

Honors U.S. and Texas Government

PSCI 2316

Fall 2018

Blackstone



Course Overview

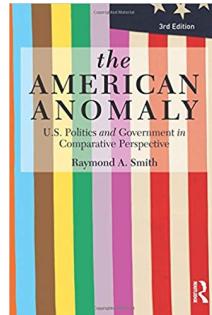
This course will introduce students to the roles of the United States and Texas governments in the American political system. We will consider the institutions, processes, and decisions of political actors that define American and Texas government. We focus particular attention on the United States and Texas constitutions, civil rights and liberties, federalism, and the institutions that comprise the three branches of government.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

American Government by OpenStax, ISBN: 1938168178. Available for free online: www.openstax.org/details/american-government

American Anomaly, 3rd edition, by Raymond A. Smith. ISBN: 9780415814331. Available from \$30.05 at UNT Bookstore.

Each student will also need to acquire a book for our Book Club assignment. Books will be assigned the 2nd week of class.



YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Professor Bethany Blackstone

blackstone@unt.edu

Office: Wooten 154

940.565.4923

Please contact via Canvas.

CLASS MEETINGS

Tuesdays and Thursdays

9:30 am - 10:50 am

Wooten 321

OFFICE HOURS*

Tuesdays and Thursdays

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Wooten 154

* You may reserve appointment slot in Canvas.

CANVAS

UNT is in the process of switching from Blackboard to Canvas. Our course site is on the Canvas platform. Some assignments will be submitted in Canvas and student grades will be posted in Canvas. You should use Canvas for course-related communications.

Find our course page at <http://unt.instructure.com>

What You'll Do in PSCI 2316

1

TEAM-BASED LEARNING & READINESS ASSURANCE TESTS (RATS)

This course uses a team-based learning approach that emphasizes your ability to apply course concepts and to solve problems. Course requirements are designed to ensure that individuals are prepared for team work and minimize the likelihood of typical “group work” problems (individuals shirking their responsibilities, other individuals dominating the group, or the division of labor to avoid group interaction).

Course grades will be based on work from individuals and teams. You will be assigned to a team during the first day of class.

At the beginning of each course unit, you will take an **individual Readiness Assurance Test (iRAT)**. You will then take the same **Readiness Assurance Test as a team (a tRAT)**. After the RATs, we will explore the unit’s topic through short lectures and team application exercises.

2

BOOK CLUB

Every student will read a book from the list posted in Canvas. You will write a 4-5 page book review of this book and participate in a book club discussion group with other members of the class. During the final weeks of the semester, you will work with other students that read the same book to share the key insights from your book with the students in the class that read different books.

3

REFLECTIONS

Individual reflective writing assignments will ask you to think about course concepts and the ways in which they apply to your life and/or to contemporary political debates. Assignment details are in Canvas.

4

FINAL EXAM

There will be one, cumulative exam in the course. You may take the final exam during the course’s scheduled final exam period—Thursday, December 13 at 8:00 am—or during my other class’s scheduled final exam period. The alternative exam time is Tuesday, December 11 from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. Both exams will be administered in our regular classroom. Please ensure that your end-of-semester plans permit you to be present for the final exam.

5

PEER EVALUATIONS

You will complete peer evaluations of your TBL teammates at two points during the semester. You will also submit peer evaluations for the students that you work with to prepare your “Lessons from Book Club” materials and presentation. You will be evaluated on both the quality of feedback you provide about your teammates’ performances and on how your teammates evaluate your performance.

Grading

Your grade will be based on the components described above: individual Readiness Assurance Tests (iRATs), team performance (team Readiness Assurance Tests—tRATs—and in-class activities), Book Club-related assignments and participation, reflections, a final exam, and peer evaluations. Detailed expectations for all assignments will be posted in Canvas.

Scores will be rounded to the nearest whole number and then letter grades will be assigned according to the scale below:

90-100% = A

80-89% = B

70-79% = C

60-69% = D

<60 = F

Late Reflections and Book Reviews will be penalized

10 points (1 letter grade) for each 24 hour period they are late. Other assignments will not be accepted after their due dates.

Missed iRATs and tRATs cannot be made up. They can be taken *early* if you will miss class for a university-excused absence (including observance of religious holidays). If 80% or more of students complete the end of semester Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) evaluations, I will drop everyone's lowest iRAT score.

There are no opportunities for extra credit. Plan accordingly.

Assignment Weights

Component	Assignment Weight
Individual Readiness Assurance Tests	20
Team Performance (Team Readiness Assurance Tests and In-Class Activities)	15
Book Club Project (includes plagiarism identification assignment, book review, participation in Book Club Discussion, and Lessons from Book Club project)	25
Reflections (3)	15
Final Exam	15
Peer Evaluations	10

Policies

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodation at any time, however ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the ODA website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of F in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at <http://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity>.

Classroom Conduct

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 classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, and Assault

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are civil rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0. Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate and she can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

Schedule

Readings from Smith's *American Anomaly* are denoted AA on the schedule below. Readings from your OpenStax textbook are denoted TB. Use the Reading Guides posted in Canvas to guide your pre-class preparation. Some additional short readings will be added to this list for non-RAT days.

Course Introduction

August 28 (T)	Read Syllabus
August 30 (R)	No Class Meeting
September 2 (Su)	Submit Book Club Preference Form by 11:59 pm. Submit Student Info Form by 11:59 pm.
<p><i>* These submissions are not graded, but for each one you submit, you may claim a 24-hour extension on the deadline for your Book Review or a Reflection assignment. (These extensions may be combined.)</i></p>	

Unit 1: The U.S. Constitution

September 4 (T)	iRAT 1 and tRAT 1 TB Chapter 2: The Constitution and Its Origins AA Chapter 2: The U.S. Constitution AA Chapter 4: The Separation of Powers
September 6 (R)	
September 11 (T)	

Unit 2: Federalism

September 13 (R)	iRAT 2 and tRAT 2 TB Chapter 3: American Federalism AA Chapter 3: Federalism
September 18 (T)	
September 20 (R)	
September 21 (F)	Plagiarism Identification Certification Test due by 11:59 pm. Upload a copy of your certificate in Canvas.

Unit 3: The Legislative Branch

September 25 (T)

iRAT 3 and tRAT 3

TB Chapter 11: Congress

AA Chapter 6: The Legislative Branch: The Two Houses of Congress

September 27 (R)

September 28 (F)

Reflection 1 Due in Canvas by 11:59 pm.

October 2 (T)

Unit 4: The Presidency

October 4 (R)

iRAT 4 and tRAT 4

TB Chapter 12: The Presidency

AA Chapter 5: The Executive Branch—The Presidency and the Bureaucracy

October 5 (F)

Midterm peer evaluations due by 11:59 pm

October 9 (T)

October 11 (R)

Unit 5: The Bureaucracy

October 16 (T)

iRAT 5 and tRAT 5

TB Chapter 15: The Bureaucracy

October 18 (R)

October 19 (F)

Reflection 2 Due in Canvas by 11:59 pm.

Unit 6: Texas Legislative and Executive Branches

October 23 (T)

iRAT 6 and tRAT 6

TB Chapter 14: State and Local Government, sections 14.3, 14.4, and 14.5

Additional reading(s) TBA

October 25 (R)

Unit 7: The Judiciary

October 30 (T)

iRAT 7 and tRAT 7

TB Chapter 13: The Courts

AA Chapter 7: The Judicial Branch—The Supreme Court and Federal Courts

Carp, Stidham, and Manning, *The State Courts*, Chapter 4 “Judges in State Courts.”

Read sections on “Selection Process for State Judges,” pages 2-9 (The reading is posted in the Judiciary Module in Canvas.

November 1 (R)

November 2 (F)

Book Reviews due in Canvas.

November 6 (T)

Unit 8: Civil Liberties & Civil Rights

November 8 (R)

iRAT 8 and tRAT 8

TB Chapter 4: Civil Liberties

TB Chapter 5: Civil Rights

AA Chapter 12: Domestic Policy

AA Conclusion: The American Anomaly on Balance

November 13 (T)

November 15 (R)

November 16 (F)

Reflection 3 Due in Canvas by 11:59 pm.

Lessons from Book Club

November 20 (T)

Lessons from Book Club:

- Mason’s *Uncivil Agreement*
- Albertson & Gadarian’s *Anxious Politics*

November 22 (R)

No Class Meeting - Thanksgiving Break

November 27 (T)

Lessons from Book Club

- Klar & Krupnikov’s *Independent Politics*
- Grossman & Hopkins’s *Asymmetric Politics*

November 29 (R)

Lessons from Book Club

- Mutz’s *In Your Face Politics*
- Frasure-Yokley’s *Race and Ethnic Politics in American Suburbs*

December 4 (T)

Lessons from Book Club

- Hollis-Brusky’s *Ideas With Consequences*
- Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen’s *Deep Roots*

Important End-of-Semester Dates

December 6 (R) Final Class Meeting - Review Session

December 7 (F) End-of-term peer evaluations for TBL teammates due by 11:59 pm
Peer evaluations for Lessons from Book Club group members due by 11:59 pm

December 11 from Final Exam
10:30 - 12:30 pm

or

December 13 from
8:00 - 10:00 am