

Political Science 2305-12: American Government

Fall 2020

T/Th 8:00am – 9:15am

CHSS 252

CRN: 82140

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Patane

Email: c.patane@shsu.edu

Campus Address: CHSS 470

Campus Phone: (936) 294-4679

Office Hours: Remote Only.

Due to COVID-19 I won't be meeting with students in person in my office. However, I will be available by email, over Blackboard, and on my Discord server (see below). Other than late night emails, I should be able to get back to students with questions relatively quickly. I am also more than happy to voice or video call with any student who wants to talk or speak relatively face to face.

COVID-19 Changes

Because of safety concerns around COVID-19, this in person class will operate slightly differently from what you may be used to. There will be a higher emphasis on work outside of the classroom. In person sessions will consist of brief lectures, discussions, and I will help students work on the weekly assignment.

1. All exams and assignments will be completed online.

Group Meetings

The university has recently decided that social distancing of 6 feet must be maintained between all students and instructors when meeting in person. CHSS 252, the room this class is scheduled for, can only hold 20 people at a time. There are 45 people enrolled in this class.

As a result, there will be **3** groups of 15 people each.

1. **Group 1:** Last names that begin with A-F
2. **Group 2:** Last names that begin with G-Mc
3. **Group 3:** Last names that begin with Me-Z

Because we have more groups than we have meetings in the week, we will use the in-person sessions as ways to review the course content that has passed since our last

meeting. This will not be like a regular lecture session but will be more of a seminar/formal discussion where you all and I will talk about the day's content.

Please look at the course schedule below for the meeting dates assigned to your group. The Calendar on the course Blackboard page will also show you your group's meeting dates.

Remote Instruction Option

The university is allowing students to individually opt for remote only courses this semester. Even though this class is scheduled in person, students can **email me** to opt-in to take the course remotely. This will not affect assignments, contact with me, or grades in any way. My goal is to provide the same access and material that you would get if you were able to be in class personally, so please make this decision based on the safety of you and your loved ones. **You can choose this option at any point in the semester.**

Deadlines and Late Work

I'm sure many of you are stressed and uncertain about the semester. Nobody is sure how events will unfold, or what other changes may be needed later in the semester. Schedules are totally different from what you're used to, and you all have other classes in addition to mine.

Please do not be afraid or worried if you forget to turn in an assignment or get mixed up on an in-person meeting date. I will not lower grades for late work, nor will I shame or otherwise punish students who turn in late work or miss a class.

I will be doing my best to check in with everyone in the class each time we meet in person, and will check in regularly through email, Blackboard, and the course Discord. You all are welcome and encouraged to reach out to me if you need any support, advice, or other help in keeping up with this class. I am perfectly happy to work with students to keep them on track to pass this course and will be happy to talk with anyone who asks for that.

As always, you are free to get in touch with me however you feel comfortable to talk about what is happening in class, or for other kinds of support. At the very least I can help get you in touch with other resources at SHSU that will be able to provide any support you might need.

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!

Learning Objectives

Course expectations can always be vague. Since you will use these scores at the end of the semester to evaluate this course, looking at the learning objectives from the IDEA evaluations will give you a better picture of what this class will be like. The most important skills you will learn follow:

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 **free** 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.

Lecture and Slides

Each week, on the Friday after class, the PowerPoint slides I use in class will be posted on Blackboard. To do best in class, please **do not** try to take notes by simply copying the slides. They will always be available for your reference at the end of the week. Instead, focus on taking notes on the main arguments/facts of the reading and the stories/relationships I lay out in class.

Please feel free to take notes on a computer or record my lectures as long as basic etiquette is followed and you are not distracting to other students.

Blackboard and Course 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.

Discord

In addition to email and Blackboard, I am using Discord to provide a place where students and I can meet, exchange instant messages, talk over voice/video, and stream. It is entirely free and provides a less formal environment where students can talk to each other or to me. I am also hoping to use this to help with class communication since we will not be meeting in person as frequently.

To set up an account on the Discord server:

1. Visit <https://discordapp.com/>
2. If you don't already have an account, click the "Register" button.
3. Once your account is created (please keep your username class/work appropriate), click on this link: <https://discord.gg/Q3W6FJD> and you should automatically be sent to the server.
4. The service will run fine on a web browser, so there is no need to download any software. If you would like to download the app to use on your phone or home computers, the site has apps available for most platforms.

Once you are on the server, you will see that there are text and voice “channels” for each of my classes this semester. You are free to look in, chat with, and generally interact with the students in classes that are not your own—this is an informal and open space. There are also several text and voice chat rooms available as “Student Study Spaces” where groups of you can work together.

Assignments

Weekly Discussion Board: 10 points each

Exam 1: 100 points

Exam 2: 100 points

Each week, a folder will appear in the “Weekly Assignments” section of the course Blackboard. It will have a checklist of the reading assignments and discussion questions for the week. It will also be where I post the outlines/recordings/lecture slides for that week. Hopefully this will make it easier for students to keep track of what is going on that week.

Because we are only meeting once a week, this class will focus more heavily on written discussions on Blackboard. These are designed to make sure that everyone understands the basics of the week’s material and will ask you to apply some of these ideas to real world examples I provide, or you find. Further instructions will be provided on each week’s opening post.

Each exam will consist of 50 multiple choice or true false questions, worth two points each. Rather than being in class, **all** exams will take place online. On the Monday of the scheduled exam week, the exam will be available on Blackboard. Students will have until 11:59pm on the following Friday to finish the exam. We will not have class on those Fridays so that there is at least one class period where everyone has time to finish the exam.

On the Friday before the scheduled exam week, we will have an in-class review. We will also have in class activities where students pose their own questions and/or answer practice questions as a group.

Because I am not sure what resources people will have available at home or in their dorms, and to reduce stresses because of COVID, exams **will be open book/note**. You will not need to use any special software such as Respondus. You can work together to figure out the answers to questions and to ask me for help.

Keep in mind that this means exam questions will be a little more difficult than you may be used to. Rather than asking basic definitions or checking to see whether you’ve memorized a fact, these questions will ask you to look at an event or idea that we’ve studied and determine which term, theory, or process best fits that example. I am more

interested in teaching you how to apply the knowledge you'll gain in this class, so questions on exams will ask you to do that.

Grading Scale

Final course grades will be calculated as the percentage of points earned. To know your score in the class at any time, simply total your earned grades and divide by the number of points available to that point in the semester. This score will also appear under the "Total Grade" column on Blackboard.

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: Below 60

Classroom Conduct

Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Cell phones must be turned off before class begins.

Students may use laptops/tablets to take notes, as long as they do not distract other students. If this happens, students with computers may be asked to sit towards the back of the room.

Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave class. Students who are especially disruptive also may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy. The instructor reserves the right to ask students to cease disruptive behavior that is not listed here.

Academic Dishonesty

Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Please be aware that plagiarized work and any form of academic dishonesty will result in an "F" on the assignment. SHSU [Academic Policy Statement 810213](#) outlines the definition of academic honesty and the related disciplinary procedures.

You should also familiarize yourself of [Academic Policy Statement 900823](#), which outlines the procedures for students to file an academic grievance should you wish to appeal your grade for reasons other than academic dishonesty. Please read over these policies. 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>

Visitors in the Classroom

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

Copyright on Lecture and 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. If you can, please let me know if you are falling behind or need additional help. I'm always happy to work with students to find ways to help them through the course as the rest of life goes on around them.

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: August 17-21:

Course introduction

Tuesday, August 18: Group 1 Meets

Thursday, August 20: Group 2 Meets

Week 2: August 24-28:

The Citizen and Government, American Political Thought

Reading: Chapter 1

Tuesday, August 25: Group 3 Meets

Thursday, August 27: Group 1 Meets

Week 3: August 31-September 4:

The Founding and Constitution

Reading: Chapter 2

Tuesday, September 1: Group 2 Meets

Thursday, September 3: Group 3 Meets

Week 4: September 7- 11

Federalism

Reading: Chapter 3

Tuesday, September 8: Group 1 Meets

Thursday, September 10: Group 2 Meets

Week 5: September 14-18:

Civil Liberties 1

Reading: Chapter 4

Tuesday, September 15: Group 3 Meets

Thursday, September 17: Group 1 Meets

Week 6: September 21-25:

Civil Liberties 2

Reading: PDFs on Blackboard

Tuesday, September 22: Group 2 Meets

Thursday, September 24: Group 3 Meets

Week 7: September 28-October 2

Civil Rights 1: Founding to the Civil War

Reading: Chapter 5

Exam 1 Due at 11:59pm on Friday, October 2

Tuesday, September 29: Group 1 Meets

Thursday, October 1: Group 2 Meets

Week 8: October 5-9:

Civil Rights 2: Civil War to the Civil Rights Act

Reading PDFs on Blackboard

Tuesday, October 6: Last day to Register to Vote in Texas.

Tuesday, October 6: Group 3 Meets

Thursday, October 8: Group 1 Meets

Week 9: October 12-16:

Civil Rights 3: Post-Civil Rights Act

Reading PDFs on Blackboard



Tuesday, October 13: Group 2 Meets

Thursday, October 15: Group 3 Meets

Week 10: October 19- 23:

Civil Rights Beyond Race/Ethnicity

Reading PDFs on Blackboard

Tuesday, October 20: Group 1 Meets

Thursday, October 22: Group 2 Meets

Week 11: October 26- 30:

Public Opinion

Reading: Chapter 6

Tuesday, October 17: Group 3 Meets

Thursday, October 29: Group 1 Meets

Week 12: November 2- November 6:

Voting and Elections

Reading: Chapter 7

Tuesday, November 3: Election Day, no in person class. Get out there and vote!
Tuesday evening, I will host a remote result watch stream for anyone interested!

Thursday, November 5: Group 2 Meets

Week 13: November 9-13:

The Media

Reading: Chapter 8

Tuesday, November 10: Group 3 Meets

Thursday, November 12: Group 1 Meets

Week 14: November 16-20:

Political Parties

Reading: Chapter 9

Tuesday, November 17: Group 2 Meets

Thursday, November 19: Group 3 Meets

Week 15: November 23 & December 1:
Interest Groups

Reading: Chapter 10

Nov 25-27 Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, November 24: Group 1 Meets

Tuesday, December 1: Group 2 Meets

Week 16, December 4 - 9:

Exam 2 Due at 11:59pm on Wednesday, December 9.