**PSCI 1051.002**

**Honors American Government: Process and Policies**

Spring 2014; Wooten 115; T/Th, 3:30 – 4:50

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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 |

**Course Description**

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 Materials:**

McGraw Hill Publishing has created a custom text (Patterson) for PSCI 1050/1051 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. 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.

**Class Responsibilities and Grades**

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

Attendance 5%

LearnSmart 15%

Group Peer Evaluation 10%

Group Project 15%

Paper 10%

Exams (3 @ 15%) 45%

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 me 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.

**Attendance:**

I will take attendance in every class, either by asking you to write a response to a question or to pose a question you would like answered. I will pass out index cards for this purpose. You get three “passes” for attendance. After that, you will lose 5% from your attendance grade for every class you miss.

**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 eleven LearnSmart exercises through Blackboard. Of the eleven, I will drop your lowest score; the remaining 10 will constitute 15% of your overall grade in the course. LearnSmart exercises are due **before class begins**.

**Groups:**

You will be assigned to a group when the drop period ends. Specifically, I’ll divide the class into groups of 5 – 7 students. Your group should come up with a name. Throughout the semester, you will work with your group on in-class activities. At the end of the semester, all students will evaluate the performance of the other members of their group. The average of your evaluations will count as 10% of your grade. It is important, then, to be in class, to be on task, and to work well with others.

**Be the Difference:**

In addition to in-class activities, your group will also work together to create and implement a strategy to make a difference in your local community. As a group, you will identify an issue that needs to be addressed in our community (for example, an intersection where there should be a walk signal). Your group’s job is to figure out WHO can make that change and HOW you can persuade that person (or persons) to agree with you. Your group will need to turn in an issue on February 13 for my approval.

At the end of the term, your group will present your results to the rest of the class. Clearly identify your objective, the party or parties you tried to persuade, the methods you used in your campaign, how successful you were, and how you might have been more successful. Your presentation must include an A/V component (powerpoint, prezi, and/or video); and an “executive summary”: a single sheet (one-sided) summary of your endeavors that you can pass out to the class before your presentation.

**Paper:**

In addition to group activities, you will each write a 5 – 7 page individual paper. Your paper should identify a STATE or NATIONAL policy issue that matters to you (for example abortion, the death penalty, or the flat tax). Identify the policy you would like to see with respect to the issue of your choice. The rest of the paper should provide a strategy for achieving your policy objective. Specifically, imagine that you are creating an interest group to achieve your policy objective. Who would your membership be? What strategies should your group choose in pursuing its goals? Why those strategies as opposed to others? You will turn in your paper topic to me on February 13, and the paper will be uploaded to Turn-it-in no later than the beginning of class on April 17.

**Exams**

Exams will be completed online in the computer testing lab in Sage Hall. Exams will be held on February 11, March 25, and May 6 (1:30 – 3:30)

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 lab and then return while the exam is in session.
4. You may not eat or drink during the exam.
5. Once one student finishes the exam, no more students will be admitted to the testing room (so be on time!).
6. 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.

Exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false, matching, and ordering questions. In addition, there will be an essay question on each exam. NOTE: I do not give essay credit for simply spewing information. Your essay response should be reasonably well-organized and it should answer the question rather than simply dumping information. In other words, just saying “true things” will not earn you credit. When you are taking exams, be sure to save sufficient time for the essay questions.

The exams are not cumulative. In other words, each exam covers a single unit of the material.

**Late and Make-up Policies**

I have a zero tolerance policy for late LearnSmart activities (your score is based on what you complete before the beginning of class on the due date). Similarly, homework is due on the day it is due, or you do not receive credit.

I will only give make-up exams in extraordinary circumstances. Ideally, you should contact me **before** the exam to verify the reason you will be missing the exam. If that is not possible, you still must contact me within 24 hours of the test to schedule a make-up. If I do not hear from you in the 24 hours immediately following the exam, you will receive a zero.

***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**

**Date Reading Notes/Due Dates**

1/14 n/a Welcome

1/16 Chap. 1 Political Culture

1/21 – 1/23 Chap. 2 Public Opinion

Thursday: Short Group Session (meet and greet)

1/28 – 1/30 Chap. 7 Mass Media

2/4 – 2/6 Chap. 3 Political Participation

2/11 – 2/13 n/a EXAM 1, 330 SAGE HALL

Thursday: Group Work – Topic for LM due

Individual paper topic due

2/18 – 2/20 Chap. 4 Political Parties

2/25 – 2/27 Chap. 5 Interest Groups

Thursday: Collective Action Game

3/4 – 3/6 Chap. 6 (pp. 161 – 184) Elections: Mechanics and Campaigns

3/18 – 3/20 Chap. 6 (pp. 184 – end) Elections: Money and Politics

3/25 – 3/27 n/a EXAM 2, 330 SAGE HALL

Thursday: Group Work

4/1 – 4/3 n/a The Electoral College

Thursday: The Electoral College Game

4/8 – 4/10 Chap. 8 Econ. and Environmental Policy

4/15 – 4/17 Chap. 9 Domestic Policy

Thursday: Budget Simulation

4/22 – 4/23 Chap 10 Foreign Policy

Thursday: Group Work

4/29 – 5/1 n/a Group Presentations

5/6 n/a EXAM 3 (1:30 – 3:30), 330 SAGE HALL