

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT SYLLABUS

Course Name: **AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**
Course Number: **POLS 2305**
Credit Hours: **3 Hours**
Semester & Year: **FALL 2017**
Department: **POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT**
Class Time: **2 – 3:20 pm**
Class Location: **CHSS 242B**
Instructor: **KELLEY BROWN**

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to American government and a broad overview of how our political system operates. Its primary objective is to examine how political scientists approach the study of American politics and government. This involves moving beyond mere description of our governmental system by employing a theoretical framework designed to analyze and explain American political behaviors and outcomes in terms of what is known as the "**Five I's**": the **Individuals** involved, their respective **Interests**, the nature of their **Interactions**, the **Institutions** that structure those interactions, and the development of these elements over **Time**.

Learning Objectives:

This course has the following three general learning objectives:

- 1) Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classification, methods, and trends) about the institutions of American government, political behavior, and civic engagement.
- 2) Gaining analytical knowledge about fundamental principles, generalizations, theories, and philosophical foundations of political behavior in the United States.
- 3) Gaining knowledge of civic responsibility to engage effectively in American democracy.

Required Materials

American Politics Today Bianco & Canon 4th Edition
ISBN 978-0-393-93700-8

Professor Contact Information

Professor: Kelley Brown, MA
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TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

| Units | | |
|-------|---------------------|--|
| | Thursday 24 Aug | Syllabus Review, Five I's |
| | Tuesday 29 Aug | <i>Reading Quiz 1 – (CH 1)</i> |
| | Thursday 31 Aug | Political Culture and Ideology |
| | Tuesday 5 Sept | <i>Reading Quiz 2 – Constitution (CH 2)</i> |
| | Thursday 7 Sept | Constitution |
| | Tuesday 12 Sept | Bureaucracy |
| | Thursday 14 Sept | <i>Reading Quiz Three – Federalism (CH 3)</i> |
| | Tuesday 19 Sept | Federalism |
| | Thursday 21 Sept | EXAM ONE |
| | Tuesday 26 Sept | <i>Reading Quiz Four – Civil Liberties (CH 4)</i> |
| | Thursday 28 Sept | Civil Liberties |
| | Tuesday 3 October | <i>Reading Quiz Five – Civil Rights (CH 5)</i> |
| | Thursday 5 October | Civil Rights |
| | Tuesday 10 October | Media in Politics |
| | Thursday 12 October | Interest Groups |
| | Tuesday 17 October | <i>Reading Quiz Six - Political Parties (CH 8)</i> |
| | Thursday 19 October | EXAM TWO |
| | Tuesday 24 October | <i>Reading Quiz Seven – Congress (CH 11)</i> |
| | Thursday 26 October | Congress |
| | Tuesday 31 October | Elections |
| | Thursday 2 Nov | <i>Reading Quiz Eight – Presidency (CH 12)</i> |
| | Tuesday 7 Nov | Presidency |
| | Thursday 9 Nov | <i>Reading Quiz Nine – Supreme Court (CH 14)</i> |
| | Tuesday 14 Nov | Supreme Court |
| | Thursday 16 Nov | EXAM THREE |
| | 20 – 24 Nov | THANKSGIVING |
| | Tuesday 28 Nov | <i>Reading Quiz Ten – Foreign Policy (CH 17)</i> |
| | Thursday 30 Nov | Fog of War |
| | Tuesday 5 December | OPTIONAL FINAL EXAM |
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Course Grades & Assignments

Grades

Course grades are based on the following:

| | |
|-----|-----------------|
| 20% | Reading Quizzes |
| 20% | Attendance |
| 15% | Exam 1 |
| 15% | Exam 2 |
| 15% | Exam 3 |
| 15% | Exam 4 |

Reading Quizzes

Reading is a critical part of this course so that you can gain factual knowledge prior to class lectures, discussions, and activities related to the topic. To keep you accountable for the reading, 20% of your final course grade is comprised of your performance on reading quizzes. There are 10 reading quizzes.

There is an assigned reading and an accompanying quiz each week, as shown in the Course Schedule. The quizzes are taken online on Blackboard and are due by class time each Monday. They are comprised of 10 multiple-choice questions related to the required reading. They are “open book,” which means you may use the reading to answer the questions. Grades for reading quizzes are automated and should appear in the Blackboard gradebook immediately after completion.

Exams

There will be three non-cumulative exams in the course. Each exam counts for 15% of your final course grade; collectively the four exams comprise 60% of your final course grade. The scheduled dates of these exams are noted in the Course Schedule. They are comprised of 33 multiple-choice questions. You should bring a pencil and green scantron to class to take each exam. Grades will be processed for exams within one week and posted on Blackboard.

Optional Final Exam

A final exam is scheduled for **Tuesday December 6th**. It is cumulative – covering all material in the course – and comprised of 50 multiple-choice questions. The final exam is optional and will replace your lowest exam grade only if you make a higher grade. Final exam grades will be processed by December 8th.

Grading Policies

Make-Up Exams and Assignments

Make-up exams and assignments will be given *only* if you have an excused absence or documented emergency. Excused absences include: participation in a university-affiliated activity that requires you to miss class, a religious holiday (and travel related to that holiday), death or major illness in your immediate family, illness of a dependent family member, participation in legal proceedings that require your presence, injury or illness too severe to allow you to attend class, or required participation in military duties.

To be excused, you should notify me in writing (an e-mail message is acceptable) prior to the date of absence if possible. In cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. accident or emergency), you should provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence. If needed, you must provide additional documentation substantiating the reason for the absence within one week of the last date of the absence. Make-up exams and assignments must be completed on the day agreed upon by you and me. Extended absences (missing more than three days) should be processed per Student Guidelines; see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/absence.html> .

Late Assignments

Late assignments are *not* accepted. In the event of an emergency or excused absence (per the policy listed above), you may be given additional days to complete the assignment without penalty if we discuss it and agree that more time is needed.

Extra Credit

Extra credit is not routinely given in this course. If there is an extra credit opportunity, it will be announced in class and on Blackboard in advance.

Final Course Grade

Your final course grade is comprised of: 20% Reading Quizzes, 20% Attendance, 15% Exam 1, 15% Exam 2, 15% Exam 3, and 15% Exam 4 (see "Course Grades and Assignments" above for details). Final course letter grades are assigned as follows:

A = 90.0 – 100.0

B = 80.0 – 89.9

C = 70.0 – 79.9

D = 60.0 – 69.9

F = 59.9 and below

No extra credit is offered at the end of the term. Nor are grades rounded. The letter grade reported at the end of the term corresponds to the grade you earned.

Classroom Policies

Attendance

You are expected to *attend class and be on time*. A portion of your course grade reflects your attendance and participation in class, and, therefore, it is imperative that you attend class to be successful in this course. If you have scheduling conflicts, please see me to make suitable arrangements. See the Make-Up Exams and Assignments policy above for the full list of excused absences.

Preparation for Class

You are expected to be prepared for class. This means completing the assigned reading and accompanying reading quiz *before* the corresponding class meeting. If you are struggling with the course reading, I encourage you to visit the Reading Center for help: <http://www.shsu.edu/~rdg.www/>.

Class Decorum

During class you are expected to behave respectfully and contribute to a positive learning environment. This means that you turn off your cellphone ringer and refrain from text messaging in class. Also, during class discussion, you are expected to be respectful of others' opinions and open to a diversity of ideas. *If you do not comply with these expectations, you will be asked to leave class and you will not be given the opportunity to make up any assignments for that class meeting.*

Course Communication

All emails sent to me directly (ashley.ross@shsu.edu) or via Blackboard email will be responded to within 48 hours during the work week (Monday-Friday). Emails sent on the weekend (after Friday at 5pm until Monday at 8am) will be responded to the following Monday. Please be mindful of this email policy when meeting course deadlines.

When communicating with me or your classmates (via email or in Blackboard), *you are expected to use professional standards, including proper salutations, capitalization/grammar*. This means you write complete sentences and do not use "text" lingo! You may consider writing your email or discussion board response in Word, to check for spelling and grammar, then paste it into your electronic communication. See the below email for an example of a professional email.

Example Email – use professional standards in course communication

Dear Professor Brown,
I am in Section 7 of your POLS 2306 course. I have a scheduling conflict with Exam 2. I'm a member of the Arts Council, and my organization is taking a trip that day. I can provide a letter confirming this. Could I take the exam on a different date?

Thank you,
Student Doe

University Policies

Student with Disabilities

Sam Houston State University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. The Counseling Center may be reached at (936) 294-3786. Once registered, please meet with me as soon as possible so that we can make all needed accommodations in the class. All disclosures of disabilities are kept confidential. For more information, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/disability/>.

Academic Dishonesty

You are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach and to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Students found to engage in academic dishonesty in any form are subject to disciplinary action. University faculty and representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. For the university policy, see: www.shsu.edu/syllabus.

Student Absences on Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20..." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For more information, see: www.shsu.edu/syllabus.

Visitors in the Classroom

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office. For more information, see: www.shsu.edu/syllabus

Student Resources

Being a successful student requires a balance in life. If you are dealing with an issue that affects your academic performance, please contact me so that we can figure out what you need to be successful in this class. In the meantime, here are some links that you might find helpful:

Academic Advising: http://www.shsu.edu/~sam_www/

Counseling Services: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/counseling/>

Veterans' Resource Center: http://www.shsu.edu/~reg_www/VRC/VRC_VetSuccess.html

International Students' Resources: http://www.shsu.edu/~int_www/current/

Newton Gresham Library: <http://library.shsu.edu/>

Blackboard Tutorials: <http://ondemand.blackboard.com/students.htm>

Reading and Writing Center: http://www.shsu.edu/~rdg_www/