

POL261, Section 02
Principles of American Government — National and State
Fall 2009: MWF 10:00 – 10:50 AM, CHSS 252

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Office: CHSS 489
Office Hours: MWF 1:00 – 3:00 PM
& by arrangement 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 Materials:

Berman, Larry & Bruce Allen Murphy. 2008. *Approaching Democracy. Portfolio Edition. 2nd ed.* New Jersey: Pearson Education. **{Berman & Murphy}**

University of Texas On-line Text. *Texas Politics*. 2008. University of Texas: Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Services. Available free at: <http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/> **{On-Line Text}**

Response Card RF: Synchronous Polling Keypad. Available in the campus bookstore or on-line (we do not have a school code, so click “Forgot Code” and then OK): <https://store.turningtechnologies.com/index.cfm>. **{Clicker}**

Exams and Grading: Your grade for this course will be determined by your performance on 10 quizzes, four in-class exams, and a comprehensive final exam:

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|----------------------------------|------------|
| In-Class “Clicker Questions” | 100 points |
| Exam 1 (Friday, September 18) | 100 points |
| Exam 2 (Monday, October 12) | 100 points |
| Exam 3 (Wednesday, November 4) | 100 points |
| Exam 4 (Monday, December 7) | 100 points |
| Final Exam (Monday, December 14) | 100 points |

The “Clicker Questions” will be presented during class lectures throughout the semester. There will be more than 100 questions presented over the course of the semester, and each is worth one point. Some of the questions will require a correct answer to earn credit, while others will have no “correct” answer and anyone answering will receive credit. You may earn a maximum of 115 of these points over the course of the semester (15 of which will be considered “bonus points”).

The four in-class, closed book, closed notes exams during the semester and the final exam may include multiple-choice, true/false, matching, and/or short answer questions covering material from class readings, lectures, and discussions. The final exam is cumulative. There will be NO opportunities to earn bonus points throughout the semester.

Course grades will be calculated according to the following scale: A = 540 points or more; B = 480 to 539.999 points; C = 420 to 479.999 points; D = 360 to 419.999 points; F = less than 360 points (*students asking me to calculate their grade for them will be penalized 100 points on their overall course grade*).

Make-Up Exam Policy: You are expected to take the exams at the scheduled times. There are no opportunities to make up exams in this class. Your final exam score will substitute for any and all of the exams you miss during the semester. For those completing all four in-class exams, you may exempt yourself from the final exam by counting the average score on these four exams as your final exam score. You will need to declare your desire to take this option by turning in a completed “Final Exam Agreement Form” (available on Blackboard) by Friday, December 11th. If you fail to turn in this form and do not take the final exam, your score for the final exam will be recorded as zero (0).

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. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” 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. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/811006.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/StudentGuidelines2007_2008.pdf.

CLASS SCHEDULE & READING ASSIGNMENTS

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

August 26: Expectations – Reasonable and Unreasonable

August 28: Basics of American Government

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 1 – “Approaching Democracy” (pp. 2-11)

August 31 – September 9: Constitutional Foundations of the United States & Texas

August 31 – September 4: Berman & Murphy, Chapter 2 – “The Founding and the Constitution”

September 9: On-line Text, “The Constitution” (Sections 1-3, 6-7)

September 11 - September 16: Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 3 – “Federalism”

SEPTEMBER 18 (FRIDAY): EXAM #1

September 21 – September 28: U.S. Congress & Texas Legislature

September 21 – September 25: Berman & Murphy, Chapter 4 – “Congress”

September 28: On-line Text, “Legislative Branch” (Sections 1-3, 6)

September 30 – October 9: The Executive Branch – U.S. & Texas

September 30 – October 5: Berman & Murphy, Chapter 5 – “The Presidency”

October 7: Berman & Murphy, Chapter 7 – “The Bureaucracy”

October 9: On-line Text, “Executive Branch” (All Sections)

OCTOBER 12 (MONDAY): EXAM #2

October 14 – October 21: The Judiciary – U.S. & Texas

October 14 – October 19: Berman & Murphy, Chapter 6 – “The Judiciary”

October 21: On-line Text, “The Justice System” (Sections 3-4)

October 23 – October 28: Civil Liberties

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 13 – “Civil Liberties”

October 30 – November 2: Civil Rights

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 14 – “Civil Rights and Political Equality”

NOVEMBER 4 (WEDNESDAY): EXAM #3

November 6 – November 13: Participation, Voting, & Elections

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 10 – “Participation, Voting, and Elections”

November 16 – November 18: Public Opinion

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 8 – “Public Opinion”

November 20 – November 23: The Media

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 12 – “The Media”

November 30 – December 4: Political Parties & Interest Groups

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 9 – “Political Parties”; Berman & Murphy, Chapter 11 – “Interest Groups”

DECEMBER 7 (MONDAY): EXAM #4

December 9: Review for Final Exam

December 11: Study Day – No Class Meeting; Final Exam Exemption Forms Due

DECEMBER 14 (MONDAY): FINAL EXAM (11:00 AM – 1:00 PM)
