

STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO READ THIS ENTIRE SYLLABUS

Course Number: POLS 2305 **Course Title:** American Government

Semester, Year: Fall 2017 **Section:** 19 **CRN:** 84383 **Credit Hours:** 3

Class Meetings: Mondays–Wednesday-Fridays, 01:00 – 01:50 pm, CHSS 252.

Professor: R. M. Bittick, M.P.A., Ph.D. **Office:** CHSS Bldg., Room 483

Contact Information: **Email:** rmb004@shsu.edu **Phone:** 936-294-4105.

Office Hours: I regularly maintain office hours Mondays-Wednesdays-Fridays, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm (“Walk-in,” no appointment necessary). I am also willing to meet with students by appointment at other mutually agreeable times. My policy is to respond to email messages weekdays within 48 hours of receipt, or by Monday for messages sent on Friday or over a weekend. Be sure to put “**POLS 2305**” in the subject heading of your email message.

Class Website: Go to the SHSU main website [<http://www.shsu.edu/>], click on Campus Tools at the top of the page, and click “Blackboard” from that menu. Students are required to access this website before each class.

Course Description: the following is from the SHSU University Catalog:

POLS 2305. American Government. 3 Hours.

This course offers an overview of American government at the national level. Topics include the origin and evolution of the U.S. Constitution, political behavior and attitudes, political parties, interest groups, the media, and the three branches of government - Congress, the Executive Branch, and the Judiciary. A goal of the course is to equip students with the knowledge to engage in political and civic life.

Welcome to POLS 2305! This course is designed for students to learn about the United States national government. Students are introduced to critical political ideas, issues, and events in US politics and government that impact their daily lives. In doing this, students will:

- Gain factual knowledge of and analyze United States governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, including their political and philosophical foundations
- Gain knowledge of civic responsibility and gain the ability to effectively engage in American democracy.

Course Goals: With the above in mind, three goals for students in this class are:

1. **US Constitution:** to understand the background, and the elements and content of the US Constitution.
2. **US National Government:** to identify and understand the branches and functions of the Federal government, the powers granted to each branch by the US Constitution, and the checks and balances existent in their relationship with each other.
3. **US Citizenship:** to know and relate the rights of responsibilities of US Citizenship to their own lives.

Learning Outcomes: to achieve the above goals, the following course objectives will be pursued:

Knowledge: at the completion of this course, students will be able to...

- Identify key ideas that make up the foundational ideas (i.e. philosophical foundations) of the US Constitution;
- Distinguish and classify the sections of the US Constitution, including:
 - Civil Liberties and Civil Rights;
 - Terms of office for the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary for national political officeholders;
 - Timeframe for sessions for the national legislature.
- Categorize and summarize the essential parts and functions of US Federal government institutions (e.g. the Executive, Legislature, Courts, and their Administrative Agencies);
- Summarize the relationship between the different branches of government concerning checks and balances;
- Understand the principles elements of Federalism and the Intergovernmental Relationships between US Federal, State, and local governments;
- Identify and contrast the major political parties and interest groups active in US politics.
- Appraise key judicial decisions made by the national and state courts.

Competencies & Related Skills: at the completion of this course, students will be able to...

- Relate how US Federal government affect their daily lives;
- Analyze basic contemporary political issues; &
- Apply skills in critical thinking to public policy debates.

Values: at the completion of this course, students will be able to appreciate...

- Democratic values and representative form of government, including civil liberties, equal rights, free press, toleration of diverse opinions in the political arena;
- Roles and responsibilities of the American citizen to participate in the democratic political process;
- Diversity of interests that exist in the contemporary American political arena; &
- Complexity of contemporary public policy issues in American politics.

Assessment: Exams, Lectures and Class Discussions.

Required Textbooks:

- Christine Barbour and Gerald D. Wright. ***Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, 7th Brief Edition**. Sage/CQ Press.
 - Paperback text: ISBN-13: 9781506349954; or,
 - Electronic text: go to https://www.amazon.com/Keeping-Republic-Citizenship-American-Politics-ebook/dp/B01N1K0QAC/ref=mt_kindle?_encoding=UTF8&me= ; or,
 - Publisher's website: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/keeping-the-republic/book244908> .

NOTE: I may assign other material for reading throughout the term that will either be handed out in class or linked in Blackboard.

Required Activities of Students:

- **Assigned Readings.** These are listed on the schedule. Since a lot of material must be covered this semester, you must plan ahead and schedule your reading time appropriately.
- **Attendance Policy.** ***Class attendance is mandatory.*** My lectures and class discussions supplement the assigned readings, and many exam questions come directly from my lectures. In addition, I reserve the right to adjust the class schedule and reading assignments as necessary. Consequently, you must consistently attend class to ensure you have the most recent information concerning the class schedule and reading assignments.
 - **If you are not able to attend class on a regular basis, you must drop the course and take it in a future semester. Students who miss more than four classes (unexcused) are subject to having 10% deducted in calculating their final grade.**
- **Exams.** Five (5) exams are scheduled for this class, and the top four (4) exam grades will count towards your final class grade. Exam #5 is a comprehensive exam. The format for each exam is a **quiz** with multiple choice, true/false, or matching questions. Students must bring a **Scantron** to class on the day of each exam.
 - **Make-up Policy: No make-up exams are allowed:** the dates for the exams are set at the times specified for you to gain the maximum learning benefit.

Grading Policy - the following coursework is required to complete this course:

<u>Required Assignments</u>	<u>Points</u>
Four (4) Exams at 100	
<u>points each:</u>	<u>400</u>
Total:	400

NOTE: No extra credit is offered.

Points based on the grade earned for each completed assignment are based on my evaluation of your work. The percentage scale for the final grade follows:

Percentage of Total Points Earned	Final Grade	Percentage of Total Points Earned	Final Grade
90% - 100%	A	60% – 69%	D
80% - 89%	B	59% and Below	F
70% - 79%	C	Below 0%	You need to take a basic math course.

Course Outline:

- Foundational Ideas: Parliament & the English Revolution, & Civil Societies
- Founding of the American Republic & the US Constitution
- Federalism & Intergovernmental Relations
- Civil Liberties & Civil Rights
- US Congress
- Presidency, Executive Bureaucracy, and US Foreign & Defense Policy
- US Judiciary
- Public Opinion
- Political Parties & Interest Groups
- Campaigns, Elections, and Voting

All university rules and procedures apply to this class.

Students must download and read the document, **Student Guidelines**, found at:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/policies/documents/Student+Guidelines+2013-2016.pdf>

The Academic Policy Manual can be accessed at:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/aps/aps-students.html>

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: The policy on **Academic Dishonesty** can be accessed at:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/728eec25-f780-4dcf-932c-03d68cade002.pdf>

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain 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.

STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY: The policy about **Student Absences on Religious Holy Days:** <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/0953c7d0-7c04-4b29-a3fc-3bf0738e87d8.pdf8>

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.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY: The policy concerning **Students with Disabilities** can be accessed at: <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/187f9029-a4c6-4fb4-aea9-2d501f2a60f3.pdf>

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.

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS: Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor IDEA evaluation online toward the end of the term.

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM:

Only registered students may regularly attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not disrupt the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:

Students shall turn off or silence their cell phones once class begins. Students shall not engage in phone conversations or text messaging during class. Students shall not engage in side conversations during class.

See next page

Schedule: The professor reserves the right to change the schedule. Changes will be linked to the class website in Blackboard.

Week	Dates	Topics – Readings - Assignments
1	Wednesday August 23 rd	Topics: Course Introduction Required Reading: Syllabus.
	Friday August 25 th	Topic: Foundational Ideas – Parliament & the English Revolution – prelude to the US Revolution. Required Readings: None. Take Good notes.
2	Monday August 28 th	Topic: Foundational Ideas – Parliament & the English Revolution – prelude to the US Revolution, continued . Required Readings: None. Take good notes.
	Wednesday August 30 th	Topic: Foundational Ideas – Civil Societies. Required Readings: None. Take good notes.
	Friday September 01 st	Topics: Power and Citizenship in American Politics. Required Readings: Barbour & Wright, ch. 1.
3	Monday September 04 th	Holiday – No Class
	Wednesday August 06 th	Topics: Power and Citizenship in American Politics. Required Readings: Barbour & Wright, ch. 1, continued .
	Friday August 08 th	Topics: The Politics of the American Founding. Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 2, Appendix 1: Articles of Confederation; and, Appendix 3, Constitution of the United States.
4	Monday September 11 th	Topics: The Politics of the American Founding, continued . Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 2, Appendix 1: Articles of Confederation; and, Appendix 3, Constitution of the United States.
	Wednesday September 13 th	
	Friday September 15 th	Topic: Exam #1.
5	Monday September 18 th	Topic: Federalism. Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 3.
	Wednesday September 20 th	
	Friday September 22 nd	

6	Monday September 25 th	Topic: Fundamental American Liberties (Civil Liberties). Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 4, & Appendix 3 U.S. Constitution Bill of Rights, pp. A-20 through A-22.
	Wednesday September 27 th	
	Friday September 29 th	
7	Monday October 02 nd	Topic: The Struggle for Equal Rights (Civil Rights). Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 5, & Appendix 3 U.S. Constitution Amendments.
	Wednesday October 04 th	
	Friday October 06 th	
8	Monday October 09 th	Topics: U.S. Congress. Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 6.
	Wednesday October 11 th	
	Friday October 13 th	
9	Monday October 16 th	Topic: Exam #2.
	Wednesday October 18 th	Topic: The U.S. Presidency. Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 7.
	Friday October 20 th	
10	Monday October 23 rd	Topic: The U.S. Presidency, continued. Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 7.
	Wednesday October 25 th	Topic: The U. S. Executive Branch - The Bureaucracy. Required Readings: Handout, and Barbour & Wright, ch. 8.
	Friday October 27 th	
11	Monday October 30 th	Topic: The U. S. Executive Branch - Foreign & Defense Policy. Required Readings: Handout, and Barbour & Wright, ch.

	Wednesday November 01 st	14, pp. 486-494.
	Friday November 03 rd	Topic: Exam #3.
12	Monday November 06 th	Topic: The American Legal System and the Courts (U.S. Judiciary). Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 9.
	Wednesday November 08 th	
	Friday November 10 th	
13	Monday November 13 th	Topic: Public Opinion. Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 10.
	Wednesday November 15 th	
	Friday November 17 th	Topic: Political Parties and Interest Groups. Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 11.
14	Monday November 20 th	Topic: Political Parties and Interest Groups, continued . Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 11.
	Wednesday November 22 nd	Holiday - No Class.
	Friday November 24 th	
15	Monday November 27 th	Topic: Voting, Campaigns & Elections. Required Reading: Barbour & Wright, ch. 12.
	Wednesday November 29 th	
	Friday December 01 st	Topic: Exam #4.
16	Finals Week, Wednesday December 06 th	Topic: Final Exam – Comprehensive. NOTE: Class is scheduled to meet 2:30 - 4:30 pm.