



*Federal Government
PS 2305-004, Spring 2017
MWF 10-10:50 a.m., MAB 302*

Instructor information

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Office Hours:

by appointment only

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Course description

This course is designed to be an introduction to American government, its historical foundations, institutions and political processes. We will examine how our political system was designed, how it has changed over time and how public opinion, the media and the "information age" have affected our government institutions and public policy. We will discuss the role and scope of government as the Founders conceived it and as it is viewed today. Finally, we will examine current policy issues, weigh the costs and benefits of actions and engage in thoughtful discussion of contemporary policies and actions with a view toward how those issues and actions impact the current political scene. To achieve these objectives, I have chosen a textbook that focuses attention on the role of citizens as key actors in the democratic experiment that we call the United States of America.

Course learning outcomes:

On successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain how government impacts your daily life;
- Recognize and evaluate the basic debates and issues in American government and American political history;
- Explain and critically assess the formal and informal political institutions and their respective roles in American politics;
- Identify and describe the key functions of the three branches of government; and
- Assess the causes and consequences of different forms of political participation, and outline the ways in which individuals and groups can affect political outcomes in the United States.

Program Learning Outcomes (Political Science):

The graduating student will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of significant theoretical approaches of political science through written work and oral communication.

- Demonstrate the ability to analyze domestic and international political processes in written work.
- Demonstrate the ability to develop arguments about global equity and equality issues in politics through written work and oral communication.

Texas Domain III Competency 19:

The teacher understands and applies social science knowledge and skills to plan, organize, and implement instruction and assess learning.

Texas Domain III Competency 23:

The teacher understands and applies knowledge of concepts of government, democracy, and citizenship, including ways that individuals and groups achieve their goals through political systems.

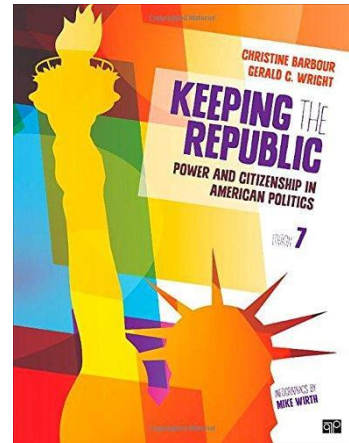
Course required text and materials:

Christine Barbour & Gerald C. Wright, *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics* (CQ Press, 7th edition, 2015). ISBN-13: 9781483352725

The *Keeping the Republic* student companion website:

<http://edge.sagepub.com/barbour7e>

(Most of the resources from the student companion website are included on Blackboard as well).



COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignments	200 points
Reading quizzes	150 points
Policy week	50 points
Mid-term	200 points
Final	200 points
Attendance	200 points

Total: 1000 points

*Citizenship points Up to 50 points

ASSIGNMENTS: You will be required to complete several assignments throughout the semester to assist in the application of course material. The instructions and information regarding each assignment are on Blackboard. Aside from posting an introduction, you have six required assignments. Three of these will be the same for every person in the class. For the other three, you get to choose! On Blackboard, I have assignment possibilities that correspond with each chapter. **Assignments for each week are due by Friday at 10 a.m.** The introduction post is worth 20 points. The other six assignments are worth 30 points each.

QUIZZES: There will be 10 reading quizzes this semester to assess your understanding of the reading material. They will be located in the Student Resources folder for each respective chapter. Quizzes will be available until the Friday at 10 a.m. in the week in which they are due. Each quiz is 10 multiple-choice questions and is worth 15 points. We will go over all quiz answers in class on Fridays. A majority of the multiple choice questions for the exams will come from quiz questions. NOTE: You can attempt the quizzes as many times as you want, and the top score will be used.

EXAMS: There will be two exams – a midterm and a final. Each will be a combination of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. The questions will come from the reading quizzes, practice questions, and discussion questions for each chapter on Blackboard.

POLICY WEEK: Before mid-terms, you will sign up for one of four policy areas: social, economic, foreign, or environmental. You will be responsible for reading the appropriate chapter (Chapter 17, 18, or 19) by Policy Week (April 24-28) and working with fellow classmates to pick discussion questions and activities to guide discussion on your particular policy day, which will take place during policy week. There will be a group on Blackboard for each policy area to assist with group collaboration. I will also provide each group with a set of prompts and ideas, as well as two, in-class group meeting days: February 24 and March 10.

***CITIZENSHIP POINTS:** On the course Blackboard page, I will post several different citizenship activities. With the exception of the SAGE Student Essay Contest (worth 50 points), all other activities are worth 25 points. These are NOT required activities. However, you may earn up to 50 points in citizenship points that I will add to your course total at the end of the year. I will update this list throughout the semester, and I am open to suggestions.

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE: A key element in the development of critical thinking and solid, educated opinions is involvement in discussion and debate. Therefore, I expect all students to attend all classes and to participate actively in activities and discussion during every class session. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class, and unexcused absences will have a negative impact on your final grade. If you are involved in a university-sponsored activity that will result in a class absence, you must notify me BEFORE the approved absence to ensure that I can make the necessary accommodations. “Excused absences” are those that have approved documentation (e.g. certified doctor’s excuses that specifically cite the class date, time, and reason for the missed day). With that said, DO NOT SCHEDULE DOCTOR, DENTIST, CHIROPRACTOR, OR ANY OTHER TYPE OF APPOINTMENTS DURING THIS CLASS.

PREPARATION FOR CLASS: In order to participate fully in class discussion and activities, it is necessary for you to complete the appropriate class readings. Given the length and density of these chapters, they are **not** designed to be read in **one** sitting. You will notice on the class schedule that I have broken chapter reading into manageable chunks. Reading for each class is expected to be done **prior to the class next to which the pages are listed**. In addition to completing the assigned readings before each class, please make sure to bring your text, a writing utensil, and paper to every class.

OTHER COURSE RESOURCES: On the course Blackboard page, under “Course Documents,” there is a “Student Resources” folder for each chapter. Each chapter folder has additional resources to aid in your understanding of the chapter material. This includes eFlashcards (to review important terms), discussion questions (to help you prepare for class discussion and the essay questions on exams), and practice questions (multiple-choice questions with immediate feedback/answers). I highly encourage you to use these resources after completing chapter readings each week.

CLASSROOM DEMEANOR: I expect the environment during class to be conducive to learning. Please make sure to turn off your personal communication devices when class begins. Interruptions caused by these devices may result in your dismissal from class. If you feel that you need special consideration due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., your wife may go into labor soon, you anticipate a family emergency, etc.), see me beforehand.

Many political issues tend to be emotionally charged. It is highly unlikely in a class this size that everyone will share your personal values, beliefs, and opinions. Believe it or not, this is a good thing! The presentation of varying perspectives will help all of us to learn. HOWEVER, this can only be accomplished if ideas, beliefs, and opinions are presented in a way that is conducive to productive, adult conversation. We must all also provide every person, regardless of opinion, his/her opportunity to share.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Doing and/or taking credit for someone else’s work, presenting the ideas and work of others as your own, and/or not citing your sources when you utilize the ideas of others are all violations of academic integrity. It is your responsibility to read and understand the university’s stance on academic dishonesty in the SRSU Student Handbook, as all violations will be taken seriously and handled through the university judicial process.

MISSED EXAMS: It is expected that you take exams on scheduled exam dates. If you need to miss an exam due to an official, university-sponsored function, you will need to provide official documentation and schedule a time to complete the exam BEFORE the scheduled exam date. If some other emergency arises that results in your need to miss an exam, expedient communication and appropriate documentation will assist in my willingness to let you take a make-up exam.

LATE WORK: If you miss a due date, you will be given full credit **only if** the assignment was missed because of a university-excused absence **and only if** you notified me in advance of this absence (except for emergencies, of course). Given that all assignments, aside from the mid-term and final, are accessible from the beginning of the term, the occurrence of late work should be rare.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: It is Sul Ross State University policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such accommodations because of a physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact the ADA coordinator for Program Accessibility located in FH 112 or call 837-8691.

Course schedule

Week	Day/Date	Topic	Readings	Required Assignments
1	Wed, Jan. 18	Introduction to course	Syllabus	
	Fri, Jan. 20	Politics	Scan Ch. 1 and review chapter Blackboard resources	Post introduction on Blackboard
2	Mon, Jan. 23	Political Culture	Scan Ch. 2 and review chapter Blackboard resources	
	Wed, Jan. 25	Our Founding	pp. 61-76	
	Fri, Jan. 27		pp. 76-90	Ch. 3 reading quiz
3	Mon, Jan. 30	The Constitution	pp. 91-118	
	Wed, Feb. 1		pp. 118-130	
	Fri, Feb. 3			Ch. 4 reading quiz
4	Mon, Feb. 6	Civil Liberties	Scan Ch. 5 and review chapter Blackboard resources	
	Wed, Feb. 8	Equal Rights	Scan Ch. 6 and review chapter Blackboard resources	
	Fri, Feb. 10			Ch. 5/6 reading quiz
5	Mon, Feb. 13	Congress	pp. 231-256	
	Wed, Feb. 15		pp. 256-278	
	Fri, Feb. 17			Letter to member of Congress & Ch. 7 reading quiz
6	Mon, Feb. 20	The Presidency	pp. 279-99	
	Wed, Feb. 22		pp. 299-322	
	Fri, Feb. 24	Policy groups		Ch. 8 reading quiz
7	Mon, Feb. 27	The Bureaucracy	Scan Ch. 9 and review chapter Blackboard resources	
	Wed, March 1	The Legal System	pp. 359-375	
	Fri, March 3		pp. 375-396	Government Job Assignment & Ch. 10 reading quiz
8	Mon, March 6	REVIEW		
	Wed, March 8	MID-TERM EXAM		

	Fri, March 10	Policy Week group work		
9	March 13-17	Spring Break		
10	Mon, March 20	Public Opinion	pp. 397-412	
	Wed, March 22		pp. 412-432	
	Fri, March 24			Ch. 11 reading quiz
11	Mon, March 27	Political Parties	pp. 433-454	
	Wed, March 29		pp. 454-470	
	Fri, March 31			Ideology Quiz & Ch. 12 reading quiz
12	Mon, April 3	Interest Groups	pp. 471-487	
	Wed, April 5		pp. 487-508	
	Fri, April 7			Ch. 13 reading quiz
13	Mon, April 10	Voting, Campaigns, & Elections	pp. 509-527	
	Wed, April 12		pp. 527-552	
	Fri, April 14	NO CLASS	GOOD FRIDAY	Ch. 14 reading quiz
14	Mon, April 17	The Media	pp. 553-570	
	Wed, April 19		pp. 570-592	
	Fri, April 21			
15	Mon, April 24	POLICY WEEK	Policy chapter	
	Wed, April 26			
	Fri, April 28			
16	Mon, May 1	Policy		
	Wed, May 3	Final Review		
	Fri, May 5, 10:15 am-12:15 pm	FINAL EXAM		
	May 12	Spring Commencement		
	May 15	Final grades due		