

Sam Houston State University  
Department of Political Science

**POLS 2305 – Principles of American Government**  
Spring 2018, 3 credits

Instructor: Victoria Cordova  
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Office hours: Via Email/By Appointment only (CHSS 280)

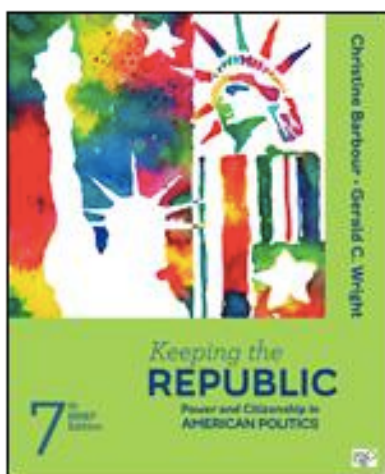
**Course Description:** Students will examine how our political system was designed, how it has changed over time and how public opinion, the media and the "information age" have affected our government institutions and public policy. We will discuss the role and scope of government as it was conceived by the Founders and as it is viewed today. Finally, we will examine current policy issues, weigh the costs and benefits of actions and engage in thoughtful discussion of contemporary policies with a view toward how those issues and actions impact the current political scene.

**Course Objectives:**

- Explain how government impacts your daily life
- Recognize and evaluate issues in American government and American political history
- Explain and assess the formal and informal political institutions and their respective roles in American politics
- Identify and describe the key functions of the three branches of government
- Evaluate different forms of political participation and outline the ways in which individuals and groups can affect political outcomes

**Required Text**

Christine Barbour & Gerald C. Wright, *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics* (CQ Press, 7th edition Brief, 2016). ISBN: 9781506349954



### **Course Grades**

Grades in this course will be based on four exams (worth 100 points each) and two assignments (worth 50 points each).

### **Grading Policy**

Exams are graded immediately through Blackboard. Grades will appear after you complete each exam on a summary page as well as in the grade book located under "My Grades." Assignment grades are posted one week after the due date.

**Course grades will be calculated according to the following scale:**

**A = 450 points or more;**

**B = 400 to 449.999 points;**

**C = 350 to 399.999 points;**

**D = 300 to 349.999 points;**

**F = less than 300 points.**

### **Exams**

There will be four course exams throughout the semester. There will not be a comprehensive final. Each exam will consist of a total of 50 multiple choice questions pulled from the readings and lectures (worth 2 points each). You will have one hour and twenty minutes to take the exam. **See course schedule for opening and closing dates.**

### **Assignments**

There will be two current event assignments. You can turn these in at any time before the assigned due dates. Each assignment is worth up to 50 points.

### **Readings**

The course is divided into four parts (see course schedule) with readings assigned every week throughout the course. I strongly encourage you to read as the exams will come mostly from the readings. The readings are designed to give you background knowledge for the subject matter that we will be discussing in the lectures. As such, I will not address everything from the readings in the PowerPoint slides and notes. Knowledge contained in the readings will be explained and expanded on.

### **Due Dates**

Due dates will be strictly enforced in this course. I will post reminders regarding exam and assignment due dates throughout the semester but it remains your responsibility to keep track of the course schedule. See syllabus guidelines on the University's website for possible exceptions to this policy.

### **Make-up Policy**

There are no opportunities to make up exams in this class. See syllabus guidelines on the University's website for possible exceptions to this policy.

### **Attendance Policy**

As this is an online course, traditional attendance is not calculated. However, it is critical that you log-in to the course website to keep up with the course requirements as well as for financial aid purposes.

**Discussion Board**

There is a discussion board tab on the class website. I encourage you to post questions, comments, concerns, and general feedback regarding the course to this discussion board. I will check it throughout the week. I will also be available via e-mail but please allow at least 24 hours to respond.

**Instructor Evaluations**

Students will be given the opportunity to complete a course evaluation survey near the end of the semester. You may also speak directly with the Chair of the Political Science Department, Dr. Tamara Waggener, if you have any urgent concerns about the quality of instruction you are receiving.

**Academic Dishonesty**

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.

**Americans with Disabilities Act**

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 adversely affect your work in this class, then I encourage you to visit the Service for Students with Disabilities webpage.

**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.

The following academic guidelines are available here: <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

## Course Schedule

*Note: This schedule is subject to change. Changes will be announced on Blackboard and via e-mail.*

<b>Principles of American Government: 2305</b>		
<b>Part I</b>	<p><b>First Class Day: January 17, 2018</b></p> <p><b>Read Chapter 1:</b> Power and Citizenship in American Politics</p> <p><b>Read Chapter 2:</b> The Politics of the American Founding</p>	<p><b>Exam #1:</b> Opens—February 5, 2018, at 8:00 a.m. <b>Closes—February 12, 2018 at 11:59 p.m.</b></p> <p><b>Assignment #1 (political cartoon): Due February 23, 2018 at 11:59 p.m.</b></p>
<b>Part II</b>	<p><b>Read Chapter 3:</b> Federalism</p> <p><b>Read Chapter 4:</b> Fundamental American Liberties</p> <p><b>Read Chapter 5:</b> The Struggle for Equal Rights</p> <p><b>Read Chapter 10:</b> Public Opinion</p>	<p><b>Exam #2:</b> Opens—March 19, 2018, at 8:00 a.m. <b>Closes—March 26, 2018, at 11:59 p.m.</b></p> <p><b>Assignment #2 (Op-editorial): Due April 6, 2018, at 11:59 p.m.</b></p>
<b>Part III</b>	<p><b>Read Chapter 6:</b> Congress</p> <p><b>Read Chapter 7:</b> The Presidency (Executive Branch)</p> <p><b>Read Chapter 9:</b> American Legal System (Courts)</p>	<p><b>Exam #3:</b> Opens—April 9, 2018, at 8:00 a.m. <b>Closes—April 16, 2018, at 11:59 p.m.</b></p>
<b>Part IV</b>	<p><b>Read Chapter 11:</b> Parties and Interest Groups</p> <p><b>Read Chapter 12:</b> Voting, Campaigns, and Elections</p> <p><b>Read Chapter 13:</b> The Media, Power and Political Communication</p>	<p><b>Exam #4:</b> Opens—April 30, 2018, at 8:00 a.m. <b>Closes—May 7, 2018, at 11:59 p.m.</b></p>