

**Introduction to Government
Political Science 261, Section 24
Fall 2007**

*Tuesdays
6-8:50 p.m.
AB1 317*

*Office Hours: M 2-3
T 5-6
W 5-6*

or by appointment

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Course description

This course deals with the origin, development and Constitution of the American governmental system. It covers both the federal and state levels of the party system, executive structures, legislatures, and judiciaries.. This course meets the legislative requirement for a course on the Constitution of the United States and Texas.

Prerequisites: None.

Course objectives and goals

While this is clearly a 'content' course intent on conveying basic introductory information about government on the federal and the state level, it is also an objective of this course to encourage critical thinking and to foster inquiry. It is my hope that in addition to introducing participants to American politics, the course will also foster responsible citizenship both among those with and those without a pronounced interest in politics. In other words, this course will allow you to develop an informed and educated position. The information will be provided, and so will be the opportunity to think and talk about it – the work of figuring out where you stand is up to you.

Course text

The textbook for this course is

Janda et al. The Challenge of Democracy. Ninth Edition – Special Edition for Sam Houston State University. ISBN 13: 978-0-618-98647-7. ISBN 10: 0-618-98647-2.

You are responsible for completing the readings by the time they first appear on the syllabus. Each notation on the course schedule refers to a chapter in the book. Readings marked CD refer to chapters about federal politics and they are in the first half of the book. Readings marked PTP refer to chapters about Texas and they are in the second half of the book.

Grading plan

There will be three in-class exams and a final in this course. All exams will be multiple-choice. Please come to the exams with a long Scantron sheet and a pencil.

On exams 1, 2, and 3, you will have as many questions and there are points to get (each question is worth one point). On the final, there are 2 options, of which the class will have to choose with a majority vote.

Final option 1 → as many questions as there are points, cumulative exam

Final option 2 → non-cumulative, each questions is worth two points (30 questions, 60 points)

You can earn a total of 200 points in this class. At the end of the semester, you will have to divide by two the total number of points you have to determine your percentage and your grade.

Grades will be assigned on the standard grading scale:

A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, D = 69-60, F = 59 and below.

The grade composition in this class is the following:

exam 1	40 points
exam 2	40 points
exam 3	40 points
final	60 points
attendance	20 points

Extra credit

Those who desire to earn extra credit in the course, it will be possible to not just view the films screened during the semester but to also write about them. (See tentative class schedule for screening times). The following conditions will apply:

- ✧ film write-ups are optional, not required assignments
- ✧ you may earn a maximum of 5 points for each write-up
- ✧ a film write-up will have to be typed, with a word count appearing next to your name, and its length will have to be between 700 and 2000 words
- ✧ to avoid technological glitches, you cannot email your write-ups – you have to turn them in as hard copy
- ✧ write-ups will only be accepted at the beginning of the class meeting immediately following the screening
- ✧ write-ups are reaction papers in which you reflect on how the themes in the film relate to themes of the course or other political phenomena

Classroom policies

The policies that govern this course are included on the BlackBoard site of the course, under Course Documents. Please note that you are responsible for knowing and abiding by, the contents of the ‘Course Policies’ document and that everything in it has the same force as other items on the syllabus. Please familiarize yourself with the document early on.

Tentative course schedule

Date	Theme	Readings	Check?
Aug 21	Intro to course		
Aug 28	Political culture and values	CD1 and PTP 1	att 1
Sept 4	Constitution	CD3 and PTP2	att 2
Sept 11	<i>review session</i>		
Sept 18	EXAM 1		
Sept 25	Participation	CD7 and PTP5	att 3
Oct 2	Parties	CD8 and PTP4	att 4
Oct 9	EXAM 2		
Oct 16	Legislature	CD11 and PTP7	att 5
Oct 23	Executive power	CD12 and PTP8	att 6
Oct 30	EXAM 3		
Nov 6	film screening		att 7
Nov 13	Bureaucracy and local government	CD13 and PTP3	att 8
Nov 20	film screening		att 9
Nov 27	Courts	CD14 and PTP10	att 10
Dec 4	<i>review session</i>		

final to be schedule by SHSU