INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
THEORY & POLITICS
Stephen F. Austin State University
Department of Government
SPRING 2016

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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OFFICE PHONE: 936-468-2098
OFFICE HOURS: T-TH 11:00am – 12:30pm | W 10:00am – 12:00pm | By appointment
WEB PAGE: www.donaldgooch.com
BLOG: www.poliscipundit.com

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Number: PSC 141
Section: 006
Prerequisites: N/A
Semester Credit Hours: 3

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, 2014-2015.

Class Meeting Days & Times: T,TH 12:30pm - 1:45pm
Room: Ferguson Liberal Arts RM# 372

REQUIRED TEXTS

REQUIRED MATERIALS
SFA APPROVED CLICKER DEVICE (TURNING TECHNOLOGIES)
“Wherever the real power in a Government lies, there is the danger of oppression. In our Governments, the real power lies in the majority of the Community, and the invasion of private rights is chiefly to be apprehended, not from the acts of Government contrary to the sense of its constituents, but from acts in which the Government is the mere instrument of the major number of the constituents.”
- James Madison, Letters and Other Writings of James Madison Volume 3

"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."
Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States

**Course Objectives**

**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, students will be able…

- To describe the basic themes and concepts related to the study of American and Texas political behavior
- To examine the relationship between political behavior and political institutions, especially the interdependence of behavior and institutions
- To think critically about American and Texas politics, especially the theoretical foundations of both systems
- To discuss the foundations of the US and Texas Constitutions
- To identify the key schools of thought regarding voting behavior and electoral processes
- To explain the roles and functions of political parties, interest groups, and media in a democratic political system
- To understand citizenship in the American political system more completely

I have divided this course into five separate sections:

1. Philosophical Foundations of American Government | Political Science & Methodology
2. Federalism | U.S. & TX Constitutions
5. Media | Public Opinion
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 3 multiple-choice exams that will cover the material for the class in each of the first three sections. The final test is comprehensive with an emphasis on the fourth and fifth sections of the course. It will be given during the final examination period.

2) *Participation.* You are expected to attend class. Consistent class attendance, reading and preparation, and participation are essential. You are expected to be **ON TIME** for class. Being on time means being in your seat ready to go **BEFORE** the class time begins. You are expected to attend class. You are expected to stay for the full period. You may **NOT** leave class early unless prior permission has been obtained from the professor. Attendance will be taken at the beginning, at the end, and throughout the course of a class through the use of the clicker device to answer questions about the lecture, polls, and attendance questions. Attendance will be taken using the SFA clicker device. You are expected to attend class. You are expected to do the assigned readings and be prepared to answer questions and discuss the readings. I will grade you on your discussions (50%) and attendance (50%). You are expected to participate on the discussion board and to answer discussion questions posted on the discussion board and respond to your fellow classmates. Also, you are expected to attend class.

3) *Caucus Simulation.* We will have 4 caucus assignments for the semester which will include a class meeting committed to the caucus at the end of the semester, during which we will simulate a caucus vote on the 2012 presidential nominations as if the 2012 election is an open seat. Further details will be provided on D2L.

4) *Bonus Opportunities.* I periodically make bonus points available in the course in the form of bonus quizzes, bonus essay assignments, bonus points for attending a lecture, etc. Bonus opportunities will be announced in class and on D2L.

**WEIGHTING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucus Simulation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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**GRADING SCALE**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90% and up</td>
<td>630 – 700</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80% - 89%</td>
<td>560 – 629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% - 79%</td>
<td>490 – 559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 69%</td>
<td>420 – 489</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and down</td>
<td>0 – 419</td>
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**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, 2012 – 2013 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/](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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>LECTURE TOPICS</th>
<th>READING ASSIGNMENTS &amp; EVALUATIONS</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| SECTION 1 | WEEK 1 | ○ Introduction  
 ○ Democracy & Liberalism  
 ○ The American Founding | Kollman, Chapter 1 |
|         | WEEK 2 | ○ Political Science as a Discipline  
 ○ Game Theory | Kollman, Chapter 1 |
|         | WEEK 3 | ○ Collective Action Problems  
 ○ Solving Collective Action Problems | Kollman, Chapter 1  
 *Caucus Assignment #1 Due* |
|         | WEEK 4 | ○ Review & Test | EXAM 1 |
| SECTION 2 | WEEK 5 | ○ Federalism | Kollman, Chapter 3 |
|         | WEEK 6 | ○ Federalism  
 ○ U.S. Constitution | Kollman, Chapter 3  
 Kollman, Chapter 2 |
|         | WEEK 7 | ○ U.S. Constitution  
 ○ TX Constitution | Kollman, Chapter 2  
 Baily, Chapter 2  
 *Caucus Assignment #2 Due* |
|         | WEEK 8 | ○ Review & Test | EXAM 2 |
| SECTION 3 | WEEK 8 | ○ U.S. Civil Rights & Civil Liberties | Kollman, Chapter 4 |
|         | WEEK 9 | ○ TX Civil Rights & Civil Liberties  
 ○ U.S. Elections | Bailey, Chapter 3  
 Kollman, Chapter 13 |
|         | WEEK 10 | ○ U.S. Elections  
 ○ TX Elections | Kollman, Chapter 13  
 Baily, Chapter 4  
 *Caucus Assignment #3 Due* |
|         | WEEK 11 | ○ Review & Test | EXAM 3 |
| SECTION 4 & 5 | WEEK 13 | ○ U.S. Political Parties & Interest Groups  
 ○ TX Political Parties & Interest Groups | Kollman, Chapters 11 & 12  
 Baily, Chapters 6 & 7 |
|         | WEEK 14 | ○ U.S. & TX Public Opinion  
 ○ U.S. Media | Kollman, Chapter 9 & 14  
 Baily, Chapter 5 |
|         | WEEK 15 | ○ Remainder Notes, Review & Test | Caucus Meeting (CA #4) |
| EXAM WEEK | | ○ FINAL EXAM | EXAM 5 |

This is a preliminary schedule only. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this schedule as needed.