**PSCI 1040.010**

**American Government: Structure and Institutions**

Spring 2014; Wooten 122; Tuesday, 6:30 – 9:20

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| **Instructor:** |  | |
| Dr. Wendy Watson | Office: | 129 Wooten Hall |
| e-Mail: wwatson@unt.edu | Office Hours: | T/Th 1:30 – 3:00;  W 10 – 12 and 1:30 – 4:30;  and by appointment |

**Teaching Assistant**

Christopher Pace Office: 331 Wooten Hall

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Th 1:30 – 3:30

**Course Description:**

Rules matter. Institutional structure and the rules by which they operate shape the outcomes of the governmental process. This class will introduce you to the institutions of government, the logic behind their structure and operation, and the rules that constrain their behavior (with particular emphasis on the U.S. Constitution). Students who complete this course should be knowledgeable about the structure and powers of the three branches of government (both national and Texas); understand the division of power between those branches (separation of powers) as well as the division of power between the national and state governments (federalism); recognize the limits placed on the powers of the government; and understand the role of compromise in creating our system of laws and institutions.

**Course Materials:**

McGraw Hill Publishing has created a custom text (Patterson) for PSCI 1040/1041 at UNT. It is available in two formats

(1) You can purchase it as a loose-leaf text at the UNT bookstore for approximately $93. This loose-leaf edition will come with access to an electronic version of the text and all online materials.

(2) You can purchase the electronic version of the directly from McGraw Hill. The electronic textbook comes with access to all online materials. There is a link to this purchase option on our class Blackboard page, and instructions are posted there as well. The cost for the e-text is $60.

**Assignments and Grading:**

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

Exams (15%, 15%, 20%) 50%

LearnSmart Activities 25%

After the Apocalypse (Group) 25%

Total 100%

There is no curve in this class. It is thus possible that everyone in the class will receive an A. It is also possible that no one will receive an A. Grades will be based upon the following scale:

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: anything below 60

Incompletes will only be given to students who provide documentation of a serious illness or family emergency that prevents them from completing course requirements in a timely fashion.

**Attendance:**

While there are no points specifically associated with attendance, it is critical that you come to class on time, prepared, and ready to participate. Students who have taken courses with me in the past can attest that much of my test material comes from the material we cover in class (some of which is not in the textbook). Moreover, there will be opportunities to earn extra credit and work on your group assignment in class; if you are not present, you will miss those opportunities. (On group work days, there will be an attendance sheet for each group, so that there is a record of your participation.)

**Exams:**

The two unit exams and cumulative final will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and matching. The exams will be taken on a computer (through Blackboard). You will need to take the exam in the UNT computer testing center (330 Sage Hall) at the designated time. The exams are password protected, so you will not be able to access them from other sites.

Once one student leaves, no more students will be admitted to the testing center. That means you need to show up on time so you do not miss the opportunity to take the test.

I will only offer make-up exams for students who contact me before or within 24 hours after an exam. I will offer make-ups for family emergencies (for which I require proof) and medical emergencies (for which I require proof). If you do not contact me within 24 hours of missing an exam, you will NOT be allowed to make it up.

**LearnSmart Activities:**

LearnSmart is an adaptive learning assignment offered online through Blackboard and your textbook provider. Essentially, you answer questions about the course readings. LearnSmart will keep asking you questions until it is satisfied that you have mastered the content. If you read carefully before you start the assignment and take it seriously, the assignment itself may take about 15 minutes. If you play guessing games or you don’t bother to do the reading, the same assignment may take an hour or more to complete. I don’t care how you get to “the end” so long as to get to “the end.” Your score for these assignments will be the percentage of the material you master. There is no reason to get anything other than 100 on each of the assignments. That said, I will drop one assignment grade (the lowest) in calculating your overall grade.

**After the Apocalypse:**

This semester, you will be working in groups to draft a Constitution for the New USA (the US as it is being rebuilt following the zombie apocalypse). We will devote regular class time to this project, though you will be expected to work independently outside of class. This is an involved semester-long simulation. Information about the simulation, the components of your grade, and the work product I expect from you are provided at the end of this document.

***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 a 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**

**Date Reading Notes/Due Dates/Activities**

1/14 n/a Welcome to Class & American Political Culture

1/21 Chap. 2 U.S. Constitution

Due: LearnSmart Chapter 2

1/28 Chap. 3 Federalism / State of the Union

Due: LearnSmart Chapter 3

2/4 Chap. 11 Texas Constitution\*

Due: LearnSmart Chapter 11

2/11 Chap. 6 Congress

Due: LearnSmart Chapter 6

2/18 Chap. 7 Presidency

Due: LearnSmart Chapter 7

2/25 n/a Exam 1: 6:30 – 7:30, 330 Sage Hall

Simulation Work: 7:45 – 9:20, 122 Wooten

3/4 Chap. 8 Federal Bureaucracy\*

Due: LearnSmart Chapter 8

3/18 Chap. 12 & 13 Texas Elected Branches

Due: LearnSmart Chapter 12 & LearnSmart Chapter 13

3/25 Chap. 9 Courts

Due: LearnSmart Chapter 9

4/1 Chap. 4 Civil Liberties

Due: LearnSmart Chapter 4

4/8 Chap. 5 Civil Rights\*

Due: LearnSmart Chapter5

4/15 n/a Exam 2: 6:30 – 7:30, 330 Sage Hall

Simulation Work: 7:45 – 9:20, 122 Wooten

4/22 n/a Simulation Presentations and Wiki’s DUE

4/29 n/a Constitutional Convention: 6:30 – 8:30

Simulation Debrief: 8:45 – 9:20

5/6 n/a Final Exam: 6:30 – 8:00, 330 Sage Hall

\* Portions of these classes will be devoted to simulation work

**After the Apocalypse – A Simulation**

***The situation ….***

The year is 2112, and a zombie apocalypse has wiped out a considerable portion of the population of the United States and led to the disintegration of our national political institutions.  While the apocalypse took a heavy social toll, it left many of our resources (notably, communication, transportation, and manufacturing facilities) intact.  We have adequate food, water, and power; but (like today) we are aware that these resources are finite.

The zombies themselves are still around, though their number has diminished and they are no longer a “horde.” The virus that caused the outbreak, a mutation of the bat-borne Duvenhage virus, has mutated during the outbreak. Infected persons exhibit distinct characteristics (a shuffling gait, extreme pallor, slurred speech due to partial paralysis of the vocal cords, intense cravings for iron-rich foods). However, cognitive impairment and uncontrollable cravings for human brains exhibit in only about 20% of the infected population. Despite the possibility of reintegration of the zombie population into the uninfected human population, many uninfected humans consider the zombies to be no longer human and show an intense distrust and dislike of the population.

On the political front, individual states have survived the outbreak, and are now seeking to join forces for protection against the growing threat of a Canadian invasion. Moreover, the states desire the greater bargaining power (with respect to both trade and diplomatic relations) they will have if united. In short, the time has come to rebuild the United States and that means drafting a new governing document ... a new constitution.

You and the rest of your group represent your state (one of 12 in this new world) in the effort to create a new constitution. I will give you a dossier about your state that indicates its concerns, interests, and overall political culture.

***Your immediate task …***

You will, over the course of the semester, develop a governing document for this new, modern U.S.  You may use concepts and elements from our original constitution, but you should update them by putting them into language that a typical citizen could understand.  You are also free, of course, to change features of the constitution.  Perhaps your group believes that a unicameral legislature would be better than a bicameral legislature.  Or perhaps you don't believe a legislature makes sense at all.  Use the comment feature of the wiki to explain the rationale behind your decisions.

While you are free to add to the constitution, there are a few items your constitution MUST address:

1. the key principles guiding the creation of your constitution (in the form of a preamble)
2. the mechanism for adopting and modifying the constitution
3. the role of the state governments
4. the structure, powers, and selection mechanism for the national legislature
5. the structure, powers, and selection mechanism for the national executive
6. the structure, powers, and selection mechanism for the national judiciary
7. limitations on the powers and decisions of the national government (what can your national government **not** do and how will it be prevented from doing these forbidden things?)
8. fundamental rights of citizens (including defining citizens)

You should organize your constitution around "Articles" (parts), with each Article getting its own page on the wiki assigned to your group for purposes of drafting your constitution.  Your “main page” of your wiki should include the preamble for your Constitution (the set of guiding principles). Altogether, your delegation’s proposed constitution should have a total of 8 pages, each covering one of the enumerated items above. Bring laptops to class regularly, as there will be in-class opportunities to work on this project.

In addition to the **written wiki-based constitution**, your group will be expected to present your constitution to the class on Tuesday, April 22. You will have 10 minutes to present the most critical elements of your constitution in a clear, professional manner. Your **presentation** must include some **visual component** (a video, a powerpoint or prezi presentation, a poster … something), and you must provide members of the entire class with a single, one-sided sheet summarizing your presentation. Your presentation will be evaluated on the basis of its clarity, its effectiveness in “selling” your proposed constitution, and on the usefulness of your **one-sheet handout**. (Remember that usefulness includes readability, so don’t just try to shove as much information as you can onto the sheet of paper. Be thoughtful with what you include and how you present it.)

***Your ultimate goal …***

On Tuesday, April 29, from 6:30 – 8:30, our class will hold it’s **constitutional convention**. Each of the 12 states will strive **to get the group as a whole to adopt as many of its eight constitutional provisions as possible**. As instructor, I will start the debate by opening the floor for discussion of a ratifying procedure (how many state delegations must vote for a provision of the constitution for it to be included in the final version). For this particular measure only, the “house rule” of 9/12 will be implemented. The convention itself gets to decide what number of delegations out of 12 will be necessary to approve any further measures.

Individual delegations may then move particular items for discussion. Each state should appoint one delegate for each section of the constitution (you may use the same delegate—who will speak for and cast votes on behalf of the full delegation—for all provisions or spread the love within your group). A state’s official delegate may raise her hand and make a motion to discuss the mechanism for modifying the constitution. Another delegation (through it’s designee – a single person acting on behalf of the group) will then second. Another motion may be made that a particular delegation’s provision be considered for adoption. There will then be debate, and eventually a motion, seconded, that the group take a vote on adoption of a provision. Along the way, delegates may make procedural motions (such as to have secret ballots, etc.), and those, too, will be voted on by the group. Each delegation (state/group) gets a single vote.

Again, your group’s goal is to get as many of your provisions adopted as possible. The group (or groups, in the case of a tie) with the most provisions in the final constitution will receive an extra 5 points. If the class is unable to complete the constitution within the two hours allotted, every group will be docked 10 points. I kid you not. This is an emergency, folks, and compromise is crucial.

Your bargaining chips: You will want to start building coalitions early in the semester so that the convention goes well and so you can get your provisions adopted. Each group will have at its disposal: rhetoric (appeals to logic, reason, popularity, etc.); log-rolling (you vote for our provision, we’ll vote for yours; and the distribution of “goodies” (cards worth extra credit for an individual’s grade that each group will receive, either to distribute internally or to use as bargaining chips with other groups … think of this as political capital, which you can choose to keep or spend).

***Your grade for this project …***

This is a long and complicated simulation, but it is a valuable tool for thinking about how our government is structured, the flaws in its structure, and the importance of both rules and compromise.

Your grade will be based on both your group grade and your group members’ evaluations of your contributions to the group effort:

Written Constitution 40 points

Presentation

Verbal Presentation 15 points

Visual Component 10 points

Handout 10 points

Presentation Total 35 points

Peer Evaluations 25 points

Grand Total 100 points

(Group “Wins” Convention) +5 points

(Class Fails at Compromise) -10 points

+ points from cards you collect during negotiation

What will I be looking for in the written constitutions? I will be looking to see whether you have provided an adequate structure for a government to operate (addressing the 8 points enumerated above); whether you have taken into consideration the general concerns of the post-apocalyptic world as well as the specific concerns of your state; whether you have allowed adequate flexibility (by omission, vague wording, etc.) to allow your constitution to endure; and whether you have explained your decisions in a thoughtful and thorough manner.

***Be creative and have fun!***

**Peer Evaluation of Teamwork Rubric**

This is the rubric (scoresheet) you will use to evaluate the members of your group. You will receive a packet with scoresheets for your whole group; fill them out and turn the whole packet to Dr. Watson on April 29 (in class).

1. Did this student attend meetings regularly, on time and prepared, and provide timely notice when he/she could not attend?

2. In meetings, did this student stay on track, facilitating a productive learning environment? (You should “disagree” with this statement if the student was distracting or tended to steer the group away from the required activities.)

3. In meetings, did this student listen attentively to other students’ input and encourage contributions from other students? (You should “disagree” with this statement if the student was rude or dismissive or if the student unnecessarily dominated conversations.)

4. Did this student make positive contributions, both in and out of meetings, in terms of ideas and research?

5. Did this student make a substantial contribution to the group presentation and/or group wiki, pursuant to the group’s pre-determined division of labor?