American Government: Process and Policies
Political Science 1050, Fall 2012
MWF Noon, Lyceum

Instructor: Dr. Wendy L. Watson
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129 Wooten Hall

Office Hours: M/T/W 2:00 – 4:30; and by appointment

TAs: Eliza Kelly Jared Perkins
Lee Rathbun Karl Boyd-Nafstad

Course Overview / Objectives

This is one of two courses on American and Texas politics required by state law and as part of UNT's general education ("core") requirements. The U.S. government is a representative democracy. That suggests a connection between the will of the people (you and me) and the policies implemented by government. In PSCI 1050, we trace that connection by looking at where individuals’ political values and attitudes come from, the mechanisms that connect individual beliefs to government action, and the outcomes of government policy.

Students who complete this course will be able to

- identify, describe, and explain the origin of individual political attitudes;
- evaluate polling as a means of measuring public opinion;
- demonstrate knowledge about the role and effects of the media on political behavior;
- explain and assess theoretical explanations for the individual decision to participate;
- assess the decline in American voter turnout;
- explain the formation of interest groups and their effect on U.S. politics;
- explain the process of electing the President and Vice President of the U.S.;
- explain the reapportionment and redistricting process
- explain the election of members of the House and Senate;
- explain the relationship between money and elections;
- recognize the stages of the policy making process;
- evaluate the need for governmental regulation;
- explain U.S. economic policy;
- explain domestic and international forces that shape U.S. foreign policy; and
- identify and critique current U.S. economic and foreign policy positions.

Learning Community

If you are enrolled in this course, you are also enrolled in Psychology 1630 with Dr. Boals. Dr. Boals and I have worked together to create a “two class experience” for you, centered around the election and civic engagement, an experience that will be richer and more interesting than our classes in isolation. You should note that these two classes have to go together. If you are taking one, you must be taking the other. There are two projects (a group project and an individual project) that “count” in both classes.
Required Materials

First, we will use Blackboard Learn (learn.unt.edu). When you go to the site, you will log in using your EUID and password (just like you would for my.unt.edu). Look for PSCI 1050 in your list of classes. If you do not see it, let a TA know ASAP.

There are two required texts:


In addition, you must purchase a Turning Point Response Card (radio frequency required, LCD preferred) ("Clicker" on the syllabus).

You can purchase the clicker at the UNT Bookstore (new for $42.75 or used for $32.25). If you have a Turning Point clicker from another class, you can use it here, but you should reregister the clicker ID number through Blackboard Learn.

For the Text and Workbook, you have three options:

1. You can purchase the text from the UNT Bookstore for **$105.75**. The text is a loose leaf version (so you'll need to put it in a 3-ring binder). It comes with an online registration code that provides you with access to an electronic version of the Text, AND the Workbook (which is only available online).

   OR

2. You can purchase the materials online through a link to Pearson Publishing for approximately **$51.60**. If you purchase the materials directly from Pearson, the cost is significantly lower BUT you will not have a print version of the Text. Rather, you'll have access to the electronic version of the Text and the Workbook.

   OR

3. You can purchase the textbook used or utilize the copy on reserve at the library. You will still need to purchase access to the Workbook for **$37.50** (you will make this purchase online through a link to Pearson Publishing on Blackboard Learn).
Class Responsibilities and Grades

Your grade in this class will be based on the following components:

- Reading Quizzes: 10%
- Workbook Assignments: 15%
- Clicker Questions: 10%
- Group Project:
  - Individual Summary Papers: 5%
  - Group Poster Presentation: 10%
- Be the Difference Paper: 5%
- Exams (3 @ 15%): 45%

Grades are based on the following distribution:

- 90-100 = A
- 80 – 89 = B
- 70 – 79 = C
- 60 – 69 = D
- < 60 = F

I will round final grades (and only final grades) using traditional mathematical criteria. For example, an 89.5 rounds up to a 90, but an 89.4 rounds down to an 89. Do not ask or expect me to deviate from these rules. I know the cut-offs are arbitrary, but all cut-offs for grades are arbitrary. Similarly, it’s arbitrary that Best Buy charges you $89.50 for an iPod rather than $89.49. You would not be able to buy an $89.50 iPod with $89.49, and you will not be able to “purchase” an A with 89.49%, even though it’s “really close.”

Team 1050:

We have four TAs in this class (listed above). The TAs and I will all hold office hours. These are open-door opportunities for you to come by and ask questions about class materials.

In addition, we are fortunate to have a Supplemental Instructor (Ayasha Hensen). The 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. Students may attend as many times as they choose. 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/
Groups:

Communication, coordination, collaboration, and compromise are all important life skills. Group work helps build those skills. You will be assigned to a small group for this class. You will work with your group on the group project. In addition, for a number of our activities you will work with your group as a “team”. Dr. Boals and I will assign you to groups when the drop period ends.

Each group will be assigned to a specific political science TA and a specific psychology TA. This pair of TAs will work as a team to guide you through the group project. Your political science TA should be your first stop for all questions about grades, class policies, clickers, etc. I should be your last resort, to resolve conflicts or to help when the TA is unable.

On Monday, September 10, your group will meet during the noon – 1 PM hour. This will be a chance to meet the members of your group, trade contact information, and divide up the articles that each group will need to summarize for the group project. If you are not present, you will not have any say in which articles you are assigned to summarize, so it is really in your best interest to be present that day.

Groups will also meet for the full noon – 2 block on Friday, October 5 (to discuss the articles, trade summaries, and start planning the group project), on Friday, October 12 (to pin down plans for the group project and divvy up the labor), and on Wednesday, October 31 (to assemble your poster presentations and have them evaluated).

Apart from class meetings, you will need to coordinate and communicate with your group members. This communication should take place on Blackboard, in your group’s discussion section. If there is a dispute about who agreed to do what or who notified whom of an expected absence, we will not be able to resolve that dispute unless the communication is recorded on the discussion board.

Workbook Assignments:

You will complete three assignments from the Cox and Ruderman workbook. To complete these assignments, you will need to do the assigned reading on the firewall protected workbook website. The site behind the firewall includes text relevant to the assignments, directions, and necessary web links.

After you complete the reading, you will actually answer the questions in Blackboard. You can only complete a workbook exercise once (so make sure you are happy with your answers before you hit “submit”. Workbook assignments are due at noon on the due date (always a Monday). Late assignments will not be accepted. No exceptions.

Reading Quizzes:

For each topic covered on the syllabus, you are expected to read material in the textbook and complete exercises on MyPoliSciLab BEFORE we cover the topic in class. To assure
that you are adequately preparing for our time together, you will take a quiz over the readings and the MyPoliSciLab exercises. You will complete these quizzes on Blackboard. They are due at noon on the due date (the due date being the day we begin covering the topic in class, either a Monday or a Wednesday).

You may take each quiz as many times as you like before the due date; your highest score will be the one that counts. Please note that you may get different questions each time you take the quiz. Do not treat the quiz like a slot machine, where you keep pulling the lever trying to hit the jackpot. Take it thoughtfully (use your book!) the first time, get a perfect score, and move on. **If you do not achieve at least a 70%, I will reduce your grade to a zero.**

You cannot take quizzes late, period. No exceptions. If you are traveling or know you will be busy, plan ahead. If you want, you can complete all of the quizzes during the first week of class ... but you cannot take them after the due date. Your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped from your final grade calculation, so if you miss one or two, it will not affect your grade.

**Clickers**

You must purchase a TurningPoint “clicker” and bring it to class. For each of our “lecture” days, I will ask a number of clicker questions during the lecture. There are a total of 23 class days in which I will ask clicker questions. For each of those days, a perfect score is 10/10 (that doesn’t mean there will be 10 questions each day; some questions may be worth more than one point). I will drop your three lowest scores (these may be zeros if you miss class or if you forget your clicker). The average of the remaining 20 class days will constitute 10% of your final grade.

Note that we will also use the clickers for the Red/Blue game and for Current Events Jeopardy. Those days are not “regular” clicker days, but there is extra credit on the line ... and if you do not have a clicker, you cannot participate.

Clickers may be purchased or rented from the UNT bookstore. They need to be registered through Blackboard. If you do not register your clicker, you will not get the points.

**Group Project:**

Your team has been hired by one of the two major party political candidates and tasked with developing a strategy to increase that candidate’s chances of winning the general election.

Each group will be responsible for reading a number of articles (three per group member) related to voting behavior, turnout, and the psychology of political participation. Using the information you learn from those articles as well as what you learn in both this class and PSYC 1630, your group will develop a strategy that you will outline on a poster.
presentation on Friday, November 2. Dr. Boals and I, along with the TAs, will evaluate your group’s poster presentation.

In anticipation of the poster project, your group will have to divide the readings. Each student will be responsible for three articles. You will have to write a 1 page summary of that article to share with your group (so make copies of each summary for each member of your group). You will also turn in those summaries through Blackboard.

Your grade for those summaries will make up 5% of your final grade while the group poster presentation will make up 10% of your final grade.

As an added incentive, the 10 best presentations in the class will be showcased at an evening event on Friday, November 9 from 6 – 8 PM at UNT on the Square. We will invite local business-people and politicians to see your work, and you will have the opportunity to network with them.

Be the Difference Paper:

You don’t have to be a presidential candidate to make a difference in the world around you. For this final short (3-4 page, double-spaced) paper, you should identify a social or political issue that matters to you and explain (briefly) the change you want to see in the world. Next, identify one thing you have learned in political science and one thing you have learned in psychology that will help YOU bring about the change you want to see in the world. This paper is due (online) by noon on Friday, November 30.

Extra Credit:

There are very specific and limited opportunities for extra credit:

(1) Collective Action Game: On September 10, you will play the Collective Action Game. Participants may earn up to 3 extra credit points for the first exam.

(2) Red/Blue: On September 28, we will play a team-based clicker competition called “Red/Blue.” To prepare, you should familiarize yourself with the platforms and histories of the Democratic and Republican parties. The team(s) with the highest score will receive 2 points of extra credit on the second exam. Note: the questions that are part of this game will not count toward your general clicker grade.

(3) On Friday, November 9, we will play a team-based clicker competition called “Current Events Jeopardy”; the team(s) with the highest score will receive 2 points of extra credit on the third exam.

Exams

There are four exams in this class: three in-class, non-cumulative exams (on 10/3, 11/7, and 12/5) and a cumulative final exam during the final exam period. They are entirely multiple choice. I will drop your lowest exam grade.
Please note a few rules about exams:

1. You cannot wear hats, headphones, or sunglasses during the exam.
2. You may not listen to music, answer your phone, or text during the exam. If we spot a portable electronic device, it will be confiscated and you will be asked to leave.
3. You may not leave the classroom and then return while the exam is in session. Please bring tissues with you (if appropriate).
4. You may not eat or drink during the exam.
5. We will not hand out any exams after the first one has been returned. If you arrive after the first completed exam is turned in, you are out of luck.

NOTE: There are no make-up exams. If you miss an in-class exam for any reason, you must take the final exam to make up the grade.

Class Policies

1. Lectures are not intended to regurgitate the material in the textbook. Rather, you should do the reading before class and come prepared to delve into the more difficult concepts covered in the text. You are ultimately responsible for the material in the readings and from class. If you are struggling with the reading, it is your responsibility to seek my help.

2. I expect you to be attentive in class. Arriving late, leaving early, talking to your neighbor, surfing the web, or otherwise distracting your fellow students will not be tolerated. I will ask you to leave class. Repeated or egregious instances of classroom disruption will result in referral to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student’s conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. 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.

3. All workbook assignments, quizzes, and exams will be turned in electronically, and late assignments will not be accepted. It is your responsibility to plan for possible computer problems and to contact the appropriate IT support person if you encounter problems with Blackboard.

4. I will communicate with the class via Blackboard and e-mail. You can set your Blackboard e-mail account to deliver messages to whichever e-mail address you regularly use. It is your responsibility to check that account regularly.

5. If you require an accommodation for a religious observance or for a disability, I am happy to oblige, but I will not do so on an ad hoc basis. If you require an accommodation for religious reasons, you must notify me in writing at least two weeks in advance. If you require an accommodation for a disability, you must provide me with appropriate documentation from ODA before I can assist you.
6. All work must be your own. That includes workbooks assignments. I'm not kidding.

7. This class uses a blended format. While the blended format gives you a bit more flexibility in terms of when you do your work and hopefully will make the work more interesting for you, there are potential pitfalls. You must be in class, on time, on class days. Moreover, you have to keep up with the work; it will be easy for students to fall behind, to dig themselves into a hole they cannot get out of. Don’t be that student. Finally, you have to let us know if you do not understand the material. We are here to help you, but we may not know that you’re struggling unless you ASK. Which leads us to ...
**ADA Statement:** The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) as amended, pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations can be found at [www.unt.edu/oda](http://www.unt.edu/oda). Also, you may visit the Office of Disability Accommodation in the University Union (room 321) or call (940) 565-4323.

**Cheating and Plagiarism:** Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, which may impose for further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

**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)
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<td>Intro</td>
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<td>F 8/31</td>
<td>Course Overview</td>
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<td>M 9/3</td>
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<td>W 9/5</td>
<td>Public Opinion*</td>
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<td>M 9/10</td>
<td>Informal Group Meetings</td>
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<td>F 9/14</td>
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<td>W 9/26</td>
<td>Media*</td>
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<td>Second article summary</td>
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<td>F 9/28</td>
<td>Media*</td>
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<td>Groups Meet (12 – 2)</td>
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<td>Fiorina 6, Wkbk 2</td>
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<td>Fiorina 10, Wkbk 6</td>
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<td>Campaign Finance*</td>
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<td>F 11/2</td>
<td>Campaign Finance*</td>
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<td>Review and Election Discussion</td>
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<td>W 11/7</td>
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**Monday 12/10 – Final Exam, 10:30 – 12:30**

* Clicker Day