

COURSE SYLLABUS
POL 2305: .03 and .04
PRINCIPLES OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT – NATIONAL AND STATE
CREDIT HOURS: 3
SPRING, 2018

LOCATION OF CLASS MEETING: .03: CHSS 252; .04: CHSS 252

CLASS MEETING TIME: .03: 11-11:50 MWF; .04: 1-1:50 MWF

INSTRUCTOR: DR. WILLIAM E CARROLL

DEPARTMENT: POLITICAL SCIENCE

OFFICE LOCATION: CHSS 496F

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION: PHONE – 41469; pol_wec@shsu.edu

Office Hours: 12-12:50 MWF

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is the required survey course in US government. Each professor brings different emphases and styles to the course. I will emphasize Americans' political ideals, our fragmented governmental system, power of organized groups, individual rights and the effects of individualism generally, and our commitment to the free market system; each of these affects politics and public policy in so many ways, obvious and not-so obvious. While the different values and beliefs people as voters hold about government certainly affect their evaluations of parties, candidates and government performance, these values and beliefs are in turn shaped by the media and other influences. At the same time the personal beliefs and party ideologies, no less than the pressure to attend to powerful interests, also combine to determine the decisions made by those we elect to make those decisions.

With so many topics that we must attempt to cover – the US Constitution, federalism and local government, civil liberties and civil rights, public opinion, the media, parties and elections, the three branches of government – it is impossible to give all of them the time they deserve; but in one form or another we will get to them.

Approach/Method of Instruction: Classes are devoted to lectures and discussion. Lectures will be used to elaborate on or amplify material in the text, highlight topics or themes that may or may not be covered in the text – and provide optimum time and opportunity for discussion of any and all relevant topics and issues. Study guides will be provided that will list both text and lecture topics for the exams.

Prerequisite: None

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Factual Knowledge: the “nuts and bolts” of the US political and governmental system, but in more precise terms, who exercises power, how, and on whose behalf. More specifically students should gain factual and analytical knowledge of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations. Also gain knowledge of civic responsibility and gain the ability to engage in American democracy.
- Critical Thinking: learning to understand and evaluate our political system in a more informed and “critical” manner: eschewing platitudes, hype, and knee-jerk opinions masquerading as “common sense.”

REQUIRED TEXT:

Barbour and Wright, Keeping the Republic 7th Brief Edition

Other readings may be assigned (or suggested). Students may make use of text on-line resources. Students are expected to keep up with current events in appropriate news sources: a deeply discounted subscription to the Wall Street Journal will be made available; though this is not required.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Class attendance is required, following general university regulations. Repeated absences result in a grade penalty. Makeup exams are given, only for verified and excused absences, and at the convenience of the instructor.

EXAMS:

There will be four exams, objective in format. Each of the exams counts equally toward the final grade. Dates of exams will be announced in class.

GRADING PLAN:

Grades will be based on the exams. The normal grading scale is used: 90 and above, A; 80-89, B; 70-79, C; 60-69, D; and 59 and below, F.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Per University policy: Cheating, collusion, plagiarism, if discovered, will result in disciplinary action. These three do not exhaust the possibilities of academic dishonesty.

CLASSROOM RULES OF CONDUCT: Per University policy: Disruptive behavior – intentionally disrupting class, persistent talking at inappropriate times, disrespectful words or actions toward classmates or instructor, etc shall result in a directive to leave class and possible referral to the Dean of Students.

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM: If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

COURSE OUTLINE:

- I. Democracy and Foundations of American Government
 - a. Politics and Government and Culture – Intro and chapter 1
 - b. U.S. Constitution – chapter 2; handouts
 - c. Federalism – chapter 3; handouts

FIRST EXAM

- II. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
 - a. Civil Liberties – chapter 4
 - b. Civil Rights –chapter 5

SECOND EXAM

- III. Governing Institutions
 - a. Congress – chapter 6
 - b. President – chapter 7
 - c. Federal Bureaucracy – chapter 8
 - d. Federal Courts and Judicial System – chapter 9

THIRD EXAM

- IV. Linking People with Government: Mass Politics
 - a. Public Opinion and Political Socialization – chapter 10; handouts
 - b. Political Parties and Interest Groups – chapter 11

- c. Voting, Campaigns, and Elections – chapter 12
- d. Media – chapter 13

FINAL EXAM

STUDY TIPS: Students are strongly advised to take thorough class notes. It also helps to keep up with the reading as we cover each topic in class, rather than leave it until the night before the exam. Keeping up with the reading also allows questions about the material to be addressed in class. There is a “Study Corner” at the end of each chapter: key terms, self-test questions, critical thinking questions, web sites. Another tip is to find classmates to study with, comparing notes, etc.

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS: Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation toward the end of the semester (fall and spring).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES will be accommodated in any way possible. Please let me know early in the semester. For detailed description of University policy please go to shsu.edu/dept/disability

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: Any student who needs to miss a class due to observance of a religious holiday will be accommodated in any way possible. Please let me know early in the semester.

Syllabus is subject to change if circumstances dictate. This would happen only if, for example, it made sense to shift material between exams for student ease. Additional topics may be added if there is time and if they are timely.

