**American Government: Process and Policies**

Political Science 1050, Spring 2012

MWF 10 or 11 AM, ESSC 255

**Instructor:** Dr. Wendy L. Watson **Office Hours:** Tuesday, 2-5;

wendy.watson@unt.edu Wednesday, 3-5;

302J Sage Hall and by appointment

**TAs:** Christina Case, Clyde Chen**,** John Pascarella, and Samantha Pettey

**SI:** Ayasha Hensen

**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

* explain the origins, development, and effects of US and Texas political culture;
* identify, describe, and explain the origin of individual political attitudes;
* identify and analyze data about political behavior and different political phenomena;
* evaluate polling as a means of measuring public opinion;
* demonstrate knowledge about the role and effects of the media on political behavior;
* describe the expansion of the franchise in the U.S.;
* explain and assess theoretical explanations for the individual decision to participate;
* assess the decline in American voter turnout;
* assess the role of forms of political participation other than voting;
* explain the formation of interest groups;
* explain the effect of interest groups on American 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.

**Required Materials**

Fiorina et al. *New American Democracy with Texas Chapters, Volume II (Custom Edition)* (Pearson Learning Solutions) (“Text” on the syllabus).

Cox and Ruderman, *Processes and Policies in American & Texas Politics, 8th Ed.* (Pearson Learning Solutions) (“Workbook” on the syllabus).

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.

For the Text and Workbook, you have two options:

1. You can purchase the text from the UNT Bookstore for $100. 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, MyPoliSciLab (a required resource), AND the Workbook (which is only available online).

OR

1. You can purchase the materials online through a link to Pearson Publishing for approximately $47. 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, MyPoliSciLab, and the Workbook.

**Class Responsibilities and Grades**

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

Reading Quizzes 10%

Workbook Assignments 20%

Clicker Questions 15%

Group Project 15%

Exams (2 @ 20%) 40%

Grades are based on the following distribution.

> 89.9 = A

80 – 89.9 = B

70 – 79.9 = C

60 – 69.9 = D

< 60 = F

**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”. I will assign you to groups when the drop period ends.

10 AM Class Groups: Mavericks 1 – 20 and Rangers 1 – 20

11 AM Class Groups: Rangers 1 – 20 and Stars 1 - 20

On Friday, January 27, everyone will come to the classroom and sit with their groups. At that point, the group will complete a “Group Contract” that specifies how the group members will communicate, where they will meet for required group meetings (on the course schedule), and who will be responsible for turning in the attendance sheets for those group meetings.

After January 27, on days marked “Groups Meet” on the course schedule, your group will convene at the pre-determined spot. If the group needs to relocate for some reason, everyone in the group must be notified at least 48 hours in advance. At these group meetings, you will take attendance on a group sign-in sheet, and those sheets will be turned in to your group’s folder at the next regular class meeting. The purpose of the attendance sheets is to keep track of participation in the group project.

Each group will have an assigned TA who is “theirs”. While you may visit any TA with individual questions about the content, if you have questions or concerns about your group or the project you should start with your official TA.

Mavs 1 – 20: Samantha Pettey Rangers 1 – 20: Christina Case

Cowboys 1 – 20: Clyde Chen Stars 1 – 20: John Pascarella

**Workbook Assignments:**

You will complete four assignments from the Cox and Ruderman workbook. Each assignment consists of two or three exercises. 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 8 AM 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 8 AM on the due date (the due date being the day we begin covering the topic in class, always a Monday). For example, we will begin our class discussion of American political culture on January 23. You should do the assigned reading and online exercises, and then take the Political Culture Reading Quiz before 8 AM on 1/23.

You may take each quiz up to 5 times before the due date; your highest score will be the one that counts. Please not 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.

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 lowest quiz grade will be dropped from your final grade calculation, so if you miss one … that’s the one that will be dropped.

**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. You will get a point for responding (whether you are correct or incorrect). Sometimes, you will get an additional point for answering correctly. You will accumulate these points over the course of the semester. Once you hit 100 points, you have full credit. If you get fewer than 100 points during the semester, you will not have full credit for this component of your grade.

Note that while I do not know how many clicker points will be available right now, I guarantee that you will have the ability to earn at least 120 points simply by responding to all questions. If you miss a day of class, forget your clicker, have a technical problem, or for any other reason miss a few questions, it’s not a big deal. One hundred is “perfect” … you can miss a couple of days and still get there.

**Group Project:**

Your team has been hired by a non-profit organization called “People for America” that aims to increase American civic engagement. Your task is to create a 3-5 minute video for your client. The video may do one of two things:

1. Your video may be a tool of socialization, helping inculcate some target audience with American values. If you opt for this alternative, your video should express what it means to be an American.
2. Your video may attempt to increase political participation among its target audience. If you opt for this alternative, your video should encourage some form of political participation.

Whichever option you choose, you need to be clear about who your target audience is. A socialization video aimed at elementary school children will look a lot different than a socialization video aimed at recent immigrants. You also need to have a clear message.

Be creative with your video: use interviews, music, imagery, dance, video graphics, poetry, whatever you want. A simple “man on the street” interview video is not very interesting. The video itself must be posted to YouTube (set preferences to “unlisted”) or Vimeo (create a password to protect your video). You will then provide me with a link to the video and (if using Vimeo) the password.

In addition to the video, your group will be responsible for a short (500 word) memo that addresses (a) who your target audience is; (b) what message you hope to convey; (c) your rationale for conveying the message the way you did; and (d) how your message connects to our class readings on American political culture or political participation.

We will watch the videos in class starting on March 30. Your classmates will evaluate your video on a scale of 1 – 5. Your group score for this project will be based on peer evaluations of your video (40%), my evaluation of your video (20%), and your group paper (40%).

To determine your individual score, I will need feedback from the other members of your group. On April 30, each student will turn in a peer evaluation form identifying the level of contribution from each member (from 0 – 100%). For example, if John thinks that everyone in his group contributed equally, he would give everyone a 100%. If John thinks that Mary contributed significantly less than everyone else, he might give everyone else a 100% and give Mary a 70%. For each student, I will drop your highest and lowest peer evaluation, and the average of the remaining evaluations will be your “multiplier.” If, for example, your group earned a 90 on the project, and your multiplier ends up being 80% (meaning you contributed something less than your “fair share”), your grade for the assignment would be 90 \* .80 = 72. In short, you cannot shirk on this assignment. If you do, your grade will suffer.

**Note: You must turn in a proposal (target, message, plan of attack) to your group TA on February 20. Failure to do so will result in a 10 point penalty on your final group grade.**

**Extra Credit:**

There are very specific and limited opportunities for extra credit. No other extra credit will be offered, so take advantage of what is here:

1. Red/Blue: On February 22, 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 their midterm exam. Note: the questions that are part of this game will not count toward your general clicker grade. This day is “special.”
2. Collective Action Game: On February 27 or 29 (depending on your team), you will play the Collective Action Game. Participants may earn up to 6 extra credit points for the midterm exam.
3. 270 Vote Pick-Up: 3/12, 3/14, and 3/16, we will play a game involving the Electoral College. The winning teams in this game will earn 4 extra credit points on the final exam. You must be present ALL THREE DAYS in order to receive the extra credit.
4. Redistricting Game: This game will be completed online. A link to the game is located on Blackboard. To complete this activity, you need to “win” the online game and submit proof of your completion to the TAs. (Details of that process will follow.) Completing the game **successfully** by the due date will earn you 4 extra credit points on the final exam.

**Exams**

There are two exams in this class, one on March 7 during the regular class period and one during the final exam period. The exams are not cumulative. They are entirely multiple choice.

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 and/or cough drops with you (if appropriate), and take care of personal matters before the exam begins.
4. 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.

If you miss the first exam for any reason at all (good or bad), the make-up exam will be given on Wednesday, May 2. It is not a good strategy to wait to take the exam, but that is your safety net.

**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)

| **Monday** | **Wednesday** | **Friday** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1/18 - Intro** | **1/20 – Intro Redux** |
| **1/23 – Political Culture**  Read: Text, Chapter 4  Due: Political Culture Quiz | **1/25 – Political Culture** | **1/27 – Group Planning in ESSC 255** |
| **1/30 – Public Opinion**  Read: Text, Chapter 5; Workbook Chapter 1  Due: Public Opinion Quiz | **2/1 – Public Opinion** | **2/3 – No Class** |
| **2/6 – Participation**  Read: Text, Chapter 6  Workbook, Chapter 2  Due: Participation Quiz | **2/8 – Participation** | **2/10 – Groups Meet** |
| **2/13 – Media**  Read: Text, Chapter 9;  Due: Media Quiz  Due: Workbook 1 | **2/15 – Media** | **2/17 – Groups Meet** |
| **2/20 – Parties**  Read: Text, Chapter 8, Workbook, Chapter 4  Due: Parties Quiz  Due: Group Project Proposal | **2/22 – Parties (Red/Blue)** | **2/24 – Groups Meet** |
| **2/27 – Collective Action Game (Mavs and Cowboys)**  Read: Text, Chapter 7; Workbook, Chapter 5  Due: Interest Groups Quiz | **2/29 – Collective Action Game (Rangers and Stars)** | **3/2 – Interest Groups** |
| **3/5 - Catch up and Review**  Due: Workbook 2 | **3/7 - Midterm** | **3/9 – Groups Meet** |
| **3/12 – Electoral College**  Read: Text, Chapter 10; Workbook, Chapter 6  Due: Presidential Election Quiz | **3/14 – Electoral College** | **3/16 – Electoral College** |
| **Spring Break**  **3/19 – 3/23** | | |
| **3/26 – Congressional Elections (Redistricting)**  Read: Text, Chapter 11  Due: Congressional Elections Quiz  Due: Workbook 3 | **3/28 – Congressional Elections (Redistricting)** | **3/30 – Groups Meet** |
| **4/2 – Campaign Finance**  Read: Nothing new  Due: Group Projects  Due: Redistricting Game (Extra Credit) | **4/4 – Campaign Finance** | **4/6 – Video Viewing 1** |
| **4/9 – Domestic Policy**  Read: Text, Chapter 18; Workbook, Chapter 8  Due: Policy Process Quiz | **4/11 – Domestic Policy** | **4/13 – Video Viewing 2** |
| **4/16 – Economic Policy**  Read: Text, Chapter 19  Due: Economic Policy Quiz | **4/18 – Economic Policy** | **4/20 – Video Viewing 3** |
| **4/23 – Foreign Policy**  Read: Text, Chapter 20;  Workbook, Chapter 10  Due: Foreign Policy Quiz | **4/25 – Foreign Policy** | **4/27 – Video Viewing 4** |
| **4/30 – Video Viewing 5**  Due: Peer Evaluations  Due: Workbook 4 | **5/2 – Midterm Make-up**  (All others, no class) | **5/4 – Reading Day – No Class** |
| **5/7 – 9 – 10 AM**  **Final Exam for Section 008** | **5/9 – 10:30 – 11:30 AM**  **Final Exam for Section 009** |  |

**\*\* Days shaded in orange are days you should meet in your pre-arranged group location. \*\***