

Political Science 261.16, CID 4036

3 credit hours

American Government

Fall 2008

Dr. Waggener

Course Location/Time: AB4 220, TuTh 3:30 – 4:50

Office Location: AB1 319B

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Office Hours: 10 – 12:00 Ts/Th 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

Print Text

Larry Berman and Bruce Allen Murphy, *Approaching Democracy* (portfolio edition) 2008

Electronic Text

Texas Politics Multimedia Textbook <http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/>

Exams 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 textbooks.

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

There are 280 students enrolled in this course. Four exam scores will be entered for each student. There is the possibility that a data entry error may be made when entering exam scores. Thus students must keep their scored scantrons until final grades are assigned. A student cannot challenge their final 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.

Linking Citizens with Government

August 26 – 28	Chapter 1: Approaching Democracy
September 2 – 4	Chapter 10: Participation, Voting, and Elections
September 9 – 11	Chapter 9: Political Parties
September 16 – 18	Chapter 11: Interest Groups
September 23	EXAM 1

The Constitution, Civil Liberties, and Civil Rights

September 25 – 30	Chapter 2: The Founding and the Constitution
October 2 – 7	Chapter 3: Federalism
October 9 – 14	Chapter 13: Civil Liberties
October 16 – 21	Chapter 14 Civil Rights
October 23	Exam 2 review session
October 28	EXAM 2

Branches of Government (Texas government and US government)

October 30 – November 4	Chapter 4: Congress Multimedia text: Legislature Branch chapter sections 1 – 3 and 9 – 10
November 6 – 11	Chapter 5: The Presidency Multimedia text: The Executive Branch chapter sections 1 – 5 and section 9
November 13	Exam 3 review session
November 18	EXAM 3
November 20	Chapter 6: The Judiciary Multimedia text: The Justice System sections 3 and 5 – 7
November 25 – 27	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
December 2	Chapter 6: The Judiciary Multimedia text: The Justice System sections 3 and 5 – 7
December 4 – 11	Current Event Material and use of online political resources

Final exam week is December 15 – 18. Please see SHSU homepage final exam schedule for the time and date of EXAM 4.

