**American Government: Process and Policies**

Political Science 1050.002

Fall 2010

**Class Meetings:** MWF 10:00 – 10:50

Wooten 122

**Instructor:** Dr. Wendy L. Watson **Office Hours:** T, 1:00 – 3:00;

207 Marquis Hall M/W 11:00 – 12:45;

wendy.watson@unt.edu and by appointment

**Teaching**

**Assistant:**   **Office Hours:**

**Course Overview**

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.

**Course Objectives**

Students who complete this course will be able to

* identify and describe the common political culture of the U.S.;
* compare and contrast the political culture of Texas with the broader U.S. population**;**
* explain the origins and determinants of individual political opinions;
* assess the quality of public opinion polls and identify and explain the flaws in those polls;
* identify, describe, and explain the individual decision to vote;
* identify, describe, and explain the factors affecting aggregate turnout;
* appreciate the roles of interest groups, parties, and the media in influencing individual political opinion and government decision-making;
* explain the origins of and impediments to political group formation;
* identify, describe, and explain the institutions of presidential and congressional elections in the U.S.;
* identify, describe, and explain the policy-making process in the U.S.;
* define key concepts relating to domestic and economic policy; and
* identify historical, domestic, and international influences on U.S. foreign policy.

**Course Readings**

There are two books required for this class:

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).

Both books are available at the UNT bookstore. Please note that the Fiorina text is a custom book. Versions of the text you find online will not contain all of the material you need for class.

Also note that the workbook will come with an online access code. You will need that code, so do not throw it away.

Finally, please note that you will be expected to complete a number of assessments through Blackboard Vista. You should locate the Blackboard page (through the UNT homepage) and check to make sure you are able to log on and that you see a link to this class on your Blackboard homepage.

**Grading**

Grades in this class will be assigned on a fixed scale:

90-100 A

80-89 B

70-79 C

60-69 D

<60 F

Your grade will be based on the following factors:

Three Exams 60% (20% each)

Online Prep Quizzes 10%

Writing Assignments 15%

Workbook Assignments 25%

I rarely change grades unless I have made a computational error, and I will not curve this class. I will not discuss or disclose grades over e-mail or via phone. Your grades for various elements of the course will be posted on Blackboard within 96 hours of submission of the work. If you believe I have made an error, you must report it to me within 48 hours of receiving the assignment back. There is no extra credit available in this course; you should do the work that is assigned to get as many points as you possibly can.

**Exams**

There are three exams in this class (on October 1, October 29, and at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 15). Each exam will consist of 50 multiple choice questions; you will use a scantron to answer these questions, so you MUST bring two sharpened #2 pencils and an eraser. The exams are not cumulative (i.e., each exam will only cover a portion of the class material with no overlap).

If you miss one of the in-class exams (on 10/1 or 10/29) for any reason, you will have to take a make-up exam on December 6. If you miss both in-class exams, you’re going to have a problem. If you have a legitimate excuse (serious illness or the death of a close relative), you must notify me before the exam and provide documentation. Ultimately, if you have legitimate excuses for missing both in-class exams, I will work with you to arrange additional time for the make-ups. Otherwise, you will simply have to take both make-up exams during the 50 minute time period.

**Writing Assignments**

You will complete 1 short essay this semester (500-750 words). For this essay, there are three important steps:

1. Write your essay
2. Review the essays of three classmates and then your own essay
3. Based on the reviews you received, revise and resubmit your essay

The essay is worth a total of 15% of your total grade: 5% for the completion of the peer and self reviews and 10% for the grade earned on the revised and resubmitted essay.

This assignment will be completed through TurnItIn; you will access these assignment through Blackboard.

**Online Prep Quizzes**

For each of the ten units on the syllabus, you will be expected to take a quiz, through Blackboard, before we begin the material in class. The quizzes are not heroic; they are designed to make sure you have done the reading and mastered the basic factual information in the chapters. You may take each quiz as many times as you like (you can take a quiz 100 times in order to achieve a perfect score). However, if you do not take a quiz or if you quit before your achieve a grade of 70%, you will receive a “0”.

At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz grade; the remaining eight grades will be averaged, and that average will account for 10% of your course grade.

**Workbook Assignments**

You must purchase the RED workbook for this course (available from the UNT bookstore). The text of the workbook is in paper form. There are, in addition, assignments and exercises that you will access through Blackboard; you will need an access code (that accompanies your workbook) to get to those assignments. There are seven “workbook assignments” (each consisting of 1 or more individual exercises). At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest workbook assignment score. Your average on the remaining five assignments will account for 15% of your course grade.

Please note that the material contained in workbook chapters is required reading and is fair game on exams.

**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. Class starts at 10:00 and runs until 10:50. I expect you to be in class, ready to roll, at 10:00, and I expect you to stay until 10:50. Moreover, during that time period, I expect you to be attentive. 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 and, after one such incident, I will begin docking points from your grade. Remember, if you do not plan to pay attention, you may as well stay home.
3. All workbook assignments will be turned in electronically, and late assignments will not be accepted. It is your responsibility to plan for possible computer problems (by not waiting until the last minute to turn in work) and to contact the appropriate IT support person if you encounter problems with Blackboard.
4. If you miss an exam (for any reason, legitimate or not), you will take a make-up on Monday, December 6. The make-up exam will be a mix of short answer, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blank.
5. I will not hand out exams after the first completed test has been turned in (so be on time). Moreover, during exams, you may not wear headphones. Your phones must be turned off and put away; if I catch you with a phone in your hand or anywhere visible, I will take your exam and you will receive a “0”.
6. I will communicate with the class via Blackboard and e-mail. These messages will go to your unt.edu e-mail address. It is your responsibility to check that account regularly and/or have messages forwarded to an e-mail account you do use.
7. 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 contact no later than Friday, September 3. If you require an accommodation for a disability, you must provide me with appropriate documentation from ODA before I can assist you.
8. All work must be your own. That includes workbook assignments.

**Office Hours (Real and Virtual)**

My office hours and those of your teaching assistant are YOUR TIME. You are free to stop by our offices without an appointment during these hours; come with questions, concerns, or even a desire for further discussion.

In addition to our “in real life” office hours, I will occasionally host virtual office hours through Twitter. If you are not a member of Twitter, visit twitter.com and create a free account. If you have a question or comment about class, simply “tweet” it including the following phrase: #1050Watson. I will monitor all tweets containing that “hashtag” and will respond ASAP. I will also occasionally announce periods of one or two hours during which I will be at my computer to allow for a “real time” Twitter chat among interested members of the class.

**University of North Texas--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 the failure of all fields of the exam. Determination of cheating or plagiarism shall be made by the instructor in the course.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism in ordinary course work may, at the discretion of the instructor, be referred to the Undergraduate Studies Committee. 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 a decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

### University of North Texas-Statement of ADA Compliance

The Political Science Department cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request on or before the sixth class day.

**Class Schedule:**

| **Date** | **Topic** | **Reading** | **Due (Before Beginning of Class)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aug. 27 | Welcome |  |  |
| Aug. 30 - Sept. 10 | Political Culture - U.S. and Texas | Text Chapters 4 and TX-1 | Prep Quiz 1  (Aug. 30) |
| Sept. 13 - Sept. 17 | Public Opinion | Text Chapter 5; Workbook Chapter 1 | Prep Quiz 2  (Sept. 13) |
|  |  |  | Workbook One:  Ex. 1-4, 1-6  (Sept. 17) |
| Sept. 20 - Sept. 24 | Participation | Text Chapters 6 and TX-2 (pp. 68-76); Workbook Chapter 2 | Prep Quiz 3  (Sept. 20) |
|  |  |  | Workbook Two:  Ex. 2-3, 2-4 (q. 1), 2-5  (Sept. 24) |
| Sept. 27 | Catch-up |  |  |
| Sept. 29 | Review |  |  |
| **Oct. 1** | **Exam 1** |  |  |
| Oct. 4 -  Oct. 8 | Interest Groups | Text Chapter 7, Workbook Chapter 5 | Prep Quiz 4  (Oct. 4) |
|  |  |  | Workbook Three:  Ex. 5-1, 5-6  (Oct. 8) |
| Oct. 11 -  Oct. 15 | Political Parties | Text Chapter 8, Workbook Chapter 4 | Prep Quiz 5  (Oct. 11) |
|  |  |  | Workbook Four:  Ex. 4-3, 4-6  (Oct. 15) |
| Oct. 18 -  Oct. 22 | Media | Text Chapter 9, Workbook Chapter 3 | Prep Quiz 6  (Oct. 18) |
|  |  |  | Workbook Five:  Ex. 3-3, 3-4  (Oct. 22) |
| Oct. 25 | Catch-up |  |  |
| Oct. 27 | Review |  |  |
| **Oct. 29** | **Exam 2** |  |  |
| Nov. 1 -  Nov. 5 | Presidential Elections | Text Chapter 10; Workbook Chapter 6 | Prep Quiz 7  (Nov. 1) |
|  |  |  | Workbook Six:  Ex. 6-2, 6-4  (Nov. 5) |
| Nov. 8 -  Nov. 12 | Congressional Elections | Text Chapter 11 | Prep Quiz 8  (Nov. 8) |
|  |  |  | Essay Draft Due  (Nov. 12) |
| Nov. 15 -  Nov. 24 | Public Policy - Domestic | Text Chapters 18 and 19; Workbook Chapter 7 | Prep Quiz 9  (Nov. 15) |
|  |  |  | Workbook Seven:  Ex. 7-5  (Nov. 19) |
|  |  |  | Peer- and Self-Review of Essay  (Nov. 24) |
| Nov. 29 -  Dec. 3 | Public Policy - Foreign Policy | Text Chapter 20 | Prep Quiz 10  (Nov. 29) |
| **Dec. 6** | **Make-up Exams** |  |  |
| Dec. 8 | Review |  | Revision of Essay  (Dec. 8) |
| **Dec. 15**  **8 - 10 AM** | **Last Exam** |  |  |