

**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT:  
STRUCTURE & FUNCTION**  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
Department of Government  
**FALL 2012**



**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

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**COURSE INFORMATION**

**Course Number:** PSC 142

**Section:** 001

**Prerequisites:** None

**Semester Credit Hours:** 3



**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.

Meets the state requirement for Texas Government.” *General Bulletin, 2011-202, p.359.*

**Class Meeting Days & Times:** T,TH 11:00am – 12:15am

**Room:** Vera Dugas Liberal Arts North 102

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Kernell, Samuel and Gary C. Jacobson. 2005. *The Logic of American Politics, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.*  
Congressional Quarterly Press: Washington, D.C.

Collier, Ken, *et al.* 2012. *Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*  
Congressional Quarterly Press: Washington, D.C.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

### **General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes:**

- In any given semester, one or more of the following Social and Behavior Science Exemplary Education Objectives (EEOs) may be assessed in this course.
- EEO #3 “To use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.”
  - EEO #4 “To develop and communicate alternative explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues.”
  - EEO #5 “To analyze the effects of historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and global forces on the area under study.”
  - EEO #6 “To comprehend the origins and evolution of U.S. and Texas political systems, with a focus on the growth of political institutions, the constitutions of the U.S. and Texas, federalism, civil liberties, and civil and human rights.”
  - EEO #10 “To analyze, critically assess, and develop creative solutions to public policy problems.”
  - EEO #11 “To recognize and assume one’s responsibility as a citizen in a democratic society by learning to think for one’s self, by engaging in public discourse, and by obtaining information through the news media and other appropriate information sources about politics and public policy.”

### **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 engage in 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

Students are expected to go beyond rhetoric and ideology to develop critical thinking about the American political system. As a result, students are encouraged to ask questions and to challenge assumptions of class discussions while respecting the logical and reasoned positions of others.

## **EVALUATION**

- 1) Exams. There will be 4 multiple-choice exams that will cover the material for the class up to the point of the test. The final test is not comprehensive. It will be given during the final examination period.
- 2) Participation. You are expected to attend class. You are expected to do the assigned readings be prepared to answer questions and discuss the readings. I will grade you on your participation and attendance. You are expected to participate on the discussion board and to answer discussion questions posted on the discussion board.
- 3) Caucus Simulation. We will have 4 caucus assignments for the semester which will include a class time committed to the caucus. We will simulate a caucus vote on the 2012 presidential nominations as if the 2012 election is an open seat. Further details to follow.

## COURSE EXAMINATION DESCRIPTIONS:

I have divided this course into four separate sections: 1) Philosophical Foundations of American Government, Political Science & Methodology, U.S. Presidency & Texas Executive, 2) U.S. Congress, Texas Legislature, Texas Local Government 3) U.S. Court System & Texas Court System 4) U.S. Economic Policy, U.S. Foreign Policy, Bureaucracy. At the end of each section, I will give you a one-hundred point multiple-choice exam of fifty questions worth two points each. The exams will cover the material in that section alone – no comprehensive exams.

## WEIGHTING SCALE

First Exam	100 points
Second Exam	100 points
Third Exam	100 points
Fourth Exam	100 points
Attend & Participate	100 points
Caucus	100 points
TOTAL POINTS	600 points

## GRADING SCALE

A	90% and up	540 – 600
B	80% - 89%	480 – 539
C	70% - 79%	420 – 479
D	60% - 69%	360 – 419
F	59% and down	0 – 359



Most of this class will be lecture with some in-class discussion. I expect you to finish the readings assigned for each day before you come to class and be prepared to discuss the readings.

## EXAM POLICIES:

- Make-up exams are given only under the most extreme circumstances (e.g., a serious illness or a death in the family).
- If you are unable to take the exam at the scheduled time, then you must notify your instructor ahead of time and must provide written documentation to substantiate your absence.
- Failure to inform your instructor of an absence prior to the exam or failure to provide adequate documentation will result in a score of zero points (0) on the exam.
- The instructor determines what constitutes adequate documentation; the instructor may request multiple documents to substantiate the absence.
- **During exams, cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off and stored away**

## PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to come to class prepared to engage in a critical evaluation of the topic of the day. At a minimum, participation entails preparation for class by completing the assigned readings before the start of class on the day that the reading is scheduled. In addition, students should be prepared to contribute voluntarily to class discussion. Although participation does not make up a portion of the final grade for the course, participation may prove to be a significant factor in determining borderline grades. For example, participation may be used as a criterion for a student whose final grade in the class is a 89.6% (B). A student who participated often in class discussions may receive an A as the final course grade.

## ATTENDANCE

- Students are expected to attend class. A strong correlation exists between attendance and student performance in the course. Thus, attendance is required for this course. Moreover, regular attendance makes a clear and distinct statement about personal responsibility; habits developed during a student's career at SFA carry over to the post-university world of employment.
- During each class session, a sign-in sheet will be passed around. Each student is expected to sign for herself/himself only. Students who sign the attendance sheet for another student will have ten (10) points reduced from their final grade total for the course for each infraction of this policy.
- For this course, students may miss class up to five (5) times without penalty. After the third absence, the student's final point total will be reduced by five (5) points for each additional absence. For this policy, no distinctions exist for "excused" and "unexcused" absences; all absences are treated the same. A student does NOT need to inform the instructor of why the student missed a particular class session.
- Furthermore, class begins promptly at the time scheduled. Students are expected to be present for the entire class period. Late arrivals and early departures are not tolerated. Tardiness is distracting to fellow students in the class. If either late arrivals or early departures become a problem during the semester, the instructor may circulate two attendance sheets, one at the beginning of class and one at the end of class. Students who do not sign both sheets are considered absent for the day.
- In addition, students should demonstrate common courtesy for their fellow students by turning off their cell phones before class begins. Students who receive and answer cell phone calls during class will be asked to leave the class. **Mocking of student's ring tone is left to the discretion of the instructor.**

## ACADEMIC HONESTY:

The following is taken from SFASU's *Policy Manual (2011)*, section on "Academic Integrity" (A-9) 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](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp). All cases of academic dishonesty will be handled according to University policies and procedures (A-9.1). The consequences for academic dishonesty may range from a score of zero (0) on the assignment to an “F” for the course. For details, students should refer to the *SFA Policy Manual* (2011) or the University’s *General Bulletin, 2011 – 2012* section entitled “Academic Integrity” and other sources of University policy.

### **WITHHELD GRADES**

The following is taken from SFASU’s *Policy Manual* (2011), “Semester Grades Policy” (A-54). 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 semesters, 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/>.

### **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 the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). 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. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.



## SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITES ASSIGNMENTS / EXAMINATIONS

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### WEEK 1

#### *Introduction*

*The Logic of American Politics & Democracy*

Readings: K&J, Chapter 1

### WEEK 2

*Political Science & Collective Action*

Readings: CG&HS, Chapter 1

### WEEK 3

*U.S. Presidency*

Readings: K&J, Chapter 7

### WEEK 4

*Texas Executive*

Readings: CG&HS, Chapter 4

### WEEK 5

#### **EXAM 1**

*The Great Commanding Theatre or Parliament of Fools? – U.S. Congress*

Readings: K&J, Chapter 6

### WEEK 6

*The Great Commanding Theatre or Parliament of Fools? – U.S. Congress*

Readings: K&J, Chapter 6

### WEEK 7

*Texas Legislature*

Readings: CG&HS, Chapter 3

### WEEK 8

*Texas Local Government*

Readings: CG&HS, Chapter 6

### WEEK 9

#### **EXAM 2**

*The U.S. Judiciary*

Readings: K&J, Chapter 9

### WEEK 10

*The U.S. Judiciary*

Readings: K&J, Chapter 9

WEEK 10

*The Texas Court System*

Readings: CG&HS, Chapter 5

WEEK 11

*The Texas Court System*

Readings: CG&HS, Chapter 5

WEEK 12

**EXAM 3**

*The Bureaucracy*

Readings: K&J, Chapter 8

WEEK 13

*Texas Public Policy*

Readings: CG&HS, Chapter 9

WEEK 14

*U.S. Economic Policy*

Readings: TBA

WEEK 15

*U.S. Foreign Policy*

Readings: TBA

EXAM WEEEEK

**EXAM 4**

THIS IS A PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE ONLY. THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THIS SCHEDULE AS NEEDED.