

## **POLS 2305 04: American Government**

**3 Credits**

**Fall 2017**

**CHSS 252**

**11:00-12:30 T/TH**

Professor: Dr. Heather Evans

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Office Hours: 12:30-1:30 pm T/TH and by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course deals with the origin, development, and Constitution of the American governmental system, citizenship and civil rights, suffrage, the national party system, the national executive, organization of congress, and the national judiciary. This course meets the legislative requirement for a course on the Constitution of the United States. Through our time in class, students will gain a better understanding of the American Government system and how citizens can make changes in our society. In this class, you will not only learn knowledge and skills, but also use those skills and knowledge to make a difference in your community. This experience, it is hoped, will help you see yourself as a positive force in this world and deepen your understanding of your role as a citizen.

### **Course Objectives**

This course provides an overview of American national government. In this class, we will explore the rules, institutions, participants, and products of American politics.

Students enrolled in POLS 2305 will:

- 1) Gain factual and analytical knowledge of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations
- 2) Gain knowledge of civic responsibility and gain the ability to engage effectively in American democracy.

### **Required Purchases:**

#### **Book**

The reading for the class comes from:

"Keeping the Republic - Brief Edition" Christine Barbour and Gerald Wright, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition.

For the KTR textbook, be sure you get the paperback Brief edition, not the hardcover (If you have a deal on the hardcover version and want to use it, go ahead. It's the same book with a couple of extra chapters we won't use).

#### **Top Hat**

We will be using the Top Hat classroom response system in class. You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or through text message.

An email invitation will be sent to you (or has been sent to you) by email, but if you don't receive this email, you can register by simply visiting our course website:  
<https://app.tophat.com/e/338591> Note: our Course Join Code is 338591

Top Hat will require a paid subscription, and a full breakdown of all subscription options available can be found here: [www.tophat.com/pricing](http://www.tophat.com/pricing). Top Hat strongly suggest you purchase the 1 year or 5 year license since there are no upgrade options for the single semester.

You can visit the Top Hat Overview (<https://success.tophat.com/s/article/ka25A0000007GSpQAM/Student-Top-Hat-Overview-and-Getting-Started-Guide>) within the Top Hat Success Center which outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as providing a brief overview to get you up and running on the system.

Top Hat support: Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, due to the fact that they require specific user information to troubleshoot these issues, please contact their Support Team directly by way of email ([support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com)), the in app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

### **Attendance**

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student at Sam Houston State University. Regular attendance is important because we will cover information in class that is not found in the texts, and this extra information will appear on the exams. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to become informed on what was covered in class. Please get class notes from a fellow student. It is not my policy to give out my lecture notes. I do not take formal attendance each day, but there will be Top Hat questions available that you will miss by not being in class.

### **Grading**

Grades in this course will be based on four exams (worth 100 points each), in-class Top Hat Questions (worth 100 points), and two written assignments (worth 50 points each).

Students are expected to read the materials assigned in conjunction with class lectures, participate in class discussions, and demonstrate their comprehension of the material in writing.

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|---------------------|------------|
| • Exam 1            | 100 Points |
| • Exam 2            | 100 Points |
| • Exam 3            | 100 Points |
| • Exam 4            | 100 Points |
| • Top Hat Questions | 100 Points |
| • Paper 1           | 50 Points  |
| • Paper 2           | 50 Points  |

## Exams

The exams will be multiple choice, true/false and I.D. type questions, drawn from the readings and the lectures. The exams are designed to keep you current in the reading and to help you keep track of the detailed material that you will learn in this class. These questions will be descriptive and analytic. That is, they may ask something as simply descriptive as how many members are in the House of Representatives, or they may ask you to draw some analytic conclusions about the respective functions of the House and the Senate, or to determine the importance or significance of an institution or policy. Memorization alone will not suffice for these quizzes; you will have to think about the material as well. I would suggest visiting <http://college.cqpress.com/sites/ktr6e/Home.aspx> which has practice quizzes as well as flashcards that will help you review the book's key terms.

## Make-Up Exams

Make-up exams will be granted ONLY to students that can provide formal documentation to the Dean of Students. If you miss an exam due to a death in the family or if you are extremely ill, please take your documentation over to the Dean's office and they will verify your absence.

## Papers

There are two short written exercises (papers) in this course as well. **The first paper is due by September 29th at 11:59pm, and the second paper is due by October 27th at 11:59pm.** Details on these two papers is given on the "Papers" tab on the left hand side of the Blackboard page.

\*Note: I do accept late work but there will be a 5 point deduction in your grade for each day the paper is late. Since the papers are each worth 50 points, that means if you turn it in one day late, the highest grade you can receive is a 45. I will accept papers up to one-week late.

## Top Hat Points

The "Top Hat Questions" will be presented during class lectures throughout the semester. There will be more than 100 questions presented over the course of the semester (around 200), and each is worth one point. Some of the questions will require a correct answer to earn credit, while others will have no "correct" answer and anyone answering will receive credit. You may earn a maximum of 115 of these points over the course of the semester (15 of which will be considered "bonus points"). There are no make-up opportunities for these points.

## Scored Scantron Sheets

Four exam scores will be entered for each student. There is the possibility that a data entry error may be made when entering exam scores. Thus students must keep their scored scantrons until final grades are assigned. A student cannot challenge their final grade unless he or she has copies of all scantron sheets.

## Instructor Evaluations

Students will be given the opportunity to complete a course/instructor evaluation form near the end of the semester.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official 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 which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

### *Wikipedia/Copying from the Internet*

In the last few semesters cheating from Wikipedia and the Internet has become commonplace. If any student is found to have cheated from any online source, they will receive a zero on their assignment.

**For other university policies (religious holy days, disabilities, visitors in the classroom), please see the following link: <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>**

### **Final Grades**

Course grades will be calculated according to the following scale: A = 540 points or more; B = 480 to 539.999 points; C = 420 to 479.999 points; D = 360 to 419.999 points; F = less than 360 points. Once the fourth exam has been administered, final grades will be posted on Blackboard and submitted to the University. Unless you have evidence that I made an error in the computation of your grade, these grades cannot be changed. If you think I miscalculated your final average, you have one day to send me further information.

### **Extra points of interest**

No squirrels allowed ☺

Not buying the book is not a valid excuse for not taking an exam.

Spending the night in jail is a valid excuse for missing an exam, if you can provide proper documentation.

Having your parents visit is not a valid excuse for not taking an exam.

I do not “give” grades. You “earn” them.

Do not plagiarize your assignments. I will find it and you will receive a zero.

Opening your notebook during the exam or having your notes out where you can see them = 0 for exam.

Texting during an exam = 0 for that exam.

## Course Schedule

Part 1	<b>Introduction to Politics, Government, and Culture</b> Read: KTR Chapter 1  <b>Politics of the Founding and the Constitution</b> Read: KTR Chapter 2
<b>Exam 1</b>	<b>September 14<sup>th</sup></b>
Part 2	<b>Federalism</b> Read: KTR Chapter 3  <b>Civil Liberties and Civil Rights</b> Read: KTR Chapter 4 & 5  <b>Public Opinion</b> Read: KTR Chapter 10
<b>Exam 2</b>	<b>October 12<sup>th</sup></b>
Part 3	<b>U.S. Congress</b> Read KTR Chapter 6  <b>The Executive Branch</b> Read: KTR Chapter 7  <b>The Courts</b> Read: KTR Chapter 9
<b>Exam 3</b>	<b>November 2<sup>nd</sup></b>
Part 4	<b>Interest Groups</b> Read: KTR Ch. 11  <b>Parties and Elections</b> Read: KTR Chapter 11 and 12  <b>Media</b> Read: KTR Chapter 13
<b>Exam 4</b>	<b>Exam Week –December 7<sup>th</sup> – 12pm</b>