Course Description

"it is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence as the danger to society is not merely that it should believe wrong things, though that is great enough; but that it should become credulous, and lose the habit of testing things and inquiring into them; for then it must sink back into savagery"

--- Clifford, The Ethics of Belief, 1879, pp. 185-186

This course explores the structure and dynamics of American national government, providing a broad-based introduction to the ideas and institutions that shape politics in the contemporary United States. We will focus our analysis on three major areas: the fundamental concepts and principles of politics and democracy, the Constitution and the political context of American politics (political culture and political economy). Our analysis will promote the examination of important political phenomena from a variety of perspectives. Ultimately, the goal is to help each member of the class arrive at a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape American government and politics, so that he or she may be both a more discerning student and critic of the system and a more informed and reflective participant in it.

You must be knowledgeable of the contents of this course syllabus and you are expected to complete all of the course assignments on time without my direct supervision. You are encouraged to maintain regular communication with me throughout the semester, especially when you have questions regarding course content or protocol. I am always pleased to receive your D2L emails with questions or concerns, so don’t hesitate to use D2L email to notify me of any problems that you are having. I should be able to reply to you within 24 hours. It is assumed that you have a reliable computer and internet connection and that you can competently use a computer to send/receive emails (with or without attached files), to conduct internet research (using various search engines), and to do word-processing. Should you encounter problems with D2L, please contact the D2L support by email (d2l@sfasu.edu) or by Phone: 936.468.1919.
Please login to the Homepage on D2L frequently (daily) to see any announcements or updates for our class. I will use this site to make announcements or notify you of any changes or updates. Please be sure to check your D2L email account for class email messages.

Course Objectives

- To analyze, criticize and evaluate demonstrably the concepts, principles, theories and practices of our republican form of democracy as evident at the federal level
- To analyze, criticize and evaluate demonstrably the cogency and efficacy of democracy, republican forms of government, federalism, civil rights and liberties, various political ideologies, political cultures and American political economy at the federal level, illuminating how they work and how they impact our lives
- To develop demonstrably your ability to suggest cogent, positive alternative concepts, principals, practices and desired outcomes where appropriate

Requirements and Grading

Your overall grade will be based upon:

1. Quizzes (50%).
2. Midterm and Final (25% Each);
   - Midterm quiz on the readings from The Mainstream of Western Political Thought.
   - Final quiz on The Gardens of Democracy.