

Political Science 261.08, CID 4434, 3 credit hours
American Government (Honors)
Fall 2007
Dr. Waggener

Course Location/Time: AB1 302, 10 :00 – 10:50, MWF
Office Location: AB1 319B
Office Phone/Email/Fax: (936) 294-1466, pol_taw@shsu.edu. (936) 294-4172
Office Hours: 2:00 – 4:30 MWF or by appointment

Course Description

This course addresses: the origin, development, and operation of the US national government and the Texas state government; civil liberties and civil rights; elections and voting; political parties and interest groups; and the three branches of government.

Course Objectives

This course has two primary objectives:

1. Students will gain knowledge of the structural and philosophical foundations of American government and Texas Government.
2. Students will be introduced to current political ideas, issues, and events in American politics. Special attention will be given to political ideas, issues, and events that students in the class deem relevant to their political lives.

Class Format

The class format will be a mixture of lecture and student participation. During class discussions, we will not assume that there is a “correct” position on a particular political issue, but rather that there are multiple positions all of which must be considered. Thus students are strongly encouraged to arrive at their own political opinions. However, students must arrive at their opinions through active debate and informed reasoning. “Off the cuff” political opinions are not credible or productive to class learning.

Required Readings

Text

Thomas E. Patterson, *The American Democracy*. (7th edition, Texas edition, ISBN 0-07-322651-3)

Exams, Projects, and Grading

Exams

There are 3 multiple-choice exams. Each exam is worth 30% of students’ final grades. There is no comprehensive final exam in this course. Exams will be based on material from lectures and the textbook.

Voter/Election Information Project

Each student must contribute to the voter/election information project. Specific duties will be assigned as we near the date of the project. Duties will include: obtaining information about primary and general elections, candidates, and policy issues; obtaining voter registration information and relevant forms; and organizing and implementing the project. 5% of students' final grades will be based on their ability to perform their duties effectively (i.e., obtain accurate information and meet deadlines). 5% of students' final grades will be based on a summary statement addressing the weaknesses and strengths of the project. The summary statement must be no more than a single spaced page, font no larger than 12, standard margins, and typed.

Grading

Final course grades will be based on the following grading scale: 100 – 90=A, 89-80=B, 79-70=C, 69-60=D, 59-0=F

Make-Up Exams

Make-up exams will be granted to students who can provide formal documentation of a medical or family emergency. If a student fails to provide this documentation, he or she will receive a zero on the exam. Please note that visitation slips issued by the University Health Center are not considered formal documentation, unless the slip clearly indicates that the student was too ill to attend class. Make up exams will be short answer exams.

Extra Credit

Under **NO** circumstances will extra credit be offered in this course.

Scored Scantron Sheets

Students must keep their scored scantron sheets. A student cannot challenge their grade unless he or she has copies of all scantron sheets.

Class Attendance

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student enrolled in this course.

Class Policies

Please see <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus> for class policies regarding: Academic Dishonesty, Classroom Rules of Conduct, Student Absences on Religious Holy Days, Students with Disabilities Policy, and Visitors in the Classroom. Please see <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html> for classroom rules of conduct.

Instructor Evaluations

Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

Class Schedule

Please note that the class schedule is tentative and may be subject to change.

The Structural Foundations of American Government

Aug 20 – 24 Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 (pp45-49)

Aug 27 – 29 Chapter 3

Aug 31 Students must use class time to begin organizing for the voter/election information project.

Sep 3 Labor Day Holiday

Sep 5 - 7 Chapter 4

Sep 10 – 14 Chapter 5

Sep 17 Exam 1

Political Participation and Government

Sep 17 – 19 Chapter 6

Sep 21 – 24 Chapter 7

Sep 26 – Oct 1 Chapter 8

Oct 3 – 8 Chapter 9

Oct 10 – 12 Chapter 10

Oct 15 – 19 Finalize plans for voter/election information project

Oct 22 Exam 2

The Branches of Government

Oct 24 – 29 Chapter 11

Oct 31 - Nov 2 Chapter 14

Nov 5 – 9 Implementation of voter/election information project

Nov 12 – 14 Chapter 14 continued

Nov 16 – 19 Chapter 12

Nov 20 – 23 Thanksgiving Holiday

Nov 26 Review of US federal government

Texas Government and Politics

Nov 28 – 30 Texas Chapter 1

Dec 3 – 5 Texas Chapter 3

Dec 7 Overview of class material

Final exam week is Dec 10 – 13. Please see SHSU homepage final exam schedule for information about the time and date for exam 3.