

# **American Government: Process and Policies**

PSCI 1050.003

Spring 2014

Mon., Wed., & Fri.: 2:00–2:50 p.m.

Wooten Hall 222

## **Description**

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the role of the United States government in the American political system. We will consider three major areas. The first area is an examination of the American-style political process including public opinion, the role of the media in politics, political participation, political parties, interest groups, and campaigns & elections. The second area is an examination of the policy-making process and various public policies including social welfare, healthcare, education, economics and foreign policy. The third area examines Texas state politics, including Texas political culture and public policy. Note: this is one of two courses on American Government required by state law and as part of UNT's general education ("core") requirements.

## **Instructor**

**Instructor:** Mr. Christopher Linebarger  
**Email:** ChristopherLinebarger@my.unt.edu  
**Office:** Wooten Hall 173  
**Office Hours:** MWF: 12:00 PM–1:00 PM

## **Teaching Assistants**

Your TA is your first line of defense in this class, and they have primary responsibility for grading your assignments and exams. They are your first resource for any non-subject material questions in the class. Any problems you have with procedural concerns such as missing homework, incorrect grades, etc., should be discussed first with your TA. This is critical for administrative questions because of the size of the class.

**Teaching Assistant:** Mr. Michael Marshall  
**Email:** MichaelMarshall@my.unt.edu  
**Office:** Wooten Hall 132  
**Office Hours:** Mon., Wed., 12:00–2:00

## Supplemental Instruction

A Supplemental Instruction (SI) component is provided for all students who want to improve their understanding of the material taught in this course. SI sessions are led by a student who has already mastered the course material and has been trained to facilitate group sessions where students can meet to compare class notes, review and discuss important concepts, develop strategies for studying, and prepare for exams. Attendance at SI sessions is free and voluntary. On average, students who attend supplemental instruction once a week, earn a significantly higher course grade than those who do not attend. SI sessions begin the second week of class and continue throughout the semester. A session schedule will be announced in class. For information about the program, and session schedule/updates, visit: <http://learningcenter.unt.edu/si>.

## Office Hours

Office hours for your TA and myself are listed above. Please feel free to stop by during these times; no appointment is needed. Come with questions, concerns, comments, or a desire for further discussion.

If none of these times are convenient for you, and you would like to schedule a meeting to discuss course material, please e-mail your TA or myself to do this. Please give us at least 48 hours notice when scheduling meetings. For example, do not e-mail or call us to schedule a meeting the same day or even the next day if office hours are inconvenient for you. This allows us to make sure we have the ample time necessary to meet with you. Remember, office hours are for your benefit, and we are here to help.

## Required Course Materials

### Textbook

There is one required text book for this course:

- Patterson, Thomas E. *We The People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics*, 10/e.

Each student must purchase the textbook. The textbook is a custom edition produced for UNT, so any copies that you may find online will not be the correct version and should not be purchased.

### Blackboard

A Blackboard page is maintained for this course at <https://learn.unt.edu>. Students are responsible for checking Blackboard every day for assignments, updates, and announcements. Student grades will also be posted in Blackboard.

## LearnSmart Modules

Within Blackboard, you will see a series of McGraw Hill “LearnSmart” modules. These are designed purely as study aids to improve your performance on exams and assignments. They are entirely optional, and you will take no penalty for not completing them.

There will be a total of 14 modules released over the course of the semester. Access to the modules will be released in batches. The first batch will open on the first day of class and will remain open until 1:30pm on the day of the first exam. The second batch will open at 3:00 on the day of the first exam, and will close at 1:30 of the day of the second exam. The third batch will open at 1:30 on the day of the second exam, and will close at 1:00 on the day of the third exam.

## Communication

When e-mailing your TA or myself, please include:

1. Course Number and Section: PSCI 1050.003
2. Subject Line: include something relevant to your e-mail message. For example, write “Question about Exam 1” in the subject line if it pertains to Exam 1.
3. Message: write your message coherently, and please do not use “IM/text message speak” or shorthand. This helps us to understand your message quickly without deciphering anything.

We get a large number of e-mails each day, and following these criteria helps us to respond faster. We will do our best to respond to your e-mails as quickly as possible.

Finally, due to the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA), your TAs and I are not allowed to discuss grades with you via email. Accordingly, grade disputes or any questions about grades should be handled during office hours or by appointment.

## Course Rules

- There will be little tolerance for disruptive behavior (including carrying on conversation with those around you during the lecture, using electronics in a disruptive manner, etc). Students not displaying appropriate conduct will be asked to leave class.
- You may use laptops to take notes; however, if their use becomes disruptive, you will be asked to put them away.
- Coffee and other beverages are fine, but please do not eat in class. I will not hold you past the end of class, so please do not begin shuffling papers and loading your bags prior to the end of class. Not only is this rude, but it is distracting to other students.
- You are responsible for your own education. You are expected to be responsible for attending lectures and arranging for notes when you miss lecture. You are responsible

for submitting assignments when they are due and for taking exams as noted on the syllabus.

- If you are late, please enter the lecture hall as quietly as possible and take the nearest available seat. Please do not be disruptive.
- Please be sure to silence or turn off cell phones and mobile devices before coming to class.
- Be sure to check Blackboard often. I will provide important course information there, including schedule changes, that you will be responsible for being aware of.
- All work in this course is expected to be your own. Cheating is taken extremely seriously and we will refer incidents of cheating to the appropriate university authorities.
- There are no extra credit assignments. Please do not ask.
- Come to me with problems/concerns early. Waiting for help until just before the exam will likely be too late.
- This syllabus is not a contract. I reserve the right to alter the schedule listed in this syllabus. You are responsible for being aware of any announced changes.
- I do not negotiate grades or arbitrarily bump up grades under any circumstances. I will only assign the grade that you earn in this class.

## Attendance

No formal attendance will be taken during lecture. As you are attending UNT to learn and acquire a degree, you are expected to attend lecture. However, as adults, the choice to do so is yours. I will make my lecture slides available on Blackboard, but they alone are not sufficient to prepare you for the course's exams.

## Grades

All assessment credit and grades on the exams will be posted on UNT's Blackboard Learn site: <https://learn.unt.edu/>.

At the end of the semester, your exams and assignments will be totalled out of a possible 100%. Exams are worth 75% of the grade, quizzes are worth 25% of the grade.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Exams (x3)	75%
Quizzes (x2)	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

At the end of the semester, your final grade will be assigned as follows:

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	90%
B	80%
C	70%
D	60%
F	<60%

## Online Quizzes

There will be **2 unannounced quizzes** in this course. The first quiz will occur sometime in the first eight weeks of class. The second will occur sometime in the last seven weeks. These are worth a total 25% of your final grade. The quizzes require you to answer a short battery of multiple choice question drawn from the texts and lecture (including multi-media). Each quiz will be announced in class and will be available online from the end of that class meeting until 11:59pm the following day. No makeup quizzes will be permitted without a documented medical excuse that verifies that the student was medically unable to complete an online course assignment during the time period. In the event of a problem with an online quiz or a medical excuse for a quiz, please contact your assigned teaching assistant.

## Exams

There will be **3 exams** in this course, each of which is marked on the course calendar below. Exams are worth 75% of your total grade. Each exam requires the student to answer multiple-choice questions drawn from the required readings and lecture (including multi-media). Scantron sheets will be furnished by the instructor to each student during each exam. Students are responsible for furnishing a valid UNT Identification Card corresponding to their own exam submission and a #2 pencil for completing the scantron.

If you bring your notes with you to study prior to the beginning of the test, please bring some sort of bag to put them in while taking the exam. Placing them on the floor in front of you is not allowed. You may also not wear headphones, hats, or sunglasses during exams, and phones must be put on silent or vibration mode, and put away. You may not listen to music, answer your phone, or text during the exam. If you are seen with a phone or other mobile device in your hand, or if your phone goes off during the exam, you will be asked to leave. You may not leave the classroom and then return while the exam is in session. Please bring tissues/cough drops/water with you (if appropriate), and take care of personal matters before the exam begins. Finally, we will not hand out any exams after the first one has been turned in. If you arrive after the first completed exam is turned in, you are out of luck.

Exams will not be returned. If you would like to review your exam, please e-mail your TA.

## **Make Ups**

Make up exams and quizzes are available only in the case of a documented medical or personal emergency or mandatory participation in a university sanctioned event. Documentation should be presented to either your TA or myself, and arrangements will then be made. Note that the documentation must indicate why you could not be in class at the *exact time of the test*. Please also note that a make-up is not an opportunity for a “do-over,” to “re-take” an exam or quiz, nor is it an opportunity to replace a zero.

## **Accommodations**

The Political Science Department cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA), <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. The ODA makes formal recommendations regarding necessary and appropriate accommodations based on specifically diagnosed disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, you should contact the ODA as soon as possible at 940.565.4323, or visit in the Sage Hall (room 167). Please present your written accommodation request to me on or before the sixth day of class. Information regarding disabilities is treated in a confidential matter.

## **UNT Dept. of Political Science Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism**

The UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline defines cheating and plagiarism as the use of unauthorized books, notes, or otherwise securing help in a test; copying others' tests, assignments, reports, or term papers; representing the work of another as one's own; collaborating without authority with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work; or otherwise practicing scholastic dishonesty.

Normally, the minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a grade of “F” in the course. In the case of graduate departmental exams, the minimum penalty shall be failure of all fields of the exam. Determination of cheating or plagiarism shall be made by the instructor in the course, or by the field faculty in the case of departmental exams.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism on graduate departmental exams, theses, or dissertations shall automatically be referred to the departmental Graduate Studies Committee. Cases of cheating or plagiarism in ordinary coursework may, at the discretion of the instructor, be referred to the Undergraduate Studies Committee in the case of undergraduate students, or the Graduate Studies Committee in the case of graduate students. These committees, acting as agents of the department Chair, shall impose further penalties, or recommend further penalties to the Dean of Students, if they determine that the case warrants it. In all cases, the Dean of Students shall be informed in writing of the case.

Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

## **UNT Dept. of Political Science Policy on Academic Integrity**

The Political Science Department adheres to and enforces UNT's policy on academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and sabotage). Students in this class should review the policy (UNT Policy Manual Section 18.1.16), located at:

<http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/>

and file: 7-Student\_Affairs-Academic\_Integrity.pdf

Violations of academic integrity in this course will be addressed in compliance with the penalties and procedures laid out in this policy. Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in The UNT Policy Manual Section 18.1.16 "Student Standards of Academic Integrity."

### **Acceptable Student Behavior**

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [www.unt.edu/csrr](http://www.unt.edu/csrr).

### **Religious Holidays**

In accordance with UNT Policy 15.2.5, students will be excused from class or other activities for the observance of religious holidays, for religions whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20 of the Tax Code. The student is encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible regarding the absence.

### **Course Evaluations**

The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SETE to be an important part of your participation in this class.

## Related Resources

Additional resources pertaining to course enrollment and student rights and responsibilities may be found here:

- *Succeed at UNT*: UNT has initiated a new campaign designed to help you succeed in your classes. The following site provides tips and general advice for academic success: <https://success.unt.edu/>
- *Course drop*: It is your responsibility to determine when and what forms you need concerning drops, withdrawals, and other administrative actions. For assistance, please visit: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html>
- *Academic dishonesty*: <http://www.vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>



## Course Calendar

The following calendar is only a guide. Dates and topics are subject to change. Any changes will be announced in-class well ahead of time. It is your responsibility to keep up to date with any schedule alterations.

Week	Dates	Topic	Required Reading	Due Dates
1	1/13 - 1/17	Introduction & Political Culture	Ch. 1	
2	1/20 (Mon.)	NO CLASS	None	MLK DAY
2	1/22 - 1/24	Public Opinion	Ch. 2	
3	1/27 - 1/31	Political Participation	Ch. 3	
4	2/3 - 2/5	Introduction to Texas History and Politics; Participation in Texas	Ch. 11	
4	2/7 (Fri.)	EXAM 1	None	EXAM 1
5	2/10 - 2/14	Elections, Campaigns and Voting	Ch. 6	
6	2/17 - 2/21	Political Parties, Candidates, and Campaigns	Ch. 4	
7	2/24 - 2/28	Congressional Elections / Interest Groups	Ch. 5	
8	3/3 - 3/7	The News Media	Ch. 7	
NA	3/10 - 3/14	NO CLASS	None	SPRING BREAK

Week	Dates	Topic	Required Reading	Due Dates
9	3/17 - 3/19	Political Parties in Texas; Campaigns in Texas	Ch. 13	
9	3/21 (Fri.)	EXAM 2	None	EXAM 2
10	3/24 - 3/26	The Policy Process	Ch. 16, 482-488	
10	3/28 (Fri.)	NO CLASS	None	ISA CONFERENCE
11	3/31 - 4/4	Economic and Environmental Policy	Ch. 8	
12	4/7 - 4/11	Welfare and Education Policy	Ch. 9	
13	4/14 - 4/18	Foreign Policy	Ch. 10	
14	4/21 - 4/25	Public Policy in Texas	Ch. 16	
15	4/28 - 4/30	Financing State Gov. / Course Wrap Up	Ch. 17	
15	5/2	NO CLASS	None	READING DAY
16	5/5	EXAM 3: meeting at 1:30 to 3:30	None	EXAM 3