Introduction to American Government: Theory and Politics
Spring 2016 - PSC 141 (online)
Department of Government - Stephen F. Austin State University

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION
Name: Peyton Wofford Gooch (Mrs. G)
E-mail: woffordgooch@sfasu.edu or woffordpe@d2l.sfasu.edu
Office: Vera Dugas Liberal Arts North 112
Office Phone: 936-468-4408
Office Hours: online
NOTE: Email is the best way to reach me.

COURSE INFORMATION
Name: Introduction to American Government: Theory and Politics
Prefix and Number: PSC 141
Section: 501
SFA Prerequisites: None
Unofficial prereqs: Common sense, time management skills, stick-to-itiveness and a sense of humor
Semester Credit Hrs: 3

COURSE DESCRIPTION
"Origins and development of American and Texas government systems; federalism; civil liberties and civil rights; and interest groups, political parties and elections. This course meets the legislative requirements for a course on the constitutions of the United States and Texas."

REQUIRED TEXTS
1) Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics by Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright
   a. ISBN: 9781483381138
2) PSC 141 Workbook - American Government: Theory & Politics edited by Alan Baily
   a. ISBN: 2818440027536

NOTE: Both texts are required. To put it another way, in my experience these two texts are necessary or essential to the aim of earning a passing grade in this course. The SFA Campus Bookstore has ISBN information for both texts. If you choose to use an older or newer edition of either, you are responsible for reading the correct chapters when chapter numbers differ from those listed on the syllabus.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
General Education Core Curriculum Objectives
In any given semester, one or more of the following Core Curriculum Objectives for the political science Foundational Component Area may be assessed. See the Texas-Mandated Assessment Rubric below for more information.

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.
CLASSROOM POLICIES

This is an online course, so you will be required to engage in self-study and utilize self-reminders about deadlines and requirements. Please be close attention to the course schedule below. We will maintain regular contact throughout the semester through D2L email and the course’s newsfeed. Check both frequently.

**Late assignments are not accepted.** Make-up exams will only be allowed under exceptional circumstances (see evaluation section below). Having another exam or paper due that day is not an exceptional circumstance. **Grades are non-negotiable.**

Let’s take a moment to address civil discourse. The respectful exchange of ideas is a requirement of this course. Make it a goal to develop critical thinking about the American political system. As such, I encourage you to ask questions and to (respectfully) challenge assumptions of class discussions. You are allowed to express your opinion. Please do so in a reasoned, professional manner. Please also remember that your fellow students are allowed to express their (potentially different) opinions. Stated another way, discussion posts and other online behavior should not interfere with my 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 subject to penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the class.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

To learn more about using D2L, visit [http://sfaonline.sfasu.edu](http://sfaonline.sfasu.edu). For technical support, contact the Office of Instructional Technology (OIT) at d2l@sfasu.edu or 936-468-1919. For computer support, contact the Technical Support Center at 936-468-4357 or helpdesk@sfasu.edu.

EVALUATION (aka grades)

Grades will be determined by discussions, think-pieces, and three examinations. Each course component is a percentage (or weight) of your final course grade. See below.

**Discussions – 25%**

You will be required to post in multiple discussion activities (or forums) each week and to provide at least two (2) responses/replies to your classmates’ posts in each discussion activity (or forum). The discussions will require you to analyze the material presented and, at times, offer an argument about a particular component of the material. Treat your posts and replies as small writing assignments. Use proper punctuation and spelling. Pay close attention to grammar and word choice. The quality of your writing impacts your ability to present an argument. As such, I may deduct points for low quality writing.

**Exams – 75%**

Each exam (excluding make-up exams) includes 50 questions in either multiple-choice or true/false format. You will have 60 minutes to complete each exam. Points will be deducted for failing to submit the exam within 60 minutes. There will be three exams, each including questions from only one segment of the course. Take a look at the course schedule to see the course segments and exam dates. Exams will include questions drawn from required reading and lesson material. You are responsible for each of these.

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 — that is, they may include short-answer questions or essay questions. If you miss an exam and would like to take a make-up exam, it is your responsibility to inform me why you were absent and to provide documentation. If the absence meets the above criteria, we will schedule a make-up exam. No exams will be given early.
Weighting (or Percentage) Scale

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<tr>
<th>Course Component</th>
<th>Percentage of Student's Final Course Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Final Grade Scale

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<th>Final Course Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90% and up</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80% - 89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% - 79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 69%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59% and lower</td>
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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.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

“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.” - SFASU’s Policy Manual (2011), section on “Academic Integrity” (A-9)

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 (2011) or the University’s General Bulletin, 2011 – 2012 section entitled “Academic Integrity” and other sources of University policy.

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/.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF LESSONS, DISCUSSIONS, and EXAMINATIONS

NOTE: This calendar is subject to change. Lessons/modules open on the Saturday after the previous lesson closes unless otherwise indicated.

KTR = Keeping the Republic          WB = Texas Politics 141 Workbook

WAIT! Please review the Getting Started lesson/module before moving forward.

LESSONS/MODULES 1 and 2 – American Government and US Political Culture

- Readings: KTR 1 and 2
- Discussions due: Friday, 1/29 by noon

NOTE: These lessons are combined to give you time to get used to the reading material (you’ll need to read the chapters more than once) and familiarize yourself with D2L. Future lessons will open and close within one week. To complete the readings, discussions, and assignments by the deadline, you’ll need to pace yourself. Do not procrastinate!

LESSON 3 – Texas Political Culture

- Readings: WB 1
- Discussions due: Friday, 2/5 by noon

LESSON 4 – U.S. Constitution

- Readings: KTR 2
- Discussions due: Friday, 2/12 by noon

LESSON 5 – Texas Constitution

- Reading: WB 2
- Discussions due: Friday, 2/19 by noon

Exam I opens at 8am on Sunday, 2/21 and closes at noon on Tuesday, 2/23.

LESSON 6 – Civil Liberties

- Reading: KTR 4
- Discussions due: Friday, 2/26 by noon

LESSON 7 – Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

- Readings: KTR 4 (please reread the chapter) and 5
- Discussions due: Friday, 3/4 by noon
LESSON 8 – Civil Rights

- Readings: KTR 5
  - Discussions due: Friday, 3/11 by noon

LESSON 9 – US Elections

- Readings: KTR 12
  - Discussions due: Friday, 3/25 by noon

LESSON 10 – Texas Elections

- Readings: WB 4
  - Discussions due: Friday, 4/1 by noon

Exam II opens at 8am on Sunday, 4/3 and closes at noon on Tuesday, 4/5.

LESSON 11 – Federalism

- Readings: KTR 3
  - Discussions due: Friday, 4/8 by noon

LESSON 12 – Parties and Interest Groups

- Readings: KTR 11 and WB 6 and 7
  - Discussions due: Friday, 4/15 by noon

LESSONS 13 and 14 – U.S. Public Opinion and Texas Public Opinion

- Readings: KTR 10 and WB 5
  - Discussions due: Friday, 4/29 by noon
  - NOTE: Lesson 13 and 14 are both due on 4/29.

LESSON 15 - Media

- Readings: KTR 13
  - Discussions due: Friday, 5/6 by noon

EXAM III opens at 8am on Saturday, 5/7 and closes at noon on Thursday, 5/12.

That’s all folks!