Introduction to American Government: Structure and Functions

142: 008- 9-9:50 Rm 371 in Ferguson
Ms. Megan Fleming
Office: 129 in LAN
Office Hours: MW 11-11:50, 2:30-3:30, F 11-11:50, 1-2, and TR 9:30-11
Department of Government

Course Description: Legislative, executive and judicial functions in American and Texas governments; public policy are such as finance, social services and foreign policy; Texas local and county governments.

Purpose: This course is designed to be an introduction to American and Texas Politics. The focus of this course is the government institutions and resulting implications for policy. As we go through the course, we will explicitly focus on comparing Texas institutions and policy output to U.S. institutions and policy output. All of you have been and will be affected by the political process. How much money you paid for this course, or the fact that this course is required are products of our government. Hopefully by the end of this course you will not only be more informed about the political process, but also more interested and involved in it.

Required Reading:
GOVT7
5th-7th editions
Sidlow and Henschen

Course requirements:
There will be four exams in the class. The first three exams are required, if you are satisfied with your course grade after the first three exams then you may choose not to take the final exam. The final exam will be cumulative. If you miss an exam for any reason then you must take the final exam. If you must miss two exams please see me as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made for you to take an early exam. Late exams are not permitted. If you take all four exams then your lowest exam grade will be dropped.

Exam 1- 20%
Exam 2- 20%
Exam 3- 20%
Final- 20%

Exams are worth 60% of your entire grade!!

There will also be reading quizzes for every chapter we read. These are not to torture you, but to make sure you are actually reading and understanding the material.

Quizzes - 10%

In the first section of the course we will be doing a class simulation of the House of Representatives. You will have to work in groups of about 10 to pass legislation.

Simulation- 10%
The class will be divided into 2 groups. Depending on what groups you are assigned to you will turn in a 200 word summary of a current event every other Wednesday. **These current events MUST be submitted by D2L email or turned in as a hard copy.**  
**Current Events – 14%**

There will occasionally be group work in class, this is so you can discuss and talk about whatever subject we are covering with your peers. If you are absent and miss group work it can NOT be made up. **Group Work- 6%**

**Extra Credit**
Before every exam a review will be posted to D2L. These reviews will be worth 2 points to your final grade, and they are completely optional. To receive credit for your review you MUST submit it through D2L email with the title formatted as such “Jane Doe -Review1”. If it is not formatted accordingly you will NOT receive credit. OR you may also turn in a hard copy before the exam to receive credit. There will also be a 1 point Bonus question on every exam in the form of a short answer. Because there are multiple opportunities for extra credit no other extra credit will be offered.

**Attendance:**
I have realized that students who do not attend class make lower grades and do not understand the material as well. I highly encourage you to attend class, however there is no attendance policy. There will be a sign in sheet at the beginning of class however, so that when you fail I can say it was because you decided not to attend class. The choice is yours.

**Participation:**
There is no participation grade, however it has been my experience that the more involved you are in the class discussions the more you understand the material and the better your grades are.

**Notes:**
Although there will be power points, I will not be posting these to D2L. This is to encourage you to take good notes during class. Actively taking notes and listening to the class lectures helps you better retain the information.

**Classroom Policies:**
- No tape recorders
- No laptops
- Cellphones
  - If a cell phone goes off in class or I see you texting in class, you will receive one verbal warning on the second incident you will be asked to leave for the remainder of the class

**Program Learning Outcomes:**
This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in this course.
General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes:
This course has been selected to be part of Stephen F. Austin State University’s core curriculum. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six objectives for all core courses: 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.

Assessment of these objectives at SFA will be based on student work from all core curriculum courses. This student work will be collected in D2L through LiveText, the assessment management system selected by SFA to collect student work for core assessment. LiveText accounts will be provided to all students enrolled in core courses through the university technology fee. You will be required to register your LiveText account, and you will be notified how to register your account through your SFA e-mail account. If you forward your SFA e-mail to another account and do not receive an e-mail concerning LiveText registration, please be sure to check your junk mail folder and your spam filter for these e-mails. If you have questions about LiveText call Ext. 1267 or e-mail SFALiveText@sfasu.edu.

The chart below indicates the core objectives addressed by this course, the assignment(s) that will be used to assess the objectives in this course and uploaded to LiveText this semester, and the date the assignment(s) should be uploaded to LiveText. Not every assignment will be collected for assessment every semester. Your instructor will notify you which assignment(s) must be submitted for assessment in LiveText this semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment Title</th>
<th>Date Due in LiveText</th>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking Skills</td>
<td>To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas though written, oral, and visual communication.</td>
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<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>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.</td>
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<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>
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**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 think critically 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

**Academic Integrity:**
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)

**DO NOT CHEAT I WILL FAIL YOU FOR THE ASSIGNMENT AND DROP YOU A LETTER GRADE!!**

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)**
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
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). 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 iCare program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

End of syllabus notes:

1. I will not grade ANYTHING sent to my SFA email address that is why it is not in the syllabus.

2. I do not know the exact dates of your exams so don’t ask. When I know you will know, I promise.

3. All Current events are due at Midnight that means 12:00am. At 12:01 it is late and at 12:05 it will not be graded.

4. Current events will not be posted until the entire class has turned it in. This means that Group 1 will have to wait on Group 2.

5. USE THE DANG SYLLABUS BEFORE ASKING SILLY QUESTIONS!

Course Outline

Section 1
- Constitutions
- The US Legislature
- The Texas Legislature

EXAM 1

Section 2
- The Executive
- The Governor
- Bureaucracy
- TX. Bureaucracy

EXAM 2

Section 3
- Judiciary
- TX Judiciary
- Local Government

EXAM 3

Section 4
- Economic Policy
- Social Policy
- Foreign Policy

FINAL

142 008- May 11 8am-10am

CURRENT EVENT DATES

Group 1- 1/25, 2/8, 2/22, 3/7, 3/28, 4/11, 4/25

Group 2- 2/1, 2/15, 2/29, 3/21, 4/4, 4/18, 5/2