This course introduces you to the way political scientists study American political processes and institutions, providing the engaged, critically thinking student with a solid foundation for understanding American politics, U.S. political history, and politics more generally—the questions asked, the answers offered and challenged. No prior background is assumed although it is recognized class members have varied backgrounds and experiences.

In general, each of the first five exams constitutes just over 10 percent of your course grade. The sixth exam counts for just over 20 percent of the course grade. The research papers count for about 7 and 13 percent. Class participation (in part, unscheduled quizzes on the assigned reading to reward those who do and understand the readings) constitutes roughly 5 percent of your course grade. You will be evaluated primarily on your familiarity with and understanding of the assigned readings and material covered in class but also in part on your knowledge and understanding of the current U.S. politics, particularly (but not exclusively) in connection with the beginnings of the new Obama administration as well as the Texas legislative session.

Ultimately your grade turns on my impression of how well you have done in this course. What impresses me? Think of this course as your job and approach it with professionalism. Take this course seriously and let me know that. How? Attend class; be prepared for class—read the assignments for understanding, be ready to ask and answer questions, take an informed role in discussions; arrive early to class; remain for the entire class; be attentive in class without distracting me or your classmates with cell phones, text messages, side conversations, bathroom trips, coming-and-going, and so forth; take exams when scheduled and complete assignments when due; demonstrate your understanding on the exams, quizzes, and research paper assignments. Gadgets of mass distraction—Blackberries, laptops, cell phones, iPhones, etc.—are not for class use—not even for note-taking.

Come prepared and ready to participate. An unexcused absence will adversely affect your course grade, as will being present but unprepared to participate, or participating without being prepared. After three unexcused absences I drop you from the course. An excused absence is almost exclusively restricted to religious reasons, certain university activities, documented medical conditions, or documented family emergencies. Absences for religious reasons or for university extracurricular activities require communication with me in advance.

If you have a disability that requires an accommodation, see me in advance.

Each of you must meet with me for 15 minutes in the first weeks of the semester. Sign up for an appointment time during the first day in class. Be punctual.

All readings should be on reserve in Fondren. The books ordered through the bookstore include Kernell, Jacobson, and Kousser, *The Logic of American Politics, 4th edition*; and Machiavelli, *The Prince* (U. Chicago Press edition). Also required but not listed below: you are expected to supplement the listed readings (including MSNBC First Read) with media accounts of ongoing U.S. politics. There may be changes in the readings and assignments below. This course requires use of Blackboard at [https://courses.smu.edu/webapps/login/](https://courses.smu.edu/webapps/login/).

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214-768-2529  
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office hours W 10-11:30 a.m. and by appointment

Readings provide background on topics covered in class lectures and discussions, so read the assignments *before* the class for which they are assigned.

Throughout the semester read MSNBC “First Read: First Thoughts” each day that it appears [http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/]; also follow other media coverage to become and remain informed about American politics generally, the Texas legislative session, and the new Obama administration.

T, Jan 20 * Introduction * Logic of American Politics, Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c.1
Th, Jan 22 * Machiavelli, *The Prince I*; read it in its entirety, then re-read and review for the next two classes
T, Jan 27 * Machiavelli, *The Prince II*
Th, 1/29 * no class, SMU follows Monday schedule
T, Feb 3 * Machiavelli, *The Prince* III

**Th, 2/5** *Exam 1—objective only, covering 1/20-2/3 readings (40 minutes); remainder of class will consider the beginnings of the Obama administration*

**F, Feb 6 * 4pm * 750 word paper analyzing the Machiavellian concepts of virtù and fortuna due by e-mail (HStanley@SMU.edu)*

T, 2/10 * Constitution, Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 2

Th, 2/12 * Public Opinion I: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 10; guest lecture: Working in the White House, Shaylyn Hynes and Torrie Miller

T, 2/17 * Public Opinion II

Th, 2/19 * Political Parties: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 12

T, 2/24 * Political Parties II

**Th, 2/26** *Exam 2—objective covering 2/5-2/24 readings and cumulative essays (40 minutes); Voting, Campaigns, & Elections I, c. 11

T, 3/3 * Voting, Campaigns, & Elections II

Th, 3/5 * Congress I: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 6

* T, 3/10 & Th, 3/12 – no class (Spring Break)

T, 3/17 * Congress II

**Th, 3/19** *Exam 3—objective covering 2/24-3/17 readings (40 minutes); remainder of class will consider… * The Presidency I: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 7

T, 3/24 * The Presidency II

Th, 3/26 * The Bureaucracy: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 8

T, 3/31 * The Federal Judiciary: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 9

**Th, 4/2** *Exam 4—objective covering 3/19-3/31 readings and cumulative essays (40 minutes); class ends with the exam

T, 4/7 * Federalism: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 3

Th, 4/9 * Civil Rights: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 4

T, 4/14 * Civil Liberties: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 5

Th, 4/16 * Federalism, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties

**T, 4/21** *Exam 5—objective covering 4/7-4/16 readings (40 minutes); remainder of class will consider… * The News Media I: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 14

Th, 4/23 * The News Media II

**F, 4/24 * 1,250 word analytical assessment of the first 100 days of the Obama administration due by e-mail (HStanley@SMU.edu)*

T, 4/28 * Interest Groups: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 13

Th, 4/30 * The Prospects for Institutional Reform: Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser, c. 15

**M, 5/11** Exam 6—objective covering 4/21-4/30 readings and cumulative essays (80 minutes), 11.30 a.m. - 12:50 p.m.