

Political Science 261 - Principles of American Government, National and State - Course Syllabus Spring 2008

Instructor: Professor Jenny Mobley
E-mail: JLM001@shsu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 9:45am-10:45 or by appointment

Office Location: AB1, 319A
Telephone: 936.294.4021 or 936.294.4571

POL 261.16 in AB1 Rm 317 – Meets T/TH 11:00-12:20
POL 261.18 in AB1 Rm 310 – Meets T/TH 12:30-1:50
POL 261.20 in AB1 Rm 310 – Meets T/TH 2:00-3:20

Final Examination, Thursday, 05/15, 11:00 a.m.
Final Examination, Tuesday, 05/13, 11:00 a.m.
Final Examination, Thursday, 05/15, 2:00 p.m.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: 3 Credit Hours.

This course deals with the origin, development, and Constitution of the American governmental system, citizenship and civil rights, suffrage, the national party system, the national executive, organization of congress, national judiciary, federal-state relations, and the Constitution of the State of Texas. This course meets the legislative requirement for a course on the Constitutions of the United States and Texas. There are no prerequisite course(s) for this class.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- This course is designed to acquaint the student with the institutional arrangements within the U.S. and Texas political systems of government, their mechanisms and the essential basic and fundamental expectations of American citizens.
- The premise for this information is to challenge the student to question the nature and purpose of government. Accordingly, it is the hope of the instructor that as this progression develops throughout the semester; you will draw your own conclusions, appreciate, as well as understand, the relationship of the American citizen and their government. This new awareness should expose the impact government legislation has on you and your global neighbors and will motivate you to get involved in the process.

THE CLASS FORMAT: will contain a mixture of lecture and discussion. You are encouraged to arrive at your own opinions through the process. Please note, during class discussions we will NOT assume that there is a “correct” view on a specific topic but many which should be given consideration. Everyone is welcome and expected to speak out--but also to listen to their neighbor’s point of view. Further, remember, political opinions based and voiced in the “heat of the moment” are neither convincing nor productive to the learning process. Please treat others as you would like to be treated.

TEXTBOOK REQUIRED FOR THIS COURSE:

Janda, Kenneth, et al. *The Challenge of Democracy*. Texas 9th Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008.

It is **each** student’s responsibility to obtain his own copy of the text at the **beginning** of the semester. Please note our text consists of the combined books for the US and Texas governments.

ATTENDANCE POLICY and EXCUSED/UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: You are all adults, and you are strongly encouraged to attend every class session if you intend to do well in the course. A class absence misses lecture notes *that cannot be made up*. You are responsible for obtaining any work that you missed from other students or off blackboard. Tardiness will not be tolerated.

- Work-related excuses will **not** be considered legitimate.
- 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.
- I reserve the right to limit such excused absences with suitable notification from a doctor or other official within 7 calendar days of your return to class. Put simply, do not miss class and try to bring me a doctor's note 2 months later; I will not accept it and your absence(s) will be unexcused. When in doubt, write me an email (JLM001@shsu.edu).
- **PLEASE NOTE: I will allow you two "free" absences that you do not have to account for.**
- **Each absence after those 2 will result in a 3 point reduction in your total final grade average.**
- **Students with 5 or more unexcused absences will fail the course—no exceptions.**
- **Excused absences:** include official active participation in university functions, illness, and religious holy days. Provide me documentation *in writing* of the pending absence and arrange to make up any missed work within two weeks of the absence.

E-MAIL AND CLASS ETIQUETTE:

- All e-mail correspondence must be sent to me at JLM001@shsu.edu . E-mails must contain, IN THE SUBJECT LINE, the full name of the student and must also designate the class (days/time) in which the student is enrolled. Appropriate verbiage is expected. If these items are not included within the e-mail, the e-mail will be deleted.

Ladies and Gentlemen: NO EXCEPTIONS:

- When you enter my classroom, remove your hats, caps, do-rags and scarves
- Turn cell phones, pagers, and other electronic gizmos **off** before entering the classroom. Keep them concealed throughout class.
- Tardiness will not be tolerated
- No whining about the above. Thank you.

STANDARD GRADING: 90=A; 80=B; 70=C; 60=D; 0-59=F.

- **THERE WILL BE NO EXTRA CREDIT** offered for this course, so please do not ask me.

EXAMS:

Since we will have the exam dates in plenty of time before an exam; ALL students are expected to be in attendance for that day. Always, check your syllabus, and I will always confirm those dates in class. I will always give you a study guide in plenty of time before the exam.

- You will need 2 number two lead pencils, a good eraser and a new Scantron (form 882-E, only) for each exam.
- There will be a total of four (4) exams, each worth 100 points. All are of equal weight in determining the course grade.
- Exam questions will be objective and drawn from **both the text and class lectures**. There will be multiple choice and true/false questions. Students should be prepared promptly at the beginning of class for an exam. No one will be allowed to leave the classroom *during* an exam—leaving will result in a zero for that exam—no exceptions!
- There will be no re-grading or dropping of grades.
- Torn or wrinkled scantrons jam the grading machine and cause errors in grading.

Make up exams will be given *at the instructor's discretion*. You are required to inform me as to why an exam will be missed and failure to provide appropriate and **very prompt** documentation for will result in a zero for that exam. Said plainly, you will know BEFORE your assigned class time if you are going to miss the exam – call my office and leave a message or write me an email, right then! Be sure your reason is absolutely unavoidable! Further, make-ups will be much more difficult and essay format.

The **FINAL EXAM will be comprehensive. Under no circumstances will the FINAL EXAM be given earlier than the university's scheduled time frame.** I'm sorry; don't ask me, no whining!

How to do well on exams in this course?

- **Keep up with reading assignments:** Everything you need to know about the reading assignments is on the syllabus. I do not make day-to-day reading assignments, so please use the syllabus to keep up with me in class. Unlike some of your past experiences, I will not cover every bit of information contained in the texts in class. A major requirement of this course is “reading.” This strategy is to encourage you to read and think about your reading independently. Students who adjust to this fact will do very well on the exams. Use your study guides!
- **Take Notes:** Write down everything -- not just what I write on the board. **Studying:** FYI, reading is not studying! So study smart! Seriously work in a partnership with your book: Ask, “what is the author trying to say?” “What are the main points?” “If I were the professor, what kinds of exam questions would I ask?” use the quizzes in each chapter and the book's website. Of course, study guides and a “study buddy” will be crucial. Prepare detailed answers for each item on the study guide and then study those answers with a partner. Watch those absences!

*****In the essence of space; please note that the following topics are covered in detail in a “Syllabus Addendum” on Blackboard.** Please make yourself a copy for your files and read it carefully. Thanks!

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| 1) Academic Dishonesty | 3) Americans with Disabilities Act |
| 2) Visitors in the Classroom | 4) Classroom Rules of Conduct |

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS: You will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation at the end of the semester

Course Assignments: You will also find a copy of the syllabus and any notes from me on Blackboard for your files.

- If you have any questions about the class or need to know where we are in relation to our class or what we will be discussing during a certain week, please **check your syllabus**. This is your guide. *However, I do still reserve the right to alter the syllabus and/or course outline in order to control the pace of the class.*

We will be using **Blackboard** a lot for communication; again, class information, study guides, etc. will be placed there to help you better understand the course. We will be covering a lot of material this semester. If you find you are struggling, come see me as soon as you need help; the end of the semester is generally too late.

Treasured student, I welcome you to stop by or drop a note in the e-mail. (JLM001@shsu.edu) I am on campus all day on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I do have classes thru the day but in between I am yours and we are certainly *not limited* to office hours. If you need me and I am not on campus, and it cannot wait until class, please feel free to write an e-mail; I check them everyday and can get back to you almost always within 24 hours. **I truly look forward to our time together!** ☺

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Concerning reading assignments please note that **our text book consists of two parts**. The first section will cover the American government information and behind it, in the back of the book, is the second text discussing Texas government.

January 17 – First day of class; Review syllabus

Week 1 – January 22 and 24

Reading Assignment: Janda, Chapters 1, Freedom, Order and Equality

Week 2 – January 29 and 31

Reading Assignment: Janda, Chapter 3, The Constitution

Week 3 – February 5 and 7

Reading Assignment: Janda, Chapter 4, Federalism

Week 4 – February 12 and 14

Reading Assignment: Janda, Chapters 7& 8 – Political Socialization and Political Parties

EXAM 1 – 2/14 *****

Week 5 – February 19 and 21

Reading Assignment: Janda, Chapter 9 Nominations, Elections and Campaigns

Week 6 – February 26 and 28

Reading Assignment: Janda Chapter 15 Civil Liberties

Week 7 – March 4 and 6

Reading Assignment: Chapter 16 Civil Rights

EXAM 2/Mid-Term - 3/4 *****

Week 8 – March 10 – 14 Spring Break!!!

Week 9 – March 18 and 20

Reading Assignment: Janda, Chapter 11 Congress

Week 10, March 25 and 27

Reading Assignment: Chapter 12 – The Presidency

Week 11 – April 1 and 3

Reading Assignment: Janda, Chapter 14, The Courts

Week 12 – April 8 and 10

EXAM 3 - 4/8 *****

Discussion of: Texas Politics, Chapters 1&2, The Environment of Politics in Texas and the Texas Constitution

Week 13 – April 15 and 17

Reading Assignment: Texas Politics, Chapter 7, The Legislature

Week 14 – April 22 and 24

Reading Assignment: Texas Politics, Chapter 10, Laws, Courts and Justice

Week 15 – April 29 and May 1

Reading Assignment: Texas Politics, Chapter 8, The Executive

Week 16 –May 6 and 8 (May 8 last class day)

Reading Assignment: Texas Politics, Chapter 6 Politics of Interest Groups

FINAL EXAMS-May 12 – May 16 – Be sure to double check your assigned class time on the SAM website for the final!

FYI: Final Grades will be posted by no later than 9:00 a.m. on Monday, May 19.