

Political Science 2305-02: American Government

Summer 2020

May 28- June 26, 2020

Online

CRN: 40796

Credit Hours: 3

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Office Hours: In person by appointment, always available by email and on class Discord.

Course Description

Can President Trump really just use a tweet to announce a military attack? Why does Congress seem like a high school drama full of old people? Does voting even matter? This is an introductory course in which we consider the basic ideas, structures, and political processes of the United States government, and explore how the scientific study of politics helps us understand government.

By the end of the semester, students should be able to recognize the major players in American politics, the basic structure of the U.S. Government, and the roles ideas, individuals, and institutions play. In addition, we will apply these ideas in our discussion about the development of civil liberties and rights and the defining/protecting of these rights. Students will also be introduced to patterns in voter turnout and civic participation, as well as the role of public opinion and the media.

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to bring up current events or issues that apply to our academic discussions in class. I will attempt to set aside time each week to discuss these issues and relate them to both our lecture and assigned readings. However, you do not need to have a deep knowledge of current political events or be involved in politics already. This class is designed for the complete beginner, and I hope that you find something that triggers your interest and desire to participate in politics as the class goes on!

I understand that with an online course, it may not be possible to meet me during my office hours or be on campus. I will be available by email during all normal business hours and will respond within 24 hours at the latest. I have an open-door policy for my office, so if you see me in there feel free to knock on the door and stop by. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I will be doing most of my work from home, so it will normally be easier to reach me by email or over the course Discord (see below).

Learning Objectives

1. Gaining a basic understanding of the structure of American government and the behavior of the people in it.
2. Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of social science.
3. Learning to apply course material to improve thinking and problem solving.

Course Textbook

There is one textbook required for this course:

Textbook: Krutz, Glen and Sylvie Waskiewicz, et. al. 2019. *American Government 2e*.

To keep costs to students to a minimum, we will be using the above book, provided by [OpenStax](#). This is available freely as a:

1. [PDF file that can be viewed online](#) or downloaded to your computer
2. As a smartphone app ([iPhone/Apple Users](#) or [Android](#)).
3. Ordered from Amazon as a print copy for \$48.50 (**not recommended**).

A PDF copy of the textbook is also available on the course Blackboard page, as are the links.

Additional Resources

Because this course is held entirely online, it is especially important to keep up with assigned reading. To help with this, I will post a brief outline every week outlining the learning objectives for the week and some important points. While you will still need to read the text to succeed on quizzes and exams, this will help you focus on the notes to take and the necessary highlights of each chapter.

I will also provide this outline in the form of a brief (15-20 minute) audio lecture for those who prefer to listen rather than read. This will also give you the highlights for each chapter, and some helpful real-world examples to attach to what you read.

This class is set up so that those who carefully read each chapter, and exercise what they've learned in the assignments, will have no problem getting an A in this class.

Online Communication

Most communication for this course will be conducted via the course's Blackboard site and University email. Any supplementary material, assignments, or changes to the course structure will be made available on this site. Each student should ensure that they have access to these materials and are able to receive emails through their student account. Please note that I cannot accept or respond to student emails that come from a non-university address.

I usually respond to emails within 24 hours of receipt, earlier if they are sent during typical business hours (9am-5/6pm). Please do not send a second email until the 24 hour waiting period is up. If there is an emergency, please take care of that first. I am always happy to work around personal emergencies when it comes to the completion of coursework.

One of the challenges with online teaching and learning is remoteness. Students and instructors have a more difficult time communicating. To help with this, I have set up a Discord server for my classes this summer. Rather than the formal environments of Blackboard and email, this server is meant to be a casual place where students can talk with each other or with me informally. Please use this to ask me questions, organize reviews, have unrelated conversations, etc.

1. You can access Discord through a web or phone browser, or through any of the apps found on [this page](#).
2. Once the apps are set up, click [this link](#) to join the server. You'll see text based and voice/streaming channels for your section of the class.

Assignments and Grading

Assignments are set up to cover three basic stages:

1. **4 Weekly Reading Definition Quizzes**
 - a. 25 questions worth 1 point each (100 points total)
 - b. These will ask basic comprehension questions to make sure everyone knows the meaning of important terms, ideas, or theories.
 - c. You **must** complete these before the Concept Exam will be available
2. **4 End of Week Concept Application Exams**
 - a. 25 questions worth 1 point each (100 points total)
 - b. These will ask you to apply your new knowledge to real world examples in American politics. Each question will pose a situation, and ask you to identify which concept, idea, term, or theory helps us explain that situation.
 - c. These will not be available until the Reading Definition Quiz for the week is complete.
3. **4 Weekly Reading Reflection Journals**
 - a. 10 points each (40 points total)
 - b. These will be similar to the exams but will ask you to write a thoughtful and informed response to some deeper question about American politics. I might ask you to further explain something described in the book or find a real-world example of your own and explain how course material helps us think about that example. Responses will ask for at least a paragraph.

Since the first week is introductory, there will only be a 10-point reading quiz and a 10-point introductory forum post.

Because time is limited and there is a large amount of reading each week, the quizzes and exams will be open book and note. However, questions on the quizzes and exams will be written with that in mind, so having the reading done before these assignments is essential to doing well.

Grading Scale

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: Below 60

Information and 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:

http://www.shsu.edu/~slo_www/

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/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/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 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>

Copyright on Course Materials

Copyright 2020 (Christopher Patane) as to this syllabus and all lectures. During this course, students are prohibited from selling notes or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the express written permission of the instructor teaching this course.

Mental Health

Sometimes the study of Political Science involves dealing with difficult material. In some cases these may reflect or reference your own personal, family, or group experiences. Other times, life events may interfere with your ability to succeed in class. We do not want to neglect our own health or well-being. If you need support, the Counseling Center can be reached at 936-294-1720. The [website](#) also contains self-help resources, and those services available in the Huntsville community.

Although this course is only about 4 weeks, I understand that sometimes life gets in the way of class. If anything comes up at all, or you feel yourself falling behind, please let me

know as soon as possible. You DO NOT need to give me details, you are allowed to simply ask for support.

As with all other parts of the course, students are welcome and encouraged to come talk to me to voice their concerns, seek support, or discuss accommodation for coursework after a crisis.

Class Schedule

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. Changes will be announced in class and on the course Blackboard site. It is the responsibility of the student to take note of any changes.

Week 1: May 28, 2020 – May 31, 2020

Course Introduction

Readings: Read the syllabus and Chapter 1 of the textbook

Assignments: Make sure all your technology is good to go, introduce yourself on the course Blackboard, and take the Syllabus quiz.

Week 2: June 1, 2020 – June 7, 2020

The “System:” The Basic Foundations of American Government

Readings: Textbook Chapters 2-5

Assignments: Due at 11:59PM on Sunday, June 7

1. Reading Quiz 1
2. Concept Exam 1
3. Reflection Post 1

Week 3: June 8, 2020 – June 14, 2020

Individuals Political Behavior and Group Political Behavior

Readings: Textbook Chapters 6-9

Assignments: Due at 11:59PM on Sunday, June 14

1. Reading Quiz 2
2. Concept Exam 2
3. Reflection Post 2

Week 4: June 15, 2020 – June 21, 2020

Interest Groups, Congress, and the Presidency

Readings: Textbook Chapters 10-12

Assignments: Due at 11:59PM on Sunday, June 21

1. Reading Quiz 3
2. Concept Exam 3
3. Reflection Post 3

Week 5: June 22, 2020 – June 26, 2020

The Judiciary and the Bureaucracy

Readings: Textbook Chapters 13 & 15

Assignments: Due at 11:59PM on Sunday, June 26

1. Reading Quiz 4
2. Concept Exam 4
3. Reflection Post 4