Introduction to American Federal Government

Stephen F. Austin State University
Spring 2024 (1.18.24 – 5.10.24)

Professor: Lee W. Payne
Email: paynelee@sfasu.edu
Office: Liberal Arts North 138
Department: Government

Course Description

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

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.

Required Books


Note: Outside readings may be assigned throughout the semester.

Grading Policy

Grades for this course will come from four exams, worth 25% each.
**Examinations:** Examinations will consist of 50 multiple choice questions worth two (2) 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 12:30 PM and close at 1:30 PM. You will have 60 minutes to take each exam. Exams will cover reading, lecture, and movie material (if time allows for movies). 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.

**Attendance:** Attendance will not be taken.

**Institution Absences (HOP 04-110)**

An Institutional Absence may be granted to a student who participates as a representative of the University in academic (including research), extra- or cocurricular, or athletic activities. Students will be excused for institutional purposes from otherwise required academic activity only when a valid Institutional Absence is approved by the appropriate administrative unit or official and the documentation of approval is provided to the faculty member at least five (5) days in advance.

Institutional absences will not be approved for keystone events, defined as: a special or unique assignment, test, project, experience, or other academic exercise identified by the Faculty member as critical for successful completion of standards of the class and unable to be missed. These events must be identified on the syllabus at the beginning of the semester and communicated to the students. Events added to the syllabus at a later date will not qualify for Keystone Event status. Keystone Events where the date/time is changed will no longer be considered a Keystone Event. Students should make themselves aware of any Keystone Events identified in the syllabus to ensure there are no conflicts.

For keystone events where the assignment dates vary, it is incumbent upon the students to work with their faculty member to not select a conflicting date.

More information on Institutional Absences, including how to apply, can be found at [https://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents/student-resources/institutional-absences](https://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents/student-resources/institutional-absences).

**Academic Integrity**

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the
whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

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 included reading and reviewing material from your assigned readings, as well as reviewing notes from class, working on class assignments, and engaging in research related to your research project. During weeks in which you will meet one-on-one with your professor, you are expected to spend more time engaged in research and writing on your major research project.

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:

- 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.

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. 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.
- Any use of AI will be considered plagiarism and reported to the University.
- 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/.
**Student Wellness and Well-Being**

SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, 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:**
**The Dean of Students Office** (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

**SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic** Human Services, Room 202
www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
936.468.1041

**The Health and Wellness Hub** “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body, and spirit. Services include:
- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education
  www.sfasu.edu/thehub
  936.468.4008
  thehub@sfasu.edu

**Crisis Resources:**
- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- johCrisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741
Tentative Class Schedule

Week 1  KTR Chapter 1
Week 2  KTR Chapters 1 & 2
Week 3  KTR Chapters 2 & 3
Week 4  KTR Chapter 3

**TEST 1  Thursday, February 8th**

Week 5  KTR Chapter 4
Week 6  KTR Chapters 4 & 5
Week 7  KTR Chapter 5
Week 8  KTR Chapter 12

**TEST 2  Thursday, March 7th**

Week 9  Spring Break!
Week 10 KTR Chapters 6 & 7
Week 11 KTR Chapters 7 & 8
Week 12 KTR Chapter 9

**TEST 3  Thursday, April 4th**

Week 13 KTR Chapters 10 & 13
Week 14 KTR Chapters 13 & 11
Week 15 KTR Chapters 11 & 14

**Test 4:  Tuesday, May 7 – 10:30-11:30**
Course Syllabus Appendix

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.

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>How the Core Objective Will be Addressed</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></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>To include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.</td>
<td></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></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></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.</td>
<td></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></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>