

POLS 2305—American Government, Honors

Spring 2018—MWF: 11.00-11.50; CHSS 495

Dr. McIntyre

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Office Hours: M, W: 2.00-3.00; T: 1.00-2.00; 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.

It is not, however, merely an introductory textbook course. We will be reading both the primary texts which constitute the various American political institutions and traditions and also secondary commentaries on the meaning of those institutions and traditions. In fact, the course will focus as much on American political culture as on American political institutions because the two are inextricably linked. We will also be concerned with the ethical dimension of American politics and much of the class will be devoted to examining the various moral questions which have informed the development of American political culture.

The course is classified as a EWCAT course, which stands for Ethics, Western Civilization and American Traditions. The character of EWCAT courses differs from other introductory courses in that class sizes are smaller, primary texts are the subject matter, class discussion is emphasized, and peer discussion groups are used to facilitate student participation.

Course Objectives

Given that this is an introductory course, the primary goal is to gain factual knowledge about American political culture. Secondary goals include the development of civic literacy, 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;
- and the American policy process, including the role of parties, media, and interest groups.

Texts

Required texts:

Kollman, *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives, Fourth Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2018).

Lowi, Ginsberg, 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 one of the easiest and most effective ways of preparing for the daily lectures and 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 tests. ***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, including the final exam, 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 also be six student-led discussion sessions during the term. For each of these, each student will prepare a one-page essay on the topic to be discussed for that session. Students will be allowed to drop two of their essays during the term. I will be giving more detailed instructions concerning the discussion sessions and the short papers during the term.

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:	50%
Essays and Participation:	25%
Final exam:	25%

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, 2—American Government or AG, Ch. 1; Readings or R, pp. 1-5, 24-37

Weeks 2, 3—*The Founding and the Constitution*: AG, Ch. 2; R, 51-59, 70-74

Week 4—*Federalism in the United States*; AG, Ch. 3; R, 75-95

Week 5—First exam

Part II: The Three (or Four?) Branches of Government

Weeks 5, 6— *Congress*; AG, Ch. 5; R, 157-174

Weeks 6, 7—*The Presidency*; AG, Ch. 6; R, 215-223, 251-264

Weeks 8, 9—*The Federal Bureaucracy*; AG, Ch. 7; R, 287-300, 341-348

Weeks 9, 10— *The Judiciary*; AG, Ch.8; R, 349-364

Week 10—Second Exam

Part III: Politics and Democracy in the United States

Week 11, 12—*Public Opinion and the Media*; AG, Ch. 9; R, 417-429, 613-616

Week 12, 13— *Elections*; AG, Ch. 10; R, 561-566

Weeks 13, 15—*Political Parties and Interest Groups*, AG, Chs. 11, 12; R, 525-540, 548-560, 501-515

Week 15—Third Exam

Final Exam—Wednesday, 9 May 2018: 12.00-2.00 CHSS 495

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.

The following are links to university policies and/or statements regarding academic dishonesty:

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

<http://www.shsulibraryguides.org/plagiarism>

<http://www.shsu.edu/academics/english/graduate/of-professional-interest/academic-honesty.html>

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. 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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