

POL261, Section 11
Principles of American Government — National and State
Spring 2008: M 6:00-8:50PM, AB1 317

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Office: AB1 315M (enter room 315K, then turn right)
Office Hours: MWF 10:00 – 10:50 AM, MW 12:00 – 2:00 PM,
M 5:00-5:50 PM, and by appointment everyday

Course Description

This course deals with the origin, development, and Constitution of the American governmental system, citizenship and civil rights, suffrage, the national party system, the national executive, organization of congress, national judiciary, federal-state relations, and the Constitution of the State of Texas. This course meets the legislative requirement for a course on the Constitutions of the United States and Texas.

Course Objectives

Specific course objectives include:

- Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends).
- Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories.
- Acquiring an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers.

Required Textbooks

Janda, et al. 2008. *The Challenge of Democracy*. 9th Ed. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company. **{Janda}**

Brown, et al. 2008. *Practicing Texas Politics*. 13th Ed. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company. **{Brown}**

Exams and Grading

Your grade for this course will be determined by your performance on ten take-home/in-class quizzes and four in-class exams:

Take-Home/In-Class Quizzes (10@10 points each)	100 points
Exam 1 (February 25 th)	100 points
Exam 2 (March 24 th)	100 points
Exam 3 (April 14 th)	100 points
Exam 4 (May 12 th , 8:00-10:00 PM)	100 points

The take-home/in-class quizzes will be handed out over the course of the semester. You must be present in class (or have a documented excused absence) to receive credit for these quizzes. The four in-class, closed book, closed notes exams during the semester may include multiple-choice, true/false, and/or matching questions covering material from class readings, lectures, and discussions. There will also be opportunities to earn bonus points throughout the semester. These opportunities will be announced in class.

Course grades will be calculated according to the following scale: A = 450 points or more; B = 400 to 449.999 points; C = 350 to 399.999 points; D = 300 to 349.999 points; F = less than 300 points (students asking me to calculate their grade for them will be penalized 50 points on their overall course grade).

Exam and Quiz Make-Up Policy

You are expected to take the exams and quizzes at the scheduled times. If you must miss an exam or quiz because of illness, family emergency, or some other legitimate reason, you must contact me as soon as possible. Requests to take a make-up exam/quiz will require some documentation or other evidence attesting to your circumstances. If you fail to contact me within 24 hours of the date of the missed exam, you automatically forfeit the opportunity to take a makeup exam/quiz and your grade for that exam/quiz will be recorded as zero. All exams will be made up during the final exam period (Monday, May 12th 8:00-10:00 PM).

Instructor Evaluations

Students will be given the opportunity to complete a course/instructor evaluation form near the end of the semester.

Attendance Policy

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student at Sam Houston State University. Because class attendance and course grade are demonstrably and positively related, I expect students to attend all class sessions of this course. Regular attendance is important because we will cover information in class that is not found in the texts. Attendance will be taken in every class meeting. If you are absent for any reason, it is your responsibility to become informed on what was covered in class. Please get class notes from a fellow student. It is not my policy to give out my lecture notes.

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain 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. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty>.

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, then 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 a complete listing of the university policy, see: http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/811006.pdf.

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. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/documents/861001.pdf.

Classroom Rules of Conduct

Students are expected to abide by the Classroom Rules of Conduct as outlined by the Dean of Students: <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>.

CLASS SCHEDULE & READING ASSIGNMENTS

Note: This schedule and the reading assignments are tentative. Changes will be announced in class.

January 21: MLK Holiday – No Classes

January 28: Campaigns and Elections

Janda, Chapter 9 – “Nominations, Elections, and Campaigns”

February 4: Political Participation

Janda, Chapter 7 – “Participation and Voting”

February 11: Public Opinion & The Media

Janda, Chapter 5 – “Public Opinion and Political Socialization”

Janda, Chapter 6 – “The Media”

February 18: Political Parties & Interest Groups

Janda, Chapter 8 – “Political Parties”

Janda, Chapter 10 – “Interest Groups”

February 25: EXAM #1

March 3: Basics of American Government & Constitutional Foundations of Nation and State

Janda, Chapter 1 – “Freedom, Order, or Equality?” (pp. 6-20)

Janda, Chapter 2 – “Majoritarian or Pluralist Democracy?” (pp. 36-45)

Janda, Chapter 3 – “The Constitution”

Brown, Chapter 2 – “Federalism and the Texas Constitution” (pp. 64-87)

March 10: Spring Break – No Class Meeting

March 17: Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations

Janda, Chapter 4 – “Federalism”

Brown, Chapter 2 – “Federalism and the Texas Constitution” (pp. 55-63)

March 24: EXAM #2

March 31: The Legislative Branch – U.S. and Texas

Janda, Chapter 11 – “Congress”

Brown, Chapter 7 – “The Legislature” (pp. 243-248, 253-290)

April 7: The Executive Branch – U.S. and Texas

Janda, Chapter 12 – “The Presidency”

Janda, Chapter 13 – “The Bureaucracy”

Brown, Chapter 8 – “The Executive”

April 14: EXAM #3

April 21: The Judicial Branch – U.S. and Texas

Janda, Chapter 14 – “The Courts”

Brown, Chapter 10 – “Laws, Courts, and Justice” (pp. 386 – 396)

April 28: Civil Liberties

Janda, Chapter 15 – “Order and Civil Liberties”

May 5: Civil Rights

Janda, Chapter 16 – “Equality and Civil Rights”

May 12 (8:00-10:00 PM): EXAM #4
