

HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE / AMERICAN GOVERNMENT 2301 - National, State, and Local I 5-Week Distance Education Course

Dr. Cammy Shay / CRN 65814 / November 8 – December 12, 2010

This is an intensive **5-week** fully online course taught using an e-textbook+ approach and with a term long emphasis on select issues in American and Texas politics. The State of Texas requires 48 hours of instruction for students to earn three credits, no matter the length of the term. Consequently, students are expected to spend at least 10 hours a week online reading, participating in discussions, and preparing written assignments to meet the requirements of this course. This three-hour credit course is transferable in partial fulfillment of the state required study of American Government.

Office Hours: By appointment, Tuesdays 10:00 – 2:00 pm at the Eastside Campus, Angela Morales Building, (6815 Rustic, Houston, TX 77087), <http://www.hccs.edu/new/mappg.html>.

Office Phone: 713.718.7141, leave a message. Always identify yourself as a GOVT 2301 student. It is easier and faster to contact me via email than voice message.

E-Mail: Use Blackboard (preferred) or drcammy@hotmail.com (emergency only with your name in the subject line).

My name is Cammy Shay. I thoroughly enjoy teaching American government and political science courses at Houston Community College. My teaching goal is to inspire an interest in thinking about and understanding politics and government. I have always found the study of human political behavior interesting and compelling. And I love college teaching. I earned the following degrees in political science qualifying me to teach American government courses: B.A., Willamette University, Salem, Oregon; M.A. and Ph.D., Rice University, Houston, Texas. I have taught at Houston Community College since 1981. Additionally, I have taught at Texas A&M University, Rice University, and the University of Houston Clear Lake.

College requires time, attention, and commitment. Many of you live busy lives. I respect you for undertaking college studies and for the balance you must find in your lives during this term. Your success is very important to me, but it must be *your success*. I will assist you as I can so long as we maintain open communication. I, too, am a busy person, teaching full time, writing professionally, and raising three children. I enjoy the challenge of being busy and finding balance in my life. It is a pleasure to be your professor this term.

Blackboard Student User ID

Your Blackboard login user ID will be your HCC User ID (sometimes referred to as the “W” number). All HCC students have a unique User ID. If you do not know your User ID you can look it up by visiting the HCC home page:

- From www.hccs.edu, under the column “CONNECT”, click on the “Student System Sign In” link
- Then click on “Retrieve User ID” and follow the instructions.

Or use the direct link to access the Student Sign In page: <https://hccsaweb.hccs.edu:8080/psp/csprd/?cmd=login&languageCd=ENG>

The default student password is “distance.” Students will then be prompted to change their password after their first login. Please visit the Distance Education (DE) Technical Support website if you need additional assistance with your login.

1. The term officially begins on **November 8, 2010**, and that is when you may enter the course. You must log in by **November 11, 2010**, or you will be dropped from the course as never attended. You will find log in procedures at the Blackboard URL as well as important information about your Browser (you must perform the **check browser**) and read about **Pop-up Blockers** and the **Java Security Certificate**. Spend several hours navigating around the course and getting comfortable with its design. You are required to understand the course design and goals. You are expected to stay current on all readings and assignments.
2. Acquaint yourself with how and when your learning will be assessed. Use the Blackboard Calendar and Announcements to keep up with assignment due dates and testing dates. Late work is not accepted or graded.
3. Begin with Module 1. Work through the reading assignments by using the **Learning Goals** provided in Blackboard, tests, WebWork, Article Reviews, and Focused Free Writes at a comfortable pace by spending at least 10 hours a week on this class (the Golden Rule for College Success actually says you should devote 1 to 2 more hours for each hour you are in class – or up to 30 hours a week for this course). You will choose how much information you need to access in order to succeed in each Module.

I have provided extensive resources; you are not expected to read everything, but you must be able to respond to the **Learning Goals** in order to do well.

Course Description: You have enrolled in a non-traditional class, one that incorporates 21st century technology in the learning process. The World Wide Web has an abundance of resource material to assist in learning about government and politics, including articles, websites, podcasts, webcasts, images, music, and more. We will use these resources and I will link you with e-textbook material as well.

Many of you may come to the study of political science wondering what value you will obtain from the course other than the required credit. The study of politics is fascinating. In it you learn about power, conflict, competition and consensus—all observable expressions of human behavior. Because we study how and why authoritative decisions are made for societies, this subject is rich in material about why people behave the way they do. You will also learn about political participation and different actions you may choose to take to influence politics.

Activities: This online class offers you an opportunity to engage in learning using different instructional techniques. We will discuss topics and issues relevant to the assigned resource material. It is therefore important to finish readings and explorations of resource material in a timely manner. Students are expected to log in regularly (at least 4 times a week) and actively participate in discussions. When you are online you will be expected to read all posted information, email, and announcements. Learning will emphasize critical thinking and reflective discourse.

Teaching Philosophy, Course Goals and Format: The teaching and learning philosophy I bring to this course emphasizes critical and reflective thinking and analysis of important political concepts. It is more important to read and write for understanding than to try to memorize a lot of information. To accomplish this objective, you will need to plan ahead and review material well in advance of tests and assignments. It is very important to give yourself adequate learning time, time to think and write about and ponder and process the information you will encounter. In our culture it is rare to give ourselves the kind of time we need to get comfortable with new material. Upon completion of this course, students will be acquainted with the contours of American and Texas politics and government as they fit within the broader discipline of political science. Specific course and module **Learning Goals** are provided in Blackboard. The course format requires different forms of interaction and active learning. Students will participate with the professor, with each other, and with the course material primarily through asynchronous discussions about relevant topics. Students are expected to take an active interest in their own learning this term.

By using a variety of assessment strategies, you will fulfill all the core competencies required by the state of Texas. These include the following:

Reading: Web-based resource material, WebWork, Tests, Article Reviews

Writing: WebWork assignments, Focused Free Writes, Article Reviews

Speaking: Focused Free Writes, Article Reviews, discussion board exchanges, email exchanges with professor, telephone conferences with professor

Listening: Focused Free Writes, Article Reviews, discussions, email exchanges with professor, telephone conferences with professor

Critical Thinking: Assigned resource material, WebWork, Article Reviews, Tests, discussions

Computer Literacy: Email exchanges with professor, preparation of all written assignments, use of the Internet for resource material and assignments.

Textbooks: There are no required hard-copy textbooks for this class. Instead, you will be linked to **Texas Politics**, an e-textbook published by the University of Texas Press, and an American Government textbook titled **ThisNation.com**. You also have the **option** of purchasing any American Government textbook of your choice, if you desire to have a hard-copy textbook handy. Any reputable textbook should cover the basic concepts you will learn in this course. Rather than rely on traditional textbooks to deliver course content, we will utilize a vast array of web-based resource material and notes I will provide in Blackboard. I believe this is the direction higher education teaching and learning is moving and we have the opportunity this term to see where it takes us. You may visit the websites of mainstream textbooks for access to online study guides, flashcards, and practice tests. Two such web addresses are:

American Government: <http://www.ablongman.com/tannahillamgov8e>

Texas Government: <http://www.ablongman.com/tannahill8e>

This syllabus is a comprehensive guide to virtually every feature of this class. You are expected to read it carefully and to understand it. It is long and detailed. It is written in such a way that any question you might have about the class has already been answered. Refer to it regularly to keep informed.

Grading: I believe in using a variety of measures to assess your learning. You will have the opportunity to earn a maximum of 455 points in this course, distributed as follows:

Assessment	Quantity	Points	%	Due Dates
Tests	3 worth 35 points each	105	23	T1 (11/18), T2 (11/29), T3 (12/10)
Focused Free Writes	7 Focused Free Writes worth 15 points each	105	23	See below
Final Exam	1 worth 105	105	23	(12/11 – 12/12)
Article Reviews	2 worth 30 points each	60	13	AR1 (11/21), AR2 (12/05)
WebWork	1 worth 50 point	50	11	(11/28)
Module Input	3 worth 10 points each	30	7	MI1 (11/18), MI2 (11/29), MI3 (12/10)
TOTAL		455	100	

I have included detailed grading rubrics in Blackboard. You should review the rubrics before you prepare any written work to know what I expect of you. You should also consult the rubrics after you receive your score for feedback. I will reply to student requests for additional feedback if you send me an email with specifics concerns included.

Writing helps all of us develop our thinking skills. I look forward to working with you to develop creative, reflective, and interesting responses to writing assignments however I will not grade written work that is not well-written. There is free tutorial assistance for writing through the HCC Distance Education Department and links from your Blackboard login page to AskOnline.

It's easy to calculate your grade throughout this course. Your final grade will be determined by the percentage of total points you earn in the term, with 90% of total points earned scoring an A, 80% a B, etc. The minimum total number of points needed for each grade is as follows:

A = 409 pts. (409 is 90% of 455 points), B = 364 pts. (364 is 80% of 455 points), C = 318 pts. (318 is 70% of 455 points), D = 273 pts. (273 is 60% of 455 points), F = 272 pts. or below. (272 is 59% of 455 points)

Although I hope everyone does well in the course, I will not curve grades. I will return graded assignments in a timely manner, usually within a week. I do not accept late work.

HCC Course Withdrawal Policy

The State of Texas imposes penalties on students who drop courses excessively. Students are limited to no more than SIX total course withdrawals throughout their educational career at a Texas public college or university.

To help you avoid having to drop/withdraw from any class, contact your DE professor regarding your academic performance. You may also want to contact your DE counselor to learn about helpful HCC resources (e.g. online tutoring, child care, financial aid, job placement, etc.). HCC has instituted an Early Alert process by which your professor may "alert" you and DE counselors that you might fail a class because of excessive absences and/or poor academic performance.

You (the student) may drop yourself online through the HCC Student Center prior to the withdrawal deadline: December 2, 2010, by 4:30 pm

After the withdrawal deadline has passed, you will receive the grade that you would have earned. Zeros averaged in for required coursework not submitted will lower your semester average significantly, most likely resulting in a failing grade of an "F". It is the responsibility of the student to withdraw from the class; however, your professor reserves the right to withdraw you without your request due to excessive absences. If you do not feel comfortable contacting your professor to withdraw, you may provide a written request to DE Counseling through the AskDECounseling form found at de.hccs.edu. However, please **do not** contact both a DE counselor and your DE professor to request a withdrawal; either one is sufficient. A W may negatively impact your ability to receive financial aid or your visa status if you are an international student.

Classes of other duration (mini-term, flex-entry, 8-weeks, etc.) may have different final withdrawal deadlines. Please contact the HCC Registrar's Office at 713.718.8500 to determine mini-term class withdrawal deadlines.

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Incomplete (I)

You will receive an I (incomplete) **only** in the event of a documented emergency situation that prevents you from completing the final test. You must speak with me as soon as possible in the event of such an emergency to arrange a course completion schedule. If you receive an I, you must arrange with me to complete the course work before the end of the next long term. After that deadline, the I becomes an I/F. All I designations must be changed to grades prior to graduation. The changed grade will appear on your record as I/Grade (ex: I/B).

Student Services

DISTANCE EDUCATION ADVISING AND COUNSELING SERVICES

DE student information can be found on the DE Student Services website: de.hccs.edu. Advising or counseling can be accomplished through our online request form [AskDECounseling](#). Counselors and Student Services Associates (SSA) can assist students with admissions, registration, entrance testing requirements, degree planning, transfer issues, and career counseling. In-person, confidential sessions, can also be scheduled to provide brief counseling and community referrals to address personal concerns impacting academic success.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Contact the International Student Office at 713-718-8520 if you have questions about your visa status.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the appropriate HCC Disability Support Service (DSS) Counselor at the beginning of each semester. Faculty is authorized to provide only the accommodations requested by the Disability Support Services Office.

Students who are requesting special testing accommodations must first contact the appropriate (most convenient) DSS office for assistance:

Disability Support Services Offices:

System: 713.718.5165

Central: 713.718.6164 – also for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services and Students Outside of the HCC District service areas.

Northwest: 713.718.5422

Northeast: 713.718.8420

Southeast: 713.718.7218

Southwest: 713.718.7909

After student accommodation letters have been approved by the DSS office and submitted to DE Counseling for processing, students will receive an email confirmation informing them of the Instructional Support Specialist (ISS) assigned to their professor.

NOTICE FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE OF HCC SERVICE AREA

Students who live or work outside the HCC service area and cannot take paper exams at one of our HCC testing locations **MUST** make arrangements for a proctor. Please see the DE Student Services Additional Resources webpage for more information.

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM CONDUCT

As with on-campus classes, all students in HCC Distance Education courses are required to follow all HCC Policies & Procedures, the Student Code of Conduct, the Student Handbook, and relevant sections of the Texas Education Code when interacting and communicating in a virtual classroom with faculty and fellow students. Students who violate these policies and guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action that could include denial of access to course-related email, discussion groups, and chat rooms or being removed from the class. I reserve the right to delete any offensive or inappropriate comments or postings from the online discussion board. Online disruptions of the respectful free flow and exchange of thoughts and information will not be tolerated.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

It is a violation of HCC policy for an employee, agent, or student of the College to engage in sexual harassment as defined in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines. Any student who has a complaint concerning this policy has the opportunity to seek resolution of such a complaint in accordance with procedures set forth in the Student Handbook. Report any complaints immediately to College Administration or call the Institutional Equity & Compliance Office 713.718.8271.

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Policies and Procedures: I expect students to familiarize themselves with policies and procedures associated with this course. As the IRS says, ignorance is not an excuse for wrongdoing or mistakes.

***Students' Responsibility to Read the HCC Student Handbook:** Students shall refer to the HCC Student Handbook (<http://www.hccs.edu/hccs/current-students/student-handbook>) for information about students' rights and responsibilities.

***Student Course Reinstatement:** - Students have a responsibility to arrange payment for their classes when they register, either through cash, credit card, financial aid, or the installment plan. Faculty members have a responsibility to check their class rolls regularly, especially during the early weeks of a term, and reconcile the official class roll to ensure that no one is attending class whose name does not appear on it. Students who are dropped from their courses for nonpayment of tuition and fees who request reinstatement after the official date of record (OE Date) may be reinstated by making payment in full and paying an additional \$75 per course reinstatement fee. A student requesting reinstatement should present the registrar with a completed Enrollment Authorization Form with the signature of the instructor, department chair, or dean who should verify that the student has been regularly attending class. Students who are reinstated are responsible for all course policies and procedures, including attendance requirements. A dean may waive the reinstatement fee upon determination that the student was dropped because of a college error. The dean should note the nature of the error in a memo to the registrar with appropriate documentation.

***Time Management:** Procrastination is the enemy! Do not put off until tomorrow what you *can and should do today*. Many students are tempted to delay doing the work as long as possible. I cannot stress enough that this is a recipe for failure. Staying current with your reading assignments, tests, and written work is essential to success in this course. **You may submit assigned work early; I do not accept late work.**

***Study Skills:** Good study skills are essential for college success. Reading assigned material is a key to your success. Don't deceive yourself into believing that you can do well in this course if you do not read the assigned material. Please ask me any questions you might have as you work through the subject. Consider me a resource and do check out the online study skills information posted in the Course Supplements area of Blackboard.

***Attendance:** Students are expected to attend online. Students who stop logging into and participating in Blackboard must withdraw themselves from the course. Failure to log into Blackboard and participate regularly will result in the student being denied access to the online course. Students who do not log into and participate in Blackboard but who do not withdraw from class will receive a grade of F for the course.

***Technology Problems:** You must contact the distance education technicians when you have technology problems by going to <http://d2.parature.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=8081>.

***Scholastic Integrity:** Honest work and effort are expected and are rewarded. However, if any student is caught cheating on a test or colluding on or plagiarizing papers, the student will receive a grade of zero on that test or assignment. A second infraction will result in a grade of "F" for the term with a recommendation to the Academic Dean for expulsion from HCC. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, unauthorized collusion (sharing) on tests or papers, or copying/paraphrasing directly from another person's work (including websites) but passing it off as your own. Review your obligations in the *HCC Student Handbook*.

***Modification of Syllabus:** This syllabus acts as a contract between students and professor. I will make every effort to fulfill the requirements of this syllabus during this term. However, in the unlikely event that changes must be made, I reserve the right to make such changes and to notify students in a timely manner of any such changes.

Course Modules: This course is organized into three Modules, each of which contains the information you must learn in order to be successful. From the Course Content homepage in Blackboard, click on Course Modules for access to the three content Modules as well as an array of supplemental information you are obligated to familiarize yourself with this term.

Module Timelines

- Module 1 – November 8 – November 18, 2010
- Module 2 – November 19 – November 29, 2010
- Module 3 – November 30 – December 10, 2010

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Final Exam – **December 11 – 12, 2010**

Module 1: Ideology, Immigration Politics, Background of Government & Politics, Political Socialization, Public Opinion, Interest Groups, and Political Parties.

Module 2: Separation of Powers, Education Politics, Constitutions, Political Participation, and Elections.

Module 3: Federalism, Infrastructure Politics, Intergovernmental Relations, and Local Governments.

Explanation of Assessment: This section of the syllabus provides you with a brief explanation of how your learning will be assessed this term. Please review it carefully.

Tests (T): Click on Assessments to learn more about my testing philosophy. All tests are taken online in Blackboard. You may use your notes or books, but each 35-question test will have a 30-minute time limit. You can take each test up to three times within the specified timeframe for each test, but each time you take the same test you could receive different questions. Blackboard will record the highest score. You will take a test upon completion of each of three Course Modules. **There will be no make-ups for missed tests.** You have three opportunities to take each test and ample time in which to complete the task. There are no exceptions to this rule; plan ahead to avoid problems. Test due dates are listed in the Grading section of this syllabus.

Final Exam (F): The final exam is comprehensive and will be made up of questions from or similar to those in the Course Module Tests. You may take the final exam three times prior to the due date/time, with Blackboard recording your highest score. **There will be no make-ups for missing the final exam.**

Focused Free Writes (FFW): We will engage in a provocative approach to teaching and learning this term that employs a Free Writing technique. In the course area called Discussions I will post seven Focused Free Write exercises, instructions, and due dates. You will respond to and engage in respectful conversations with each other about your postings. Postings must be composed of a minimum of 10 relevant and complete sentences in order to receive full points. Each Focused Free Writing response can earn 15 points for a total of 105 points. **I do not accept late submissions.** Due dates are posted below and on the Discussion Board.

You can earn up to one (1) bonus point for each Focused Free Write (for a total of 7 bonus points during the term) by contributing to a meaningful discussion about the assignment topic. To do this, after posting your initial response, ask a respectful question or comment about student Focused Free Write responses and/or reply to questions or comments made about your response. The purpose of the bonus points is to encourage you to spend extra time participating in conversations with your classmates about each Focused Free Write topic. These brief discussions allow students a chance to explore their own thinking about issues raised in the course curriculum. Of course, feel free to discuss the topic beyond the bonus point opportunity. **I do not accept late submissions.**

FFW Due Dates/midnight: FFW 1 – **11/12**, FFW 2 – **11/17**, FFW 3 – **11/22**, FFW 4 – **11/27**, FFW 5 – **12/02**, FFW 6 – **12/07**, FFW 7 – **12/12**

WebWork (WW): Click on Assignments to learn more about the WebWork assignment. During the term you will be responsible for turning in one web-based assignment. This assignment will call on you to read and think about information critically and analytically before you write up the finished product. The WebWork assignment builds on information you will learn in the content modules of this class. You must prepare your **maximum two page** paper in a word processing program (Word is preferred) with one inch margins, double spaced, 12 point font. You must write in your own words and, though you can share ideas with your classmates, you must submit your own individual work. There is a severe penalty for collusion (sharing your paper) and/or plagiarism. Be sure to use spell/grammar check and your own eyes to proof your papers. Points will be deducted for spelling/grammar errors and/or for papers that are too long or too short. You do not need a heading or title page. You do not have to include your name or social security number. You **MUST** upload your papers according to the "How to Submit Papers" instructions available to you in Blackboard by clicking on Course Requirements. WebWork due date is **November 28, 2010**. **I do not accept late WebWork assignments.**

This syllabus is a comprehensive guide to virtually every feature of this class. You are expected to read it carefully and to understand it. It is long and detailed. It is written in such a way that any question you might have about the class has already been answered. Refer to it regularly to keep informed.

Article Reviews (ARs): The Article Reviews give you the opportunity to read and write about a relevant political article. You are to read and think about the elements of the assignment, follow all instructions, and creatively report on your discoveries in a thoughtful review. You must prepare your **maximum one page** paper in a word processing program (Word is preferred) with one-inch margins, double spaced, 12-point font. You must write in your own words and, though you can share ideas with your classmates, you must submit your own individual work. There is a severe penalty for collusion (sharing your paper) and/or plagiarism. Be sure to use spell/grammar check and your own eyes to proof your papers. Points will be deducted for spelling/grammar errors and/or for papers that are too long or too short. You do not need a heading or title page. You do not have to include your name or social security number. You **MUST** upload your papers according to the "How to Submit Papers" instructions available to you in Blackboard by clicking on Course Requirements. Article Review 1 is due **November 21, 2010** and Article Review 2 is due **December 5, 2010**. **I do not accept late Article Reviews.**

Module Input (MI): You will receive up to ten points for each of three Course Input paragraphs of at least ten substantive sentences in which you provide specific constructive feedback about your learning in each course module. Your focus is not on the curriculum itself but rather on the design of the course module, the information you access in each module, and discussions that take place within each module. Module Input 1 is due on **November 18, 2010**, Module Input 2 is due on **November 29, 2010**, Module Input 3 is due on **December 10, 2010**. **I do not accept late Module Inputs.**