**American Government: Process and Policies**

Political Science 1050, Fall 2013

MWF Noon, Auditorium

**Instructor:** Dr. Wendy L. Watson **Office Hours:** M/W, 10 – 11:30;

 wendy.watson@unt.edu T 11 – 2;

 129 Wooten Hall and by appointment

**TAs:** Jared Perkins Michael Marshall Kelsey Naughton

**SI:** Maria Head

**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.

**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 is one required text: Patterson, “We the People/State of TX V2,” McGraw Hill Custom

Please note that you need **VERSION 2** . . . version 1 is for a different course.

You have two purchasing options:

1. You can purchase the text from the UNT Bookstore for **$92.85**. 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 you will need to access online material through Blackboard Learn; hold on to this code!!

**OR**

1. You can purchase the materials online through a link to McGraw Hill for approximately **$60**. If you purchase the materials directly from McGraw Hill, the cost is significantly lower BUT you will not have a print version of the Text (only electronic). With online purchase, you’ll automatically be signed up for the online resources we will be using.

**Class Responsibilities and Grades**

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

LearnSmart 15%

Group Project

 Individual Summary Papers 5%

 Group Poster Presentation 15%

Be the Difference Paper 5%

Exams (3 @ 20%) 60%

Grades are based on the following distribution:

90-100 = A

80 – 89 = B

70 – 79 = C

60 – 69 = D

< 60 = F

I do not round grades; if you end up with an 89.99%, you will get a B. Do not ask or expect me to deviate from this rule. I know the cut-offs are arbitrary, but all cut-offs for grades are arbitrary. Similarly, it’s arbitrary that Best Buy charges you $90.00 for an iPod rather than $89.99. You would not be able to buy a $90.00 iPod with $89.99, and you will not be able to “purchase” an A with 89.99%, even though it’s “really close” to a 90.

All of your grades will be posted on Blackboard as soon as your work has been evaluated. It is your responsibility to keep track of these grades. You have one week after a grade has been posted to let us know if there has been a data entry error or if you believe your score was awarded in error. After that one week mark, you are stuck with the recorded grade.

**LearnSmart:**

Adaptive learning technology helps you master course content and prepare for classes and exams. You will have one adaptive learning exercise (LearnSmart) for each chapter we read; each exercise will take anywhere from 30 minutes to many hours depending on (a) how well you have read the chapter before beginning and (b) how difficult you find the material. The extra time you put into these exercises will be well worth it when it comes time to study for tests!

You will access each of the nine LearnSmart exercises through Blackboard. Of the nine, I will drop your lowest score; the remaining eight will constitute 15% of your overall grade in the course. LearnSmart exercises are due at **before class begins**.

**Groups:**

You will be assigned to a group 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.

There are several days set aside for group meetings; they are on the course schedule below. Each group will be expected to turn in a group attendance form for each of these in-class sessions. Apart from the 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.

**The Group Project:**

The 2016 presidential election is right around the corner. Your team has been hired by one of the two major party political candidates (Hillary Clinton or Marco Rubio) and tasked with developing a strategy to increase the candidate’s chances of winning the 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 in a poster presentation due on November 4th. This poster will count for credit in PSYC 1630 and PSCI 1050.

In anticipation of the poster project, your group will have to divide the readings. Each student will be responsible for three articles. On September 9, you will be able to choose articles. If you are not present on September 9, your articles will be assigned to you. You will write a 1 page summary of that article to share with your group and for a grade. You will turn in those summaries through Blackboard and provide copies to all in your group.

Your grade for the article summaries will make up 5% of your final grade while the group poster presentation will make up 15% of your final grade in this class.

As an added incentive, the 6 best presentations in the class will be showcased at an evening event on at UNT on the Square on November 22.

**Be the Difference Paper:**

No matter your age, experience, or income, you can 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 22nd.

**Extra Credit:**

There are very specific and limited opportunities for extra credit. First, there are three activities listed on the schedule (noted with asterisks), one for each unit. Each activity is worth up to 2 extra credit points on the next unit exam. In addition, we’ll have 3 movie nights this term, one during each of our units (dates, times, locations all TBA). Attending those movies will be worth 1 extra credit point on the unit exam. Finally, attending the group presentation event on November 22 will earn you 2 points of extra credit on the final exam.

**Exams**

There are four exams in this class: three non-cumulative unit exams (on 10/2; 11/8; and 12/4) and a cumulative final exam during the final exam period. Exams will be completed online, either on a laptop or in the computer testing lab in Sage Hall. 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 receive a 0.
3. You may not leave the classroom or lab and then return while the exam is in session.
4. You may not eat or drink during the exam.
5. You will not be able to access the exam to begin after the first 10 minutes.
6. If you catch a fellow student cheating, notify the instructor or TA immediately; helping us catch a cheater will earn you 2 points of extra credit on the exam.
7. For each exam, you will receive a “receipt” to prove you completed the test. You must hold on to that receipt in case there is some technical problem with your test. No receipt means you didn’t take the exam.

**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.**

**Late Policy**

All work in this course will be turned in ON LINE. I have a zero-tolerance late policy; late work will not be accepted, period. If you do not turn in an exercise, paper, or exam on time, you will receive a “0”. There are sufficient options for credit in this class that missing a single deadline will not destroy your grade, but you cannot make a habit out of it.

**LAPTOPS**: Research suggests that using them in class for taking notes actually reduces student success – not just for those using the laptops but for those students around them. I urge you to use your laptop at your own risk. Unless you have an ODA accommodation, you must sit in the back 10 rows of class if you plan to use your laptop during lectures.

***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)

**Course Schedule**

| ***DAY***  | ***TOPIC*** | ***READING*** | ***DUE*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| W 8/28  | Course Overview |  |  |
| F 8/30 | Intro |  |  |
| W 9/4 | Public Opinion | Chapter 2 | LearnSmart Ch. 2 |
| F 9/6 | Public Opinion |  |  |
| M 9/9 | Informal Group Meetings |  |  |
| W 9/11 | Media | Chapter 7 | LearnSmart Ch. 7 |
| F 9/13 | Media |  |  |
| M 9/16 | Participation | Chapter 3 | LearnSmart Ch. 3 |
| W 9/18 | Participation |  |  |
| F 9/20 | Participation |  |  |
| M 9/23 | Parties | Chapter 4 | LearnSmart Ch. 4 |
| W 9/25 | Parties |  |  |
| F 9/27 | Red, White, and Blue\* |  | Article Summaries |
| M 9/30 | Review |  |  |
| **W10/2** | **EXAM 1** |  | EXAM 1 |
| F 10/4 | Groups Meet (12 – 2) |  |  |
| M 10/7 | Collective Action Game\* | Chapter 5 | LearnSmart Ch. 5 |
| W 10/9 | Interest Groups |  |  |
| F 10/11 | Interest Groups |  |  |
| M 10/14 | Congressional Elections | Chapter 6 | LearnSmart Ch. 6 |
| W 10/16 | Congressional Elections |  |  |
| F 10/18 | Groups Meet (12 – 2) |  |  |
| M 10/21 | Presidential Elections |  |  |
| W 10/23 | Presidential Elections |  |  |
| F 10/25 | Presidential Elections |  |  |
| M 10/28 | Campaign Finance |  |  |
| W 10/30 | Campaign Finance |  |  |
| F 11/1 | Groups Meet (12 - 1) |  |  |
| M 11/4 | Group Presentations |  | Group Posters |
| W 11/6 | Review |  |  |
| **F 11/8** | **EXAM 2** |  | EXAM 2 |
| M 11/11 | Economic Policy | Chapter 8 | LearnSmart Ch. 8 |
| W 11/13 | Economic Policy |  |  |
| F 11/15 | Economic Policy |  |  |
| M 11/18 | Domestic Policy | Chapter 9 | LearnSmart Ch. 9 |
| W 11/20 | Domestic Policy |  |  |
| F 11/22 | Domestic Policy |  | Be the Difference Paper |
| M 11/25 | Foreign Policy | Chapter 10 | LearnSmart Ch. 10 |
| W 11/27 | Next Threat\* |  |  |
| M 12/2 | Review |  |  |
| **W 12/4** | **EXAM 3** |  | EXAM 3 |

**Wednesday 12/11 – Final Exam, 10:30 – 12:30**

**NOTE: All due dates are noon on the day specified. Late work is NOT accepted.**