

**Political Science 261.05, CID 1006, 3 credit hours**  
**American Government**  
**Spring 2008**  
**Dr. Waggener**

Course Location/Time: AB1 317, 12 – 12:50, MWF

Office Location: AB1 319B

Office Phone/Email/Fax: (936) 294-1466, [pol\\_taw@shsu.edu](mailto:pol_taw@shsu.edu), (936) 294-4172

Office Hours: 10 – 12:00 MWF or by appointment

**Course Description**

This course addresses: the origin, development, and operation of the US national government and the Texas state government; civil liberties and civil rights; elections and voting; political parties and interest groups; and the three branches of government.

**Course Objectives**

This course has 3 primary objectives:

1. Students will gain factual knowledge of the structural and philosophical foundations of American government and Texas Government.
2. Students will learn how to find and use resources for answering questions and solving problems.
3. Students will be introduced to current political ideas, issues, and events in American politics. Special attention will be given to political ideas, issues, and events that students in the class deem relevant to their political lives.

**Class Format**

The class format will be a mixture of lecture and student participation. During class discussions, we will not assume that there is a “correct” position on a particular political issue, but rather that there are multiple positions all of which must be considered. Thus students are strongly encouraged to arrive at their own political opinions. However, students must arrive at their opinions through active debate and informed reasoning. “Off the cuff” political opinions are not credible or productive to class learning.

## **Required Readings**

### ***Text***

Janda, et al, *The Challenge of Democracy (With Practicing Texas Politics)*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0-618-98647-7

## **Exams, Projects, and Grading**

### ***Exams***

There are 4 multiple-choice exams. Each exam is weighted equally. There is no comprehensive final exam in this course. Exams will be based on material from lectures and the textbook.

### ***Grading***

Final course grades will be based on the following grading scale: 100 – 90=A, 89-80=B, 79-70=C, 69-60=D, 59-0=F

### ***Make-Up Exams***

Make-up exams will be granted to students who can provide formal documentation of a medical or family emergency. If a student fails to provide this documentation, he or she will receive a zero on the exam. Please note that 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. Make up exams will be short answer exams.

### ***Extra Credit***

Under **NO** circumstances will extra credit be offered in this course.

### ***Scored Scantron Sheets***

Students must keep their scored scantron sheets. A student cannot challenge their grade unless he or she has copies of all scantron sheets.

## **Class Attendance**

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student enrolled in this course.

## **Class Policies**

Please see <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus> for class policies regarding:

Academic Dishonesty, Classroom Rules of Conduct, Student Absences on Religious Holy Days, Students with Disabilities Policy, and Visitors in the Classroom. Please see <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html> for classroom rules of conduct.

## **Instructor Evaluations**

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

## Class Schedule

Please note that the class schedule is tentative and may be subject to change.

### *The Philosophical and Structural Foundations of American Government*

Jan 16 – 18            Chapter 3: The Constitution  
Jan 21 – 25            Chapter 4 Federalism

### *Linking Citizens with Government*

Jan 28 – 30            Chapter 5: Public Opinion  
Jan 31 – Feb 1        Chapter 6: The Media  
**Feb 4                    Exam 1**  
Feb 6 – 11            Chapter 7: Participation and Voting  
Feb 13 – 15          Chapter 8: Political Parties  
Feb 18 – 22          Chapter 9: Nominations, Elections, and Campaigns  
Feb 25 – 29          Chapter 10: Interest Groups  
**March 3                Exam 2**

### *Institutions of Government*

March 5 – 7            Chapter 12: The Presidency  
March 10 – 14        Spring Break  
March 17 – 21        Chapter 11: Congress  
March 24 – 28        Chapter 14: The Courts

### **Texas Government and Politics**

March 31              Chapter 1 (Texas section): The Environment of Texas Politics  
April 2 -4            Chapter 3 (Texas section): Local Governments  
**April 7                Exam 3**  
April 9 - 14          Chapter 7 (Texas section): The Legislature and Chapter 8 (Texas section): The Executive

### **Civil Liberties and Civil Rights**

April 16 – 23        Chapter 15: Order and Civil Liberties  
April 25 – 30        Chapter 16: Equality and Civil Rights  
May 2 – 7            Review of Class Material

Final exam week is may 12 - 16. Please see SHSU homepage final exam schedule for information about the time and date for exam 4.

