

Political Science 141.XXX: American Government – Theory SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Fall 2014

Department of Government, SFASU

Course Meeting Time: TBA

Course Location: TBA

Instructor: TBA

Office Location: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Office Phone: TBA

E-mail: TBA

SI Leader: TBA

SI Meeting Times and Location: TBA

Course Description:

“Origins and development of American and Texas government systems; federalism; civil liberties and civil rights; interest groups, political parties and elections. Meets the state requirement for American Government. This course meets the legislative requirements for a course on the Constitutions of the United States and Texas.”
General Bulletin, 2012-2013.

General Education Core Curriculum Objectives:

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

- 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 and no specific program learning outcomes for a political science major are addressed in this course.

Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, you should be able to

- Critically evaluate political science theories and approaches to political behaviors such as voting, elections, campaigns, political parties, civil rights and / or civil liberties
- Communicate your understanding and interpretation of key theories of political science as they apply to political behavior as defined above
- Understand social responsibility by examining political behavior and civic participation across various racial, ethnic, culture, and / or religious groupings and / or in comparisons between Texas and other states and between the U.S. and other countries.
- Describe historical and contemporary debates over political behaviors and how these debates impact citizen choices and personal responsibility

Textbooks:

The following books are currently used by faculty teaching this course. Textbook decisions are made by individual faculty, but all textbook must cover the basic content of this course.

Baily, Alan. 2013 *Political Science 141 Workbook* [Current Edition] SFASU University Printing Services.

Barbour, Christine, and Gerald C. Wright. 2013. *Keeping the Republic*. [5th Brief Edition.] Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Collier, Ken, Steven Galatas, and Julie Harrelson-Stephens. 2011. *Lone Star Politics*. [2nd Edition.] Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Kernell, Samuel, *et al.* 2013. *Logic of American Politics*. [6th Edition.] Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Kollman, Ken. 2011. *The American Political System* [1st Edition.] Boulder, CO: W. W. Norton.

Kollman, Ken. 2012. *Readings in American Politics* [12th Edition.] Boulder, CO: W. W. Norton

Lowi, Theodore, *et al.* 2012. *American Government: Power and Purpose* [12th Brief Edition.] Boulder, CO: W. W. Norton.

Grades:*

Grades for the course will be drawn from the following sources:

Exams	70%
Writing Assignments	30%
TOTAL	100%

Point values will be converted to letter grades using a standard 90% -- 80% -- 70% scale:

- A: 90% and above
- B: 80% to 89.9%
- C: 70% to 79.9%
- D: 60% to 69.9%
- F: 0 – 299 points (below 60%)

*Note: Individual faculty determine the types, number, content, and specific weights of course assignments used in specific sections of the course. Above is an example of how a faculty member might allocate course grades.

Exams:**

Each exam consists of fifty (50) multiple-choice questions worth two (2) points each. Thus, each of the exams is worth a total of 100 points. Material for the exams comes from classroom discussions as well as the assigned readings. Class sessions do not cover all material from the assigned readings, but all assigned readings, regardless of whether the material is discussed in class, are incorporated into the exams. Make-up exams are given only under the most extreme circumstances (e.g., a serious illness or a death in the family). You must notify your instructor ahead of time if you are going to miss an exam. You 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. Collectively all four exams are worth 70% of your total grade for this course.

** Note: Individual faculty members determine the number of exams and structure of exams used in specific sections of the course. Above is an example of how a faculty member might structure their exams.

Writing Assignments:***

You will conduct at least one writing assignment during the semester. This assignment will require you to select a key area of civil liberties such as the right to privacy, right to bear arms, or freedom of speech. It will directly assess your mastery of all four Core Curriculum Objectives assigned to this course: critical thinking, communication skills, social responsibility, and personal responsibility.

Mastery of critical thinking is demonstrated by:

- Clear and concise conceptualization of the civil liberty (e.g. an attempt to define free speech)
- Correctly identifying points of contention or debate over the civil liberty (e.g. what is hate speech, when may speech be limited, the “Clear and Present Danger” test, etc.)

Mastery of written communication is demonstrated by:

- Organization of the writing assignment
- Correct use of grammar and syntax

Mastery of social responsibility is demonstrated by:

- Explanation of the connection between the civil liberty you selected on various regional and national groups (e.g. if hate speech is illegal, then how does that effect the rights of those censored and how does it protect the rights of others)

Mastery of individual responsibility is demonstrated by:

- Evaluation of civil liberty you selected on individuals including yourself (e.g. how does a ban on hate speech limit your own rights, how does the ban offer you protection from bullying and harassment)

*** Note: Individual faculty members may include additional writing assignments in their courses. The above assignments will be required of all sections regardless of instructor as part of the Core Curriculum Assessment Plan for this course. Specific details will be determined in the near future by political science faculty as part of the Core Curriculum Assessment Plan for this course.

Participation:****

You are expected to come to class prepared to engage in a critical evaluation of the topic of the day. At a minimum, you must complete the assigned readings before the start of class on the day that the reading is scheduled. In addition, you should be prepared to contribute voluntarily to class discussion.

**** Note: Individual faculty members may include participation in the overall course grade for the class. The nature of participation and how participation is to be assessed for the purpose of course grades is determined by each faculty member.

Attendance:*****

You are expected to attend class. A strong correlation exists between your attendance and your performance in the course. Thus, attendance is required for this course. Moreover, regular attendance makes a clear and distinct statement about your personal responsibility; habits developed during your time at SFA carry over to the post-university world of employment. During each class session, a sign-in sheet will be passed around. You are expected to sign for yourself only.

For a Monday, Wednesday, Friday section, you may miss class up to nine (9) times without penalty. After the ninth absence, five (5) points will be deducted for each additional absence. No distinctions exist for “excused” and “unexcused” absences; all absences are treated the same.

For a Tuesday and Thursday or Monday and Wednesday section, you may miss class up to six (6) times without penalty. After the sixth absence, five (5) points will be deducted for each additional absence. No distinctions exist for “excused” and “unexcused” absences; all absences are treated the same.

You DO NOT need to inform the instructor of why you missed a specific class session.

***** Note: Individual faculty members determine the attendance policy for their sections of this course. The above section is for illustration purposes only.

Academic Integrity:

The following is taken from SFASU's *Policy Manual (2012)*, 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.

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 (2012)* or the University's *General Bulletin, 2012 – 2013* section entitled "Academic Integrity" and other sources of University policy.

Withheld Grades

The following is taken from SFASU's *Policy Manual (2012)*, "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.

Course Topics#

Topic	Time	Core Objectives	
		Instruction and Practice	Assignment
Definitions and background (required)	1 week	Critical thinking Communication skills Social responsibility Personal responsibility	No
U.S. Constitution (required)	2 weeks	Critical thinking Communication skills Personal responsibility	No
Texas Constitution (required)	1 week	Critical thinking Communication skills	No
Federalism (required)	2 weeks	Critical thinking Communication skills Social Responsibility Personal Responsibility	No
Civil Liberties (required)	2 weeks	Critical thinking Communication skills Social Responsibility Personal Responsibility	Yes (covers all four objectives)
Civil Rights (required)	1 week	Critical thinking Communication skills Social Responsibility Personal Responsibility	No
Political Parties (required)	1 week	Critical thinking Communication skills Social Responsibility Personal Responsibility	No
Interest Groups (required)	1 week	Critical thinking Communication skills Social Responsibility Personal Responsibility	No
Elections and Voting Behavior (required)	2 weeks	Critical thinking Communication skills Social Responsibility Personal Responsibility	No

Note: Course topics and allocation of time are approximate. Faculty may deviate from the schedule and topics based upon individual specialization and / or student interest. Additional topics beyond those listed may be added by individual faculty if time permits; these additional topics are optional and specific to faculty teaching individual sections of the course. The instruction on civil liberties and on elections / voting behavior will offer explicit instruction on all four course objectives assigned to this course. Other topics in this course will meet core objectives naturally through discussion of course topics, classroom instruction, and classroom assignments and examinations not explicitly associated with core curriculum assessment.