

STATE POLITICAL SYSTEMS
Spring 2008

POL232
MWF: 11:00-11:50

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AB1 302

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Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday 8:00-10:00am, 12:00-1:00pm, by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The purpose of this 3 hour course is to explore the nature of state governments in the U.S. According to political scientist Harold Lasswell, politics can be defined as the process of determining “who gets what, when, and how.” In this course we will examine how states determine “who gets what, when, and how.” We will review a number of approaches to understanding state government decision making. These include historical, constitutional/legal, cultural, economic, institutional, and behavioral approaches. The fact that we have fifty states enhances our ability to analyze the impact of a range of variables on state government decision making. We will compare the constitutions, the legislatures, judiciaries, bureaucracies, and the governor’s offices, the political cultures, the parties and interest groups, the economies; and the policies of the 50 states. We will analyze the impact of these variables on state policy making. (Prerequisites: POL261)

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The objectives for students include:

- Building a knowledge base regarding state politics
- Learning fundamental principles, theories, approaches in state politics
- Learning how to analyze and evaluate arguments

COURSE READINGS:

Smith, Kevin, Alan Greenblatt, and John Buntin. GOVERNING STATES AND LOCALITIES. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2005.

Smith, Kevin. STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2007-8 EDITION. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2008.

GOVERNING ON-LINE. You will need to sign up for a free on-line subscription to the GOVERNING website. Go to <http://www.governing.com/emailsub.htm> to register. This website provides daily news updates from state and local politics. I will be making regular assignments from this site.

Additional Readings. I will place additional readings on Blackboard.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Exams: Four exams will be given. Each will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. You will need a Scantron 882 for the exams.

COURSE EVALUATION:

Exam I	25%
Exam II	25%
Exam III	25%
Exam IV	25%

Students earning 90-100% will earn an A, 80-89% will earn a B, 70-79% will earn a C, 60-69% will earn a D, and any grade below 60% will earn an F.

No extra credit will be given. Grades will not be curved. Students should not ask to have their grades raised in order to avoid suspension, loss of scholarship, financial aid, to avoid the wrath of their parents, etc. Grades are not negotiable; begging will not help.

CLASSROOM POLICIES:

Make Up Exams: Make up exams will be given to students who miss an exam because of illness, a death in the family, or an official university activity. You must notify me immediately if you miss an exam. Make up exams will be given at the convenience of the faculty member. Make up exams will consist of essay questions only.

Attendance: After three unexcused absences, I reserve the right to deduct one point from the final grade for each additional unexcused absence.

Academic Dishonesty: Students found cheating on an exam will receive an F for the course. Cheating includes using any unauthorized material, notes, or information to assist in answering test questions as well as obtaining answers to exam questions from others. Again, you will receive an F for the course for this misconduct.

Classroom Conduct: Turn off your cell phones. Do not plan to get up in the middle of class and leave. If you find you must leave for any reason, do not re-enter the classroom. Once you leave, even for a brief moment, you may not come back in to class. Do not talk to each other while I am talking. I will ask you to leave if you disrupt the class.

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences requires syllabi to include the following information in addition to that provided above: (**Note: The next four sections are covered on the SHSU webpage at: <https://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/> .**)

Academic Dishonesty:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

Americans with Disabilities Act:

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 are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Instructor Evaluations

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