

POL261, Section 06
Principles of American Government — National and State
Fall 2008: MWF 12:00 – 12:50 PM, CJC A209

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Office: AB1 315M (enter room 315K, then turn right)
Office Hours: MWF 9:00 – 9:50, 11:00 – 11:50 AM
TH 5:00-5:50 PM (at UCTR)
& 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}**

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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| Quizzes (10 @ 10 points each) | 100 points |
| Exam 1 (Wednesday, September 17 th) | 100 points |
| Exam 2 (Monday, October 13 th) | 100 points |
| Exam 3 (Wednesday, November 12 th) | 100 points |
| Exam 4 (Wednesday, December 10 th) | 100 points |
| Final Exam (Monday, December 15 th) | 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. The final exam is cumulative and will be in multiple-choice format. There will also be opportunities to earn bonus points throughout the semester. These opportunities will be posted on the Blackboard course website and announced in class.

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 60 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 12th. 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. 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.

August 27: Basics of American Government

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

August 29 – September 8: Constitutional Foundations of the United States & Texas

August 29 – September 5: Berman & Murphy, Chapter 2 – “The Founding and the Constitution”

September 8: On-line Text, “The Constitution” (Sections 1-3, 6-7)

September 10 – September 15: Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 3 – “Federalism”

SEPTEMBER 17 (WEDNESDAY): EXAM #1

September 19 – September 26: U.S. Congress & Texas Legislature

September 19 – September 24: Berman & Murphy, Chapter 4 – “Congress”

September 26: On-line Text, “Legislative Branch” (Sections 1-3, 6)

September 29 – October 10: The Executive Branch – U.S. & Texas

September 29 – October 3: Berman & Murphy, Chapter 5 – “The Presidency”

October 6: Berman & Murphy, Chapter 7 – “The Bureaucracy”

October 8 – October 10: On-line Text, “Executive Branch” (All Sections)

OCTOBER 13 (MONDAY): EXAM #2

October 15 – October 22: Participation, Voting, & Elections

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

October 24 – October 29: Public Opinion

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 8 – “Public Opinion”

October 31: The Media

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 12 – “The Media”

November 3 – November 5: Political Parties

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 9 – “Political Parties”

November 7 – November 10: Interest Groups

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 11 – “Interest Groups”

NOVEMBER 12 (WEDNESDAY): EXAM #3

November 14: No Class Meeting

November 17 – November 24 : The Judiciary – U.S. & Texas

November 17 – November 21: Berman & Murphy, Chapter 6 – “The Judiciary”

November 24: On-line Text, “The Justice System” (Sections 3-4)

November 26 – November 28: No Class Meetings

December 1 – December 3: Civil Liberties

Berman & Murphy, Chapter 13 – “Civil Liberties”

December 5 – December 8: Civil Rights

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

DECEMBER 10 (WEDNESDAY): EXAM #4

December 12 (Friday): Study Day – No Class Meeting

Optional Final Exam Agreement Form Due

DECEMBER 15 (MONDAY): FINAL EXAM (2:00 PM – 4:00 PM)
