**Chapter – The Judicial System in Texas**

This chapter is about the Texas judiciary. We have all seen television programs about the legal system and I find that when people read about the judicial system “for real” they find it fascinating and sometimes different than they have seen on television if they are not in the legal field. Have fun reading this chapter and let me know if you have any questions! I think you will enjoy this chapter.

For your post on this chapter, tell us three (3) things you learned in this chapter that you found fascinating and why.

**Chapter – Political Socialization, Political Behavior, and Public Opinion**

In this chapter you will explore the process by which people gain their political values and learn their political viewpoints. You will also learn about public opinion and the role it has in Texas politics and with our government. For your post on this chapter, tell us the three (3) things that have shaped your political socialization / behavior the most and fully explain why and how.

**Chapter – The Party System in Texas**

In this chapter you are reading about political parties. Although I am sure everyone has heard the term “political party,” I think you will still learn a lot in reading this chapter.

For your post on this chapter, write about what sort of party you would form if you were to form a political party. Determine what your characteristics will be and define your party platform. We live in Texas so you are forming this party in Texas. That said, all parties start somewhere so your goal may be to keep your party focused on Texas issues and effect change here or you can start it here and your goal may be to take it to a national level. It is up to you but you are starting it here in Texas. Will you form a single issue political party here because you feel so strongly about one issue you think it warrants a political party to address it? If so, what is your issue and fully explain it and what your party will do “for” the issue. Or will you form a political party that takes a stand on more than one issue or many issues. If so, explain that to us.

Some Things to Think About When Forming Your Party:

* What is a political party?
* Four major functions of political parties:
	+ Nominating candidates to office
	+ Structuring the voting choice in elections
	+ Proposing alternative government programs
	+ Coordinating the actions of government officials
* Will you form a large party that takes a stand on many issues or will you form a small party that has one issue that is meaningful to them?
	+ Large parties like the Democratic Party and the Republican Party have platforms that encompass major issues – in Texas members of larger parties have platforms that address, at least, the following – see page 106 in your book for examples of the Texas Democratic and Republican Party Platforms:
		- Stronger states’ rights vs. stronger national rights
		- Education
		- Taxes – should taxes be more or less – should you put higher taxes on things like cigarettes and alcohol and lower taxes on food?
		- Abortion
		- Death Penalty
		- Immigration
		- Citizenship
		- Minimum Wage
		- Healthcare
	+ Smaller parties may take on one major issue like the following and hope to gain momentum in a certain issue area. Remember that smaller parties can actually impact major change – smaller parties may not survive themselves “forever” but they can make the larger parties have to contend with the issue they bring to the forefront of voters’ minds. For example:
		- A party that is totally focused on the environment.
		- A party for the Animals (gained 2 seats in the Dutch Parliament in 2006).
		- A party totally focused on immigration and has platform for how to fix it.
		- A party totally focused on healthcare for all people and a plan on how to get it.
		- A farmer/labor party where the goal is to promote the interest of farmers and growers.
		- A “splinter party” that splinters off from a larger party because you disagree with an issue – i.e. you identify with the democrats but really want to be pro-life so you have democratic party ideals but are pro-life.
* EXAMPLE of a party that started on a grassroots level and has grown much larger: Green Party
	+ Example of a small party that started small and is growing in momentum.
	+ Grassroots parties that are created in classrooms just like this can gain momentum and grow and change the way people think and vote.
	+ Started in Denver, Colorado, in 2000.
	+ Focus overall on the environment, social justice, human rights, peace.
	+ Here is their platform now – taken from their website [www.gp.org](http://www.gp.org). Visit the website if you want more details on each of their “10 Key Values” below:
1. GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY
2. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
3. ECOLOGICAL WISDOM
4. NON-VIOLENCE
5. DECENTRALIZATION
6. COMMUNITY-BASED ECONOMICS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE
7. FEMINISM AND GENDER EQUITY
8. RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY
9. PERSONAL AND GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY
10. FUTURE FOCUS AND SUSTAINABILITY

**Chapter – Elections, Campaigns, and Voting in Texas**

In this chapter you are reading about voting and elections in Texas. There is a lot of valuable information in this chapter about our election system and how it works. A discussion on voting and elections is not complete without forming an opinion on negative advertising. Some people think negative advertising works and reveals important facts about candidates that they do not want you to know. Some people think negative advertising distracts from the real issues in the campaign and frustrates voters. Form an opinion about negative advertising as you study this chapter and think about it in light of the information you are learning as you read.

For your post on this chapter go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and do a search for “negative campaign ads” and/or “negative political ads” and watch some negative campaign ads. For your post – let us know what you saw and what you thought about it – how do you feel about negative advertising? Would you run a negative ad against your opponent if you were running, do you think they work, do you think they do not work (i.e. makes the person look bad so can “backfire” on the person who runs it), what are your overall thoughts on negative political advertisements.

I know this is a Texas class and you will not only see Texas ads but for purposes of this class I want you to get an idea of the ads that are out there – not just ones in Texas. Keep in mind – you are just seeing a 30 second “blip” of a campaign by watching the ads you watch – but many voters are not well-versed in the candidates and this could have been the only thing they saw – so your impressions of the candidates (both the one who ran the ad AND the candidate the ad is about) are important. In addition to your own research on ads, there are three ads I want you to go to YouTube and make sure you see:

1. The Daisy Ad – this ad is considered to be the most controversial political advertisement ever made. It was run by Presidential incumbent Lyndon Johnson against his opponent Barry Goldwater during the 1964 election. Goldwater was considered a proponent of using nuclear weapons and the Johnson campaign wanted to capitalize on that and the people in America disagreed with it. Make sure you watch this ad and see what you think about it.
2. Go to YouTube and type “Wendy Davis Wheelchair Ad” – this ad was considered by most political scientists to be the most controversial political advertisement shown in the last Texas gubernatorial race.
3. Go to YouTube and type in “Joni Earnst Squeal ad” – this is really a negative ad but a political ad you might find funny!