

POLS 2305: American Government

3 Credits

Spring 2018

Department of Political Science

Online

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Office Hours: THURSDAY, 2-3pm 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 Constitutions of the United States.

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 TEXT

The reading for the class comes from:

- "Keeping the Republic - Brief 7th Edition" Christine Barbour and Gerald Wright

For the 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. But it costs more so if you are buying new, get the Essentials.)

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIONS

Participation (via Discussion Boards)

The class sessions are interactive and you are required to participate **every week** by articulating your ideas on key themes and posted questions to proper forum on the **Discussion Board**.

On every Wednesday, topic question(s) will be posted on the Blackboard and you have **FIVE days until every Sunday 11:59 pm** to post your initial opinions and **a FULL**

WEEK until every Tuesday 11:59 pm to participate in the discussion by posting your replies to others' initial opinions and answer the others' replies on the Discussion Board. You are expected to be an active participant in each week's discussion, so that you are required to post **one your original opinions or thoughts** on the posted question(s) and **at least one your comment(s)** responding to other students' opinion(s). **In summary**, you are required to **post at least two posts** on the Discussion Board every week.

Two points per week, 12 weeks (week 3-13 and week 15), No makeups or late participation counted, one Extra point if you participate all 12 weeks. Discussion period ends Tuesday nights (11:59 pm). I will check the Discussion Boards on a regular basis and will answer questions as needed. No makeups or late participation after due time are counted in grading. You are expected to participate in all 12 weeks' discussions, through which you earn two points for each week's participation. If you participate in all 12 weeks' discussion, then you can gain one extra point for your participation. Participation is a matter of not only quantity of posts, but also quality of posts. Please read statements in the next box carefully.

- 1) ***Are substantive in content.*** While it's nice to give brief feedback like "thanks," "good idea," and "I agree" to your classmates and such messages are not discouraged, they do not count toward your graded contributions. Responses should be substantive and should reference reading assignments, web references, lecture notes or outside resources. Your posts should also attempt to introduce a new point of view or piece of information or otherwise further the discussion. And you are also expected to back up your examples and opinions with sufficient evidence so that your reader will believe in what you say. If you have any questions about the course please be sure to ask!
- 2) ***Are thoughtful and well composed.*** Posts should use correct grammar, punctuation and vocabulary appropriate for a university-level course.
- 3) ***Are responsive either to the initial question or to someone's reply.*** Each week you should be engaged in dialogue with others, not just replying to the initial discussion question. Indeed, it can get mighty redundant in some instances if everyone replies to the initial prompt and no one replies to each other. Part of the nature of this class is for students to collaborate with one another in troubleshooting problems and to develop critical-thinking skills. Working through questions on the forum is an excellent way to develop proficiency in these areas.
- 4) ***Extend the conversation in meaningful ways.*** Don't just repeat what others have said, but make a new point, provide a new piece of evidence, or ask an insightful question. And questions are just as meaningful and valuable as posts that offer up one's knowledge!
- 5) ***Show mutual respect.*** It should go without saying, but I'll say it anyway, that while differences of opinion are fine, treating each other with respect is expected at all times. Misuse of the discussion boards will not be tolerated.

Quizzes

There are **9 quizzes** as scheduled in the class schedule box. Each quiz is open in the Blackboard **from Wednesday to Friday (11:59 pm)** in the scheduled week. Quiz is **open book test** and you have **four hours** to complete the quiz. Each quiz covers **class readings from the latest quiz to the present week's class**. Quiz asks multiple choice and true/false questions. Each quiz is constructed to help you on the right track of detailed materials that you learn from this class.

Questions in quiz 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. Memorizing alone will not suffice for these quizzes; you will have to think about the material as well. I would suggest visiting <http://college.cqpress.com/sites/republic-brief/home.aspx>, which has practice quizzes as well as flashcards that will help you review the book's key terms.

No makeups are allowed. Also, late works over due (11:59 pm, Friday) lose one point after full grading the quiz.

Exercises

You are expected to write **TWO short assignments** (no more than two pages with 1 inch margin, 12 font-size, double-spaced, and Time New Roman font-style). You can choose **ONE of three topics** as I will provide one week before the due date. You are required to submit these assignments **ELECTRONICALLY** through the **SafeAssign** link on the Blackboard system **by 11:59 pm March 20th (Exercise 1) and May 8th (Exercise 2)**. Details regarding each exercise will be posted on Blackboard.

No makeups are allowed. Also, late works over due date will lose two points per each delayed submission day (up to six days).

GRADING AND FINAL GRADES

Grades in this course will be based on participation via Discussion Boards, 9 Quizzes, and 2 exercises. Students are expected to read the materials assigned in conjunction with class lectures and demonstrate their comprehension of the material in writing.

• Participation	25 points total (24 points + 1 extra point)
• 9 Quizzes	45 points total (5 points each)
• Exercise 1	15 points
• Exercise 2	15 points
Total	100 points

As shown above, total scores available for this course are 100 points. Final grade is very straightforward and will be calculated by how many points you earned in class activities (**NOT by average scores in blackboard**). Course grades will be calculated according to the following scale: A = 90 points or more; B = 89 to 80 points; C = 79 to 70 points; D = 69 to 60 points; F = 59 point and less. Once the second exercise has been administered, final grades will be posted on Blackboard and submitted to the University.

MAKEUPS POLICY

No Makeup in this course is allowed EXCEPT a student having received **PRIOR permission** from the instructor, and/or a written university approved excuse through the Dean of Student's Office verified documentation ONLY.

If you have an approved excuse, you must make up your missed assignment within three days of the original due date. After three days, penalties of late work are your responsibility. Note that students are responsible for making any necessary arrangements

with the instructor to complete outstanding course requirements within the prescribed time frame.

EXTRA CREDIT

NO extra credit will be offered in this course.

TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

As this is online class, activities through computer and internet are critical. Any technical problem during assignment should be properly reported and solved first via SHSU Online Support Desk. Such problems may include but not be limited to; loss of work or interruption due to bad connection of wifi, power trouble, or any event.

Please remind, if you are in such trouble, contact first and immediately the SHSU Online Support Desk for assistance and record. You can reach them by using Technical Support icon at the top of left navigation menu, or the Need Help link under HELP & HOW TO. It is very important that the fact you are in technical trouble does not waive any of student's responsibility in assignment.

Please note that students are responsible for any kind of technical problem. So, you are highly recommended to keep the secured and stable environments for taking class assignments.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

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. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

[Dean of Student's Office](#)

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

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

Except the changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Dates (Wed-Tue)	Topic	Activities/ Assignments All Due Dates @ 11:59 PM CST
Introduction	Jan 17 - Jan 23	Introduction to the Course	Introduce Yourself on Discussion Board by Tue, 1/23 (Not counted as grade but required for the first-day-attendance check) No other assignment
Week 1	Jan 24 - Jan 30	Power and Citizenship in American Politics Ch. 1	No Assignment
Week 2	Jan 31 – Feb 6	Politics of the American Founding Ch. 2	Discussion 1: Initial Post by Sunday, 2/4 Replies by Tuesday, 2/6 Quiz 1: by Friday, 2/2
Week 3	Feb 7 - Feb 13	Federalism Ch. 3	Discussion 2: Initial Post by Sunday, 2/11 Replies by Tuesday, 2/13
Week 4	Feb 14 - Feb 20	Fundamental American Liberties Ch. 4	Discussion 3: Initial Post by Sunday, 2/18 Replies by Tuesday, 2/20 Quiz 2: by Friday, 2/16
Week 5	Feb 21 - Feb 27	The Struggles for Equal Rights Ch. 5	Discussion 4: Initial Post by Sunday, 2/25 Replies by Tuesday, 2/27 Quiz 3: by Friday, 2/23

			Exercise Topics will be posted
Week 6	Feb 28 - Mar 6	Congress Ch. 6	Discussion 5: Initial Post by Sunday, 3/4 Replies by Tuesday, 3/6 Quiz 4: by Friday, 3/2
Week 7	Mar 7 - Mar 13	The Presidency Ch. 7	Exercise 1: by Tuesday, 3/20 Discussion 6: Initial Post by Sunday, 3/11 Replies by Tuesday, 3/13
Week 8	Mar 14 - Mar 20	Spring Break!	
Week 9	Mar 21 - Mar 27	The Bureaucracy Ch. 8	Discussion 7: Initial Post by Sunday, 3/25 Replies by Tuesday, 3/27 Quiz 5: by Friday, 3/23
Week 10	Mar 28 – Apr 3	The American Legal System and the Courts Ch. 9	Discussion 8: Initial Post by Sunday, 4/1 Replies by Tuesday, 4/3 Quiz 6: by Friday, 3/30
Week 11	Apr 4 - Apr 10	Public Opinion Ch. 10	Discussion 9: Initial Post by Sunday, 4/8 Replies by Tuesday, 4/10
Week 12	Apr 11 - Apr 17	Parties and Interest Groups	Discussion 10: Initial Post by Sunday,

		Ch. 11	4/15 Replies by Tuesday, 4/17 Quiz 7: by Friday, 4/13
Week 13	Apr 18 - Apr 24	Elections Ch. 12	Discussion 11: Initial Post by Sunday, 4/22 Replies by Tuesday, 4/24 Quiz 8: by Friday, 4/20 Exercise Topics will be posted
Week 14	Apr 25 - May 1	Media Ch. 13	Discussion 12: Initial Post by Sunday, 4/29 Replies by Tuesday, 5/1 Quiz 9: by Friday, 4/27 Exercise 2: by Thursday, 5/8