

POLS (Political Science) 2305 (3 credit hours)—American Government

Fall 2017—MWF 10.00-10.50 CHSS 252

Dr. McIntyre

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Office Hours: M, W: 2.00-3.00; T: 12.00-2.00; or by appointment

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to American government and the American political system. The course begins with a general analysis of the framework of American government, and also examines subjects such as political parties, public opinion, governmental institutions, American federalism, and the principles of American constitutionalism.

Course Objectives

Given that this is an introductory course, the primary goal is to gain factual and analytical knowledge of American political culture, focusing specifically on governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and the various theoretical justifications for American institutions. Secondary goals include gaining knowledge of civic responsibility, gaining the ability to engage effectively in American democracy, the development of critical thinking, and the cultivation of the study skills requisite for success in undergraduate classes. We will accomplish these objectives in the context of studying:

- the origins and development of American political culture;
- the structure and function of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the U.S government;
- the American electoral process, including the role of parties, media, and interest groups;
- American civil and political rights and duties;
- And the American policy process, including the role of parties, media, and interest groups.

Texts

Required text:

Lowi, Ginsbert, Shepsle, Ansolabehere, *American Government: Power and Purpose, Brief 14th Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2017).

Recommended texts:

**A textbook on American history and a textbook on modern/contemporary world history (the library has copies of all of these in its reference section and there are online versions as well).

Course Requirements

All members of the class are expected to attend all sessions of the class, and to have completed the assigned readings during the week on which they are listed. Attendance is important because it is closely correlated with academic success. Having the readings done ahead of time is the one of the easiest and most effective ways of preparing for the daily lectures and occasional class discussions.

There will be three examinations during the course of the term and a comprehensive final exam. I will drop the lowest grade of the three in-class examinations. Because of this, ***there will be no make-up exams except under the most extraordinary circumstances (e.g. death in the family, etc.). Students who are aware that they will miss an exam should see me about taking it before the normal test date.***

The tests will be comprised of objective questions (e.g. true/false, multiple choice, etc.), and each student will be required to bring a Scantron to class on the day of scheduled tests. The questions will be taken from the course readings and the lectures. ***There will be no make-up final exam except under the most extraordinary circumstances (e.g. death in the family, etc.). Students who are aware that they will miss the final should see me about taking it before the normal test date.***

There will be no extra credit work assigned.

Make-up policy

See course requirements for make-up policy.

Evaluation

These requirements will contribute to the overall course grade in the following proportions:

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Exams during term: | 50% |
| Final exam: | 50% |

Grades (Examination Average)

90-100—A
80-89—B
70-79—C
60-69—D
Everything else—F

Course Outline

Part I: The Framework of American Government

Weeks 1 and 2. Politics, Democracy, and The American People Ch. 1

Week 3. From Colonialism to Constitutionalism Ch. 2

Week 4. The Federal System Ch. 3

First exam

Part II: The Three Branches of Government

Weeks 5 and 6. Congress Ch. 5

Weeks 6 and 7. The Presidency Ch. 6

Weeks 7 and 8. The Bureaucracy Ch. 7

Weeks 8 and 9. The Judiciary Ch. 8

Second exam

Part III: Politics and Democracy in the United States

Week 10. Public Opinion and the Media Ch. 9

Week 11. Elections Ch. 10

Week 12. Political Parties Ch. 11

Week 13. Interest Groups Ch. 12

Week 14. Thanksgiving—no class

Week 15. Third exam and review for final.

Final Exam—Monday, 4 December 2017 at 10.30 am.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism or unauthorized collaboration (e.g. copying answers on an exam, using 'cheat sheets', gaining access to an exam prior to its administration, using computers or other electronic devices to access answers) will not be tolerated, and will be reported to the appropriate honor board. Such academic dishonesty will result in immediate disciplinary action by the professor, which could involve failing the examination alone or the whole course. Students who are caught cheating are also subject to further disciplinary action from the university which could lead to academic probation, suspension, or expulsion.

Classroom Conduct

Students are expected to treat each other and the professor with respect and courtesy. Cell phones and other electronic or distracting items should not be visible or audible (keep in pockets, purses, or bags and on silent).

If you are bothered or distracted by other students during class, inform me and I will address the problem.

Students with Disabilities Policy

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. 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. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential.

NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center. *Student requests for accommodations must be initiated by the student. A student seeking accommodations should go to the Counseling Center and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in a timely manner.*

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.

Caveat Emptor

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

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