

**POLS 2305 – American Government
Spring 2018**

Online – 3 Credit Hours

Instructor: Fondren Notman
By Appointment/Via E-mail: Everyday

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces students to the origins, foundations, and institutions of American government. Specifically, we examine the US Constitution as well as the major institutions of governance: the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government. We also explore media influence, public opinion, and political behavior within the country such as voting and elections.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course provides an overview of American politics. In this class, we will explore the rules, institutions, participants, and products of American politics. The specific course objectives are:

- Gain factual knowledge and learn fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories of American government;
- Increase student knowledge of the theoretical basis of American government, the operation of the American institutions of government, and the roles and responsibilities of American citizens, and
- To encourage students to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view about important political issues.

REQUIRED TEXTS: Central Ideas in American Government. Asheville, NC: Soomo Publishing, 2014. {On-Line Text}

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

EXAMS: There will be four course exams throughout the semester. There will not be a final exam in this class. The exams may contain multiple choice, true/false, and/or matching questions. There will be 50 questions worth 2 points each. You will have one hour and twenty minutes to take the exam. You may only take the exam one time. If you have an emergency, or a valid excuse for missing an exam due date, make-up exams may be scheduled at my discretion. However, you must contact me within 24 hours of missing an exam or you forfeit your right to take a makeup. Please contact me in advance if you anticipate an inability to meet due date requirements.

QUIZZES: Each chapter contains reading questions embedded in the chapter. These reading questions will count as your quiz grades for each chapter. You must answer all of the questions in each chapter to get these points. The questions can be answered multiple times so you should be able to get them all right as you work through the readings. These questions are worth 10% of your overall grade, so if you do not do the readings, you cannot make an A in the course.

ASSIGNMENTS: Each chapter contains two investigations. These investigations will count as your assignment grades. You must do both investigations in each chapter. You can only do the investigation one time. They are embedded in the chapter so you can either do them when they come up or save them until you've worked through the entire chapter. The investigations are worth 20% of your overall course grade.

READINGS: Each week you will be assigned one chapter from the reading. There are videos embedded in the chapters to give you additional information but they are not required for the readings.

POWERPOINTS: Each week you will find a PowerPoint that corresponds to the chapter for that week. These PowerPoints will supplement the text and help guide your study notes. I recommend that you pull these up and use them as you work through the chapters.

DUE DATES: The course material will be available throughout the semester. There are no due dates for the reading questions or investigations. However, due dates for the exams will be strictly enforced. You should consider the material for the exam due before the exam. The exams are worth 70% of your overall course grade. You should complete the reading questions and investigations prior to the due date of the exam as these will act as study guides for the exams. If you miss an exam, you have 24 hours to contact me or you forfeit your right to take a make-up exam. In any case, make-up exams will be scheduled at my discretion and you are not entitled to a make-up exam simply because you ask for one. If you have an emergency, then you should contact me and we will discuss arrangements appropriate to the situation.

GRADING POLICY: The reading questions and investigations are graded in the webtext. Grades for these items will show up in the grade book in Blackboard as soon as you complete them. Exams are graded immediately through BlackBoard. These grades will show up after you complete the exam on a summary page, as well as in the grade book located under "My Grades." **I WILL NOT CALCULATE POTENTIAL FINAL GRADES SO DO NOT ASK ME.** If you ask me to calculate what grade you need to make on the final exam in order to make your desired letter grade in the class, my head will explode and I will take 10% off of your overall course grade. This does not mean that you can't talk to me about your grades. I want you to talk to me about your grades. Just do not ask me to calculate potential grades for you.

Grade distribution is as follows:

• 4 Exams	70%
• 15 Chapters with Reading Questions	10%
• 30 Investigations	20%

MAKE-UP POLICY: If you miss an exam, you must contact me within 24 hours of the due date or you forfeit your right to take a make-up. If you have an emergency or a valid reason for missing course due dates, you must discuss this with me at your earliest convenience via e-mail and we will make arrangements appropriate to the situation. In any case, make-up exams will be scheduled at my discretion and you are not entitled to a make-up exam simply because you ask for one. If you anticipate an inability to meet course deadlines, please contact me via e-mail.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: As this is an online class, traditional attendance is not an issue. However, it is very important that you log in to the course BlackBoard website weekly in order to keep up with the course requirements. The class material is broken down by week and the exams will be due after you've had enough time to work through each chapter assigned for that unit. Remember, the reading questions count for 10% of your final grade. This could mean a letter grade difference in your overall course grade. I strongly encourage you to be diligent in keeping up with reading assignments, questions, and investigations so that you are well prepared to take the exams.

ONLINE CONDUCT: Each student is expected to be fully acquainted and comply with all published policies, rules, and regulations of Sam Houston State University. Students are also expected to comply with all federal and state laws.

Section 5.2.22 of the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline defines that campus disruptive activities or disorderly conduct on component-owned or controlled property or at a component-sponsored or supervised function that inhibit or interfere with the educational responsibility of the component community or the component's social-educational activities shall include but not be limited to: using abusive, indecent, profane or vulgar language; making offensive gestures or displays that tend to incite a breach of the peace; perpetrating fights, assaults, acts of sexual violence, abuse, or threats; or evincing some obviously offensive manner or committing an act that causes a person to feel threatened. Such prohibition includes disorderly classroom conduct that obstructs, interferes with, inhibits and/or disrupts teaching and/or related classroom activities.

Even though we are not meeting in a traditional classroom setting, I expect you to engage in appropriate behavior in your correspondence with fellow students and the instructor. Reports of abusive, threatening, offensive, or profane behavior will be taken seriously and will be investigated and/or reported as appropriate to the situation. Please be kind to each other.

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS: Students will be given the opportunity to complete a course/instructor evaluation form near the end of the semester. You may also speak directly with your professor or the Chair of the Political Science Department if you have concerns about the quality of instruction you are receiving.

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

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](#)

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 should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). 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 Services for Students with Disabilities 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 Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

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. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: </dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf>

Course Schedule

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

Week	Date	Topic	Reading Questions and Investigations	Unit Due Date
UNIT ONE				
Weeks 1 – 4 1/17 – 2/11		Ch. 1 – The Founding and Constitution	Ch. 1 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 2 – Federalism	Ch. 2 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 3 – Civil Liberties	Ch. 3 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 4 – Civil Rights	Ch. 4 Questions & Investigations	
		Exam 1		2/11
UNIT TWO				
Weeks 5 – 8 2/12 – 3/11		Ch. 5 – Congress	Ch. 5 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 6 – The Presidency	Ch. 6 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 7 – Bureaucracy	Ch. 7 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 8 – The Judiciary	Ch. 8 Questions & Investigations	
		Exam 2		3/11
UNIT THREE				
Weeks 9 – 12 3/12 – 4/8		Ch. 9 – Voting and Political Participation	Ch. 9 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 10 – Elections and Campaigns	Ch. 10 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 11 – Political Parties	Ch. 11 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 12 – Interest Groups	Ch. 12 Questions & Investigations	
LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS: APRIL 6TH				
		Exam 3		4/8
UNIT FOUR				
Weeks 13 – 16 4/9 – 5/6		Ch. 13 – Public Opinion	Ch. 13 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 14 – The Media	Ch. 14 Questions & Investigations	
		Ch. 15 – Public Policy	Ch. 15 Questions & Investigations	
		Exam 4		5/6