

POLITICAL SCIENCE 261
Principles of American Government – National and State
Professor Robert E. Biles – Spring 2008
Section 17, TuTh 11-12:20, AB1 Room 317

TEXTS: Janda, Kenneth, and others. *The Challenge of Democracy*. 9th ed.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008.

Brown, Lyle C., and others. *Practicing Texas Politics*. 13th ed. Boston:
Houghton Mifflin, 2008.

Note: Buy the cheapest version that fits your needs (but be sure to get the correct editions, 9th of Janda and 13th of Brown). Your best buy may be the “Special Edition for SHSU” that combines the two books. Brown, Janda, and the combined edition should be available used. Be aware that the “Texas Edition” of Janda does not use Brown for the Texas component. If you can understand all this, you should pass the course with no problem.

Blackboard and Electronic Reserve. Notices and course information will be placed on **Blackboard**. To get there, start at the SHSU homepage and use your Sam computer account info for access. Please **check the Course Information** section periodically. I may also email the class using your student computer account address. If you don’t check it regularly, set it to roll over to the email you do check. Information may also be available on **Electronic Reserve**. On the SHSU homepage, click Library, then Course Reserves, Electronic Reserve, and finally Electronic Reserves and Reserves Pages. Select Course Reserves by Instructor (Biles), POL 261, and finally the item you wish to download. The **password is ideology**. You will need to use PDF (Adobe Acrobat) to download the material. It should come up automatically. **NOTE: You must take good notes yourself. Do not rely on just listening; that is a ticket to taking the course again next semester! When there are outlines, use them as a basis for outlining your own notes.**

PURPOSE: The purpose of this course is to assist the students in developing a better understanding of the basic political and governmental processes and institutions with which they will have to deal as citizens. As a result of the course, students should be better able to describe and analyze the political system. They should have an understanding of the background (historical, philosophical, and social) of the national and Texas state governments, the state and national constitutions, the mechanisms available for citizen participation, and the major institutions of government at both levels. Students should also improve their analytical skills. For those who take the writing options, writing skills should be enhanced. This course meets the state requirement for instruction in the U.S. and Texas constitutions.

REQUIREMENTS: There will be three non-comprehensive exams, a comprehensive final, and an optional paper. **All exams and the final are of equal weight** in determining the course grade. The **paper will substitute for the lowest exam grade** if that will benefit you. There will also be at least one optional position paper. Objective questions will be used on exams. Exam questions will be drawn equally from the textbooks and class lecture-discussion. Note that

certain court cases will be included by name; they are listed on the Course Outline below. Exam dates will be announced in class. The standard for the course is: 90 = A; 80 = B; 70 = C; 60 = D; 0-59 = F. Course grades are rounded up at .5 (e.g., 89.5 = A).

PAPER: The paper is optional and will **substitute for the lowest exam grade**. The paper may be (1) an analytical review of a book or (2) an original research paper. An **analytical book review** is one in which you read the whole book, write a page introducing the book and summarizing what it is about, and then spend the bulk of the paper responding thoughtfully to the book. Two common approaches are to list the major ideas and explain why you agree or disagree or to apply the book to something you know (or apply something you know to the book). “Analytical” covers a multitude of sins, but it does not involve just summarizing the book. An **original research paper** involves such activities as doing interviews, looking at election returns by precinct, or going through archives to come up with an answer to a question you raise. Note that a **library research paper** (where you pull together ideas and information from library and Internet sources) is **NOT an available option**. Library research papers will be returned ungraded. The first day we will talk about topics and hints on how to do the paper. Use *formal writing* style, *but* write the paper with the assumption that it will be read by other students in this class at the end of the semester. By then, they will know something about government and politics but not a great deal about your topic. **Do not plagiarize**; if in doubt, give a citation. Plagiarizing will produce a grade of zero that will count toward the class grade. Half of the **grade** will be determined by the substance of the paper: for example, is the information accurate and complete, is the thesis developed adequately, does the paper reflect the knowledge in the field, are the sources adequate? The other half of the grade will be determined by the quality of the writing: grammar, spelling, organization, and smoothness of writing. **Due date: Thursday, Feb. 28**. With permission, papers **may be revised** and resubmitted. The grade on the revised paper will substitute for the original grade. **Revisions are due Thursday, April 3**.

PAPER REQUIREMENTS CHECK LIST: (1) topic approval, (2) length, (3) citations (all, including book reviews), (4) style manual, (5) bibliography or formal bibliographic entry, (6) supporting materials, (7) cover sheet, and (8) turning in the paper. Details are provided below. Papers may exceed the minimum requirements; however, **papers not meeting the requirements will not be read** until all deficiencies are corrected.

Details:

- (1) **Books** for review and **topics** for research papers **must be approved** by the instructor. The *topic* should deal with some aspect of government or politics at the national, state, or local level. Pick something of interest to you, perhaps something related to your major. In choosing a topic, bear in mind that the paper should be *analytical, not descriptive* (e.g., why, what were the consequences?).
- (2) The paper must be at least **five** word-processed, double-spaced **pages** of text, not including cover sheet, endnotes, or bibliography. Use no. **12 font** and **one-inch margins**.
- (3) **Citations must appear in all papers**. Use the **works cited style**. For all papers, quotations and *paraphrasing* must have a citation in the proper style. *Page numbers* must be indicated for quotations and specific references. **Both book reviews and research papers must cite page numbers**. In book reviews, the page numbers may be placed in the text without the author’s

name – e.g., “He died “ (210). Those citing *Wikipedia* will receive an F for all courses taken this semester (well, maybe just for the paper).

(4) A **style manual** such as Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, or the *MLA Handbook* is required. In the bibliography, **state the manual used**.

(5) *Research papers must contain a works cited section* containing all and only the sources cited. **A book review must contain a complete bibliographic entry of the book.** (The entries above for your texts are complete bibliographic entries.)

(6) Appropriate **supporting materials** must be turned in with the paper – **including** photocopies of all pages cited in the paper/review. Include a photocopy of the **page(s) from your style manual** showing examples of the proper form for the bibliographic entries used in your paper.

(7) *Cover sheets* should list at least your name, title of the paper, the course, the professor’s name, and the *period* (e.g., TuTh 12:30-2).

(8) Enter an **electronic copy on Turnitin.com**, a plagiarism checker. (Only the paper, not the supporting materials, are to be submitted to Turnitin.com.) Directions will be provided on Blackboard. Turn in a **paper copy with the supporting materials** to the prof. **Keep a copy** of the paper *for yourself* on disk or paper in case my copy gets lost.

POSITION PAPER: Students may write an optional paper explaining why they prefer or oppose a particular candidate currently running for U.S. President. The paper must include the following information: the full name and party of the candidate, their standing in a current poll (cite your source for the poll), how much money they have raised for the campaign (citing your source), their past political experience, the candidate’s position (taken from the candidate’s website and a news article, both of which you will cite) on the Iraq war and two other issues important to you. Then, use your own words to explain briefly why you do or do not prefer the candidate. The paper is limited to two double-spaced word-processed pages (12 font and one-inch margins). (The works cited can be in addition to the two pages.) Longer and shorter papers will not be graded. The paper **must be accompanied by** a copy of pages from the candidate’s website showing the required information and any other sources you consult in preparing the paper. Include the citation for the website(s) and all sources used. Staple the sheets together and give to the professor. Papers will be graded 0-3, and the grade will be added to the course average. An electronic copy of the paper (not the supporting materials) **must be entered in Turnitin.com**, a plagiarism checker. **Due Thursday, March 20.**

ATTENDANCE, MISSED WORK, PARTICIPATION, & COMPORTMENT:

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually, to read the assignments, and to participate in class discussions.

- For each unexcused **absence in excess of three**, a **point will be deducted** from the course average. Students with **one or no absences** will receive a **two point bonus** on their average.
- It is the responsibility of the student to **report late arrival (at the end of the class)**, to provide written **documentation** of excused absences, and to arrange to make up any missed work, including examinations.
- Barring extenuating circumstances, **missed work** should be made up within two weeks of your return to school. All missed work must be made up by the last day of classes.
- **Excused absences include** official active participation in university functions, illness of yourself or someone for whom you are a primary caregiver, attendance at a funeral, religious

holy days, and occasional work emergencies. I will consider other reasons in the spirit of the above. Sleeping late because you work late is not an acceptable reason.

- **Tardiness** will count as half an absence.
- Students **leaving class early** without prior clearance will be counted absent.
- Students physically but not mentally present in the class (e.g., reading newspapers, playing with their cell/computer, using earphones, studying for other classes, or sleeping), **disturbing the class**, or using tobacco products may be asked to leave, counted absent, and referred to the Dean of Students. Laptops may only be used on the first two rows of the classroom.
- **Turn off cell phones, pagers, etc. before class begins.**

CONTACT INFO: Office AB1 315H, **phone** (936) 294-1460, **e-mail** gov_reb@shsu.edu. Enter the political science suite through 315 or 315K. **Classes** TuTh 11 & 12:30; Mon 6 at the UCtr. **Office hours:** TuTh 10-10:30, 4-5; MWF 11:30-12:30. Please do not come to see me the 15 minutes just before class, when I am getting ready to teach. Any other time I am in, you are most welcome. Conferences by **appointment or drop-in, after class, or by phone**. I am available most of each day, and students are **not limited to office hours**. Come see me as soon as you need help; the end of the semester is generally too late. **We also have a graduate assistant who can help/tutor you** (without charge).

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: I disapprove of cheating on exams, papers, or other assignments. Those engaged in dishonest practices will be submitted to university disciplinary action. In addition, cheating will produce a zero on the assignment and will be part of the course grade. **Plagiarism** is a particular problem. Don't do it! In writing a paper, cite the source of any ideas, facts, phraseology, etc. that is not very common knowledge. **If you paraphrase** something (that is, take the ideas or information from a source but put it in your own words), cite the source. When you are learning, it is better to sin on the side of too many citations than too few. **If you use someone else's words (more than three in a row), put them in quotation marks** and provide a citation of where you found the material. This includes material from web sites, books, articles, interviews – **any** source that is not your very own words. A common form of plagiarism is using material patched together from websites. For additional information, see www.shsu.edu/syllabus/.

Cell phones must be off and out of sight during all examinations. If I see one on and in view, you fail the exam.

STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY: Holy day absences are treated like other excused absences. Provide me documentation of the absence before or after the absence and arrange to make up any missed work within two weeks of the absence. For additional information, see www.shsu.edu/syllabus/.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: 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, I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center 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 Counseling Center. For additional information, see www.shsu.edu/syllabus/.

COURSE OUTLINE

I. THE BACKGROUND OF POLITICS

- a. The American Political Environment: Political Culture, Ideas, and Ideology, US book, Chaps. 1 & 2*
- b. The Texas Political Environment: TX book, Ch. 1*

III. CONSTITUTIONS

- a. U.S.: US, Ch. 3 and Appendix, A-1 to A-12, Dec. of Independence & U.S. Constitution
- b. Texas: TX, Ch. 2 beginning on pg. 64

- Know *Edgewood v. Kirby* (see the information on Blackboard).

EXAMINATION – Date to be announced in class

- c. Federalism and Separation of Powers: US, Ch. 4; TX, pp. 55-64.
- d. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights: US, pp. 456-67, 493-94 (also *Plessy* and *Brown*)

IV. THE CITIZEN AND PARTICIPATION: Controlling Public Policy?

- a. Survey Research, Political Socialization, and Public Opinion: US, Ch. 5
- b. Participation, Voting, and Elections: US, Ch. 7 & 9; TX, Ch. 5
- c. Political Parties: US, Ch. 8; TX, Ch. 4

- Know *McCulloch*, *Plessy*, *Brown*, *Miranda*, and *Roe*.

EXAMINATION – Date to be announced in class

- d. Interest Groups: US, Ch. 10; TX, Ch. 6.
- e. The Media: US, Ch. 6

V. BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

- a. Congress and Legislature: US, Ch. 11; TX, Ch. 7
- b. The Executives: US, Ch. 12 & in Ch 13 pp. 394-95, 399-402, 407-11; TX, in Ch 8, pp. 301-29. (Be familiar with the Gov, Lt Gov, AG, & Comptroller.)

EXAMINATION – Date to be announced in class

- c. The Courts: US, Ch. 14; TX, in Ch. 10 pp. 382-410, 422-end of chapter.

VI. LOCAL GOVERNMENT – TX, Ch. 3

- Know *Marbury*. The other cases may reappear on the final.

COMPREHENSIVE FINAL -- Tuesday, Tues. 13, 11-1

*“Essays” at the end of Texas chapters may be omitted unless specifically assigned. Items such as Key Terms and Review Questions may be useful to study. You are responsible for boxed items and graphics; see the study guide.