic devices (except computers for note taking) should be turned off and put away during class time.

During tests, no electronic devices will be permitted at your desk except a watch (not a cell phone that tells time, but a watch).

During tests please turn your baseball caps so they are facing backward.

Unless otherwise explicitly noted, all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified.


I reserve the right to eject and/or lower the grade of any student who violates these or other rules.

Changes to Syllabus/Class

I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO MODIFY ANY PORTION OF THE CLASS AND/OR SYLLABUS. SHOULD THE NEED ARISE, I WILL NOTIFY YOU BY EMAIL AT YOUR SFASU.EDU ACCOUNT.
Tentative Assignments

Week 1   General Introduction
         What is Politics? (Text, Introduction, Chapter 1)

Week 1 & 2   U.S. Political Culture

Week 2 & 3   U.S. Constitution (Text, Chapter 2)

Week 4   Federalism (Text, Chapter 3)

TEST 1

Week 5-6   Civil Liberties (Text, Chapter 4)

Week 6-7   Civil Rights (Text, Chapter 5)

TEST 2

Week 8   Public Opinion, Participation and Voting (Text, Chapters 6 & 7)

Week 9   Political Parties and Interest Groups (Text, Chapters 8 & 9)

Week 10   Media (Text, Chapter 10)

TEST 3

Week 11   Congress (Text, Chapter 11)

Week 12   President (Text, Chapter 12)

Week 13   Bureaucracy (Text, Chapter 13)

Week 14   Federal Courts, (Text, Chapter 14)

Week 15   Domestic Policy and Foreign Policy (Text, Chapters 15 & 16)

Week 16   FINAL EXAM (December __, 2021) (10:30-12:30??)

Voting Information

Voter Registration:  http://www.votetexas.gov/ or http://votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/