

Sam Houston State University
American Government: Summer 2008
10-11:50; AB1 310

Professor: Dr. Rhonda Callaway

Email: rhonda.callaway@shsu.edu

Office: AB1 Room 314

Office Hours: M-TH 9:00 - 10:00 and by appointment

Course Goals: The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the origins, foundations, and institutions of American government. We examine the basic American principles, practices, and values, federalism, the Constitution, the role of mass politics, and the major institutions that make up the American governmental system. In addition, the student is introduced to the institutions and politics of the states of Texas. Specific course objectives include:

- Learning how the system of American government works.
- Discovering why the American system is structured the way it is.
- Increase student knowledge of the theoretical basis of American government, the operation of American institutions of government, and the roles and responsibility of the American citizen.
- Increase student analytical, critical thinking, and communication skills.

Required Texts:

Patterson, Thomas E., *The American Democracy*, 7th edition (The Texas edition)

Course Requirements:

- Four exams throughout the semester (this includes the final): All the exams are weighted equally.
 - Three exams will count toward your final grade - thus, the lowest grade is dropped.
 - Each exam is worth 30%
 - Anyone who misses a scheduled exam will receive a zero on that exam. There will be no make-up exams! If you miss an exam, that will be the exam that is dropped.
- Writing exercises and Movie Essay - 10%
 - Any in-class writing assignments
 - Each student must write a movie review and explain how the topic is related or is important to politics.
- In order to do well in the course, it is highly recommended that you attend class regularly. Please note that I do not give repeat performances. You must be on time! Entering a class late or leaving early is always disruptive. Such a disruption is unfair to the rest of the class and will undoubtedly make you known to the instructor for all the wrong reasons.

- **Perfect attendance will be rewarded. Those with perfect attendance will receive 3 additional points added to the final average.**
 - **NOTE: Perfect attendance means perfect...no absences for any reasons. Also note: being tardy is not perfect. If you are tardy, you will not receive any additional points. So...to receive full credit, you must be in class at 10:00am! No exceptions.**

Participation:

Participation in class discussions is strongly encouraged. As students, you will get the most out of this class if you engage in the discussions. Every student in this class has an opinion, and each of those opinions is valued in this class. I ask that you respect the diverse backgrounds and views of your fellow students, and employ common courtesies during class.

Reading:

In order to get the most out of this class you should read assigned materials before the classroom discussion on that topic. It is your job to keep up with the reading and come to class prepared to discuss the material. It may be helpful to take notes when reading the material and bring any questions to class.

Grading:

Course grades of 90 - 100 will be scored an A; a B is 80 to 89; 70 to 79 is a C; 60 to 69 is a D; below 60 is an F.

If you think that an error has been made in calculating your grade, it is *your responsibility* to provide me with all of your work. To that end, it would be prudent to save anything that is handed back to you until you get your final grade report. Any students caught cheating on an exam will receive a minimum punishment of a failing grade for the class.

Other Important Policies:

Anyone having problems in this course is strongly encouraged to contact the instructor as early as possible. I will be happy to meet you and help you in anyway possible. I may be able to help you study more effectively or recommend other assistance. **Remember - I want you to do well in this course.**

Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.* Please be aware that plagiarized work will result in an "F" in the course. See the following web address for more information on academic dishonesty. http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/810213.html

In general, plagiarism is defined as using another person's words and/or ideas as if they were your own. Your papers **must** be original work. If you use the exact words from another source in your academic papers, you must set off such quotes in quotation marks. After the closing quotation, you must provide an accurate citation which includes the author, date of publication, and page number. If you paraphrase, you still need to provide a citation. The citation within the text should look like the following:

The events of the Easter Uprising led to many Irish men and women immigrating to the United States. It was these ex-patriots that served as the link between the United States and Ireland. Adams goes so far as to argue that the survival of the IRA was in part due to "The enormous Irish-American population has always felt a strong sentimental attachment to 'the old country' and this has been translated into a steady stream of cash and guns to the IRA" (Adams 1986, 134)

The complete citation must be provided in a bibliography.

Adams, James. 1986. *The Financing of Terror: How the groups that are terrorizing the world get the money to do it*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Classroom Rules of Conduct: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. **Students are to turn off all cell phones while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination.** Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days: Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

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 visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

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.

This syllabus should be seen as a rough guide of the coming semester. I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus throughout the semester.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1	Topic	Reading
7/8	Hand out syllabus - Plagiarism lecture and American Political Culture	Ch. 1/TX 1
7/9	The Birth of a Nation	Ch. 2
7/10	Constitutional Democracy /Texas Constitution	Ch. 2*
7/11	Federalism	Ch. 3
* Also read the following: Declaration of Independence (Appendix); The Virginia Plan (online); The New Jersey Plan (online); The Constitution (Appendix); TX Ch 2		
 Week 2		
7/14	Test 1	
7/15	Constitution and the Supreme Court	Ch. 14
7/16	Civil Rights	Ch. 4
7/17	Civil Liberties	Ch. 5
7/18	Texas Courts	TX. 9
 Week 3		
7/21	Test 2	
7/22	Movie #1	
7/23	Political Participation & Public Opinion	Ch. 6&7
7/24	Political Parties and Campaigns	Ch. 8/TX 5
 Week 4		
7/28	Interest Groups	Ch. 9
7/29	Test 3	
7/30	Movie #2	
7/31	The Presidency and Electoral College	Ch 12

Week 5

8/4 The Presidency, Executive Branch, TX Gov Ch. 13**

8/5 Congress Ch. 11

8/6 Congress and Texas Legislature Ch. 11**

8/7 Test 4 and Papers Due!

** Also read: TX Ch 7 and TX Ch 8