

# Political Science 2305-14: American Government

Spring 2020

Online

CRN: 22167

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Patane

Email: c.patane@shsu.edu

Campus Address: CHSS 470

Campus Phone: (936) 294-4679

Office Hours: M/W 1:00pm-4:00pm or by appointment

## 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. If the scheduled office hours do not work for your schedule, please email me for an appointment. If you are on campus, and see my office in 470 CHSS open, feel free to stop by. Students are always welcome to drop in if my office door is open.

## Learning Objectives

1. Gaining a basic understanding of the subject (factual knowledge, principles, theories)
2. Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual activity
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.

## Blackboard and Online Communication

All 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.

## Virtual Office

Because we do not get to meet in person, I have set up a "Virtual Office" on Blackboard. During my scheduled office hours, I will also be in this "room" on Blackboard where we can chat (by text) remotely. This way, students can talk with me personally even if they are away from campus. Please see the directions under the "Virtual Office" section on Blackboard for how to access this resource.

Students are also completely free to use this space to chat with each other about the course as well.

## **Grading**

Exam 1: 100 points

Exam 2: 100 points

Exam 3: 100 points

Weekly Reading Quiz: 10 points each

Discussion Board: 10 points each

Each week, there will be a reading quiz and a discussion on Blackboard.

Quizzes will consist of 10 questions, worth two points each, answerable by looking at the text. For discussion boards I will post two discussion questions. They will ask students to apply the concepts discussed in each chapter or pose a hypothetical situation that students must use the week's material to solve. To receive full credit, students must answer these in full (about a paragraph a piece) and use material from the week to back up their answers. They may also comment/respond to other student responses, although this is not enough to get full credit alone.

To prepare for each exam, I will make a review sheet available one week before the scheduled date. On the day of the exam you will have 24 hours to complete it. Exams will require using the Respondus Lockdown Browser and other anti-cheat tools. Directions will be forthcoming when the first exam date gets closer. Because of the odd schedule, the final exam will be available from the 4<sup>th</sup> of May to the 7<sup>th</sup>.

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, structure your own note-taking, and providing extra context where necessary. While you will still need to read the text to succeed on quizzes and exams, this will help you narrow down your focus to do so more efficiently.

**All assignments will be due by 11:59pm on the Sunday of the week they are assigned.**

## **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/](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](mailto: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.

### **Emergencies, Crises, and 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 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.

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 Outline**

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.

You will also notice that particularly important political events (such as elections) are posted here. These are for your information, and we will discuss them as the events themselves get closer.

### **Week 1: January 15-17**

#### **The Citizen and Government, American Political Thought**

Reading: Chapter 1

### **Week 2: January 20-24**

#### **The Founding and Constitution**

Reading: Chapter 2

### **Week 3: January 27-January 31**

#### **Federalism**

Reading: Chapter 3

### **Week 4: February 3-7**

#### **Civil Liberties**

Reading: Chapter 4

#### ***Last Day to Register to Vote in Texas***

Friday, February 7, Exam 1 Due

### **Week 5: February 10-14**

#### **Civil Rights**

Reading: Chapter 5

### **Week 6: February 17-21**

#### **Public Opinion**

Reading: Chapter 6

### **Week 7: February 24-28**

#### **Voting and Elections**

Reading: Chapter 7

**Week 8: March 2-6**  
**The Media**

Reading: Chapter 8

Tuesday, March 3, Texas Primary Elections

**Week 9: March 9-13**  
**No Class, Spring Break**

**Week 10: March 16-20**  
**Political Parties**

Reading: Chapter 9

Friday, March 20: Exam 2 Due

**Week 11: March 23-27**  
**Interest Groups**

Reading: Chapter 10

**Week 12: March 30-April 3**  
**Congress**

Reading: Chapter 11

**Week 13: April 6-10**  
**The Presidency**

Reading: Chapter 12

**Week 14: April 13-17**  
**The Courts**

Reading: Chapter 13

**Week 15: April 20-24**  
**The Bureaucracy**

Reading: Chapter 15

**Week 16: April 27-May 1**  
**Finals Week**

Thursday, May 7 11:59pm, Exam 3 Deadline