

POLS 2305: American Government

3 Credits

Spring 2018

Professor: Dr. Heather Evans

E-mail: hke002@shsu.edu

Office Hours: 12:30-1:30 pm T/TH and by appointment

Course Description

This course deals with the origin, development, and Constitution of the American governmental system, citizenship and civil rights, suffrage, the national party system, the national executive, organization of congress, and the national judiciary. This course meets the legislative requirement for a course on the Constitution of the United States. Through our time in class, students will gain a better understanding of the American Government system and how citizens can make changes in our society. In this class, you will not only learn knowledge and skills, but also use those skills and knowledge to make a difference in your community. This experience, it is hoped, will help you see yourself as a positive force in this world and deepen your understanding of your role as a citizen.

Course Objectives

This course provides an overview of American national government. In this class, we will explore the rules, institutions, participants, and products of American politics.

Students enrolled in POLS 2305 will:

- 1) Gain factual and analytical knowledge of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations
- 2) Gain knowledge of civic responsibility and gain the ability to engage effectively in American democracy.

Required Purchases:

Book

The reading for the class comes from:

"Keeping the Republic - Brief Edition" Christine Barbour and Gerald Wright, 6th Edition.

For the KTR textbook, be sure you get the paperback Brief edition, not the hardcover (If you have a deal on the hardcover version and want to use it, go ahead. It's the same book with a couple of extra chapters we won't use).

Grading

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

Students are expected to read the materials assigned in conjunction with class lectures, and demonstrate their comprehension of the material in writing.

- Exam 1 100 Points
- Exam 2 100 Points
- Exam 3 100 Points
- Exam 4 100 Points
- Paper 1 50 Points
- Paper 2 50 Points

Exams

Now that I have taught this course many many times, and since I have had a husband that has finished his degree online, I understand the needs of those that take online courses. Because of this, students can log on at any time and complete the exams, **however if you fail to complete the exams by 11:59pm on the last day of class, you will receive a zero for those exams.**

The last day of our course is **May 4th!** Make a note of this now. There is no cumulative final in this course.

The last time I taught this course in this manner, a few students actually took all of their exams within the first week and made an A! I was impressed.

These exams will be primarily multiple choice, true/false and I.D. type questions, drawn from the readings and the lecture notes. These questions will be descriptive and analytic. That is, they may ask something as simply descriptive as how many members are in the House of Representatives, or they may ask you to draw some analytic conclusions about the respective functions of the House and the Senate, or to determine the importance or significance of an institution or policy. Memorization alone will not suffice for these quizzes; you will have to think about the material as well. I would suggest visiting the website offered with the book, which has practice quizzes as well as flashcards that will help you review the book's key terms.

There will be 50 multiple choice questions in each exam. Each question is worth 2 points. You will have 60 minutes to complete the exam once you enter it. At the end of the 60 minutes, you will be kicked out of the exam and not allowed to finish

Papers

There are two short written exercises (papers) in this course as well. Unlike the exams, these papers have due dates. **The first paper is due by February 23rd at 11:59pm, and the second paper is due by March 30th at 11:59pm.** Details on these two papers is given on the "Papers" tab on the left hand side of the Blackboard page.

*Note: I do accept late work but there will be a 5 point deduction in your grade for each day the paper is late. Since the papers are each worth 50 points, that means if you turn it in one day late, the highest grade you can receive is a 45. I will accept papers up to one-week late.

Instructor Evaluations

Students will be given the opportunity to complete a course/instructor evaluation form near the end of the semester.

Academic Dishonesty

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

Wikipedia/Copying from the Internet

In the last few semesters cheating from Wikipedia and the Internet has become commonplace. If any student is found to have cheated from any online source, they will receive a zero on their assignment.

For other university policies (religious holy days, disabilities, visitors in the classroom), please see the following link: <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

Final Grades

Course grades will be calculated according to the following scale: A = 450 points or more; B = 400 to 449.99 points; C = 350 to 399.99 points; D = 300 to 349.99 points; F = less than 300 points. Once the course is over, final grades will be submitted to the University.

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Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy:

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. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/documents/861001.pdf

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 . For a complete listing of the university policy, see: http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/811006.pdf

Other SHSU syllabus policies can be located at <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus>

Course Schedule

Part 1	Introduction to Politics, Government, and Culture Read: KTR Chapter 1 Politics of the Founding and the Constitution Read: KTR Chapter 2
Exam 1	
Part 2	Federalism Read: KTR Chapter 3 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights Read: KTR Chapter 4 & 5 Public Opinion Read: KTR Chapter 10
Exam 2	
Part 3	U.S. Congress Read KTR Chapter 6 The Executive Branch Read: KTR Chapter 7 The Courts Read: KTR Chapter 9
Exam 3	
Part 4	Interest Groups Read: KTR Ch. 11 Parties and Elections Read: KTR Chapter 11 and 12 Media Read: KTR Chapter 13
Exam 4	