

**PSCI 1040.001: American Government—Laws and Institutions**  
**Fall 2012**  
**MWF, 10:00–10:50 AM, Business Leadership Building 080**

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the roles of the United States and Texas governments in the American political system. We will consider the institutions, processes, and decisions of political actors that define American and Texas government. We focus particular attention on the United States and Texas constitutions, civil rights and liberties, federalism as well as the institutions that comprise the three branches of government.

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**Instructor**

Professor Bethany Blackstone

- Email: blackstone@unt.edu
  - Office: Wooten Hall 154
  - Office Hours: Mondays 1:00 pm–4:00 pm, Thursdays 9:00 am–12:00 pm, and by appt.
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**Teaching Assistants**

The Teaching Assistants (TAs) can help you with any issues related to the course. Your Teaching Assistants are graduate students in the Department of Political Science and are a great resource for you. If you have questions about course material, exam preparation strategy, or your grades, the TAs should be your first contact. The TAs hold weekly office hours and will also be happy to schedule alternative meeting times if no one's office hours are compatible with your schedule.

Ms. Eliza Kelly

- Email: ElizaKelly@my.unt.edu
- Office: Wooten Hall 173
- Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:30 am–12:30 pm and Wednesdays 11:00 am–12:00 pm

Mr. John Kirby

- Email: JohnKirby@my.unt.edu
  - Office: Wooten Hall 337
  - Office Hours: Mondays 12:00 pm–2:00 pm and 5:00 pm–6:00 pm
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**Supplemental Instruction (SI)**

The UNT Learning Center provides Supplemental Instruction for this course. Your SI Leader will be a UNT student that has taken this course before and earned an A. Your SI will hold weekly group study sessions and a weekly office hour. All students are welcome to and strongly encouraged to attend SI sessions. Your SI cannot answer questions about your grades but can help with any questions about course content.

Your Supplemental Instruction Leader is Ayasha Hensen. Once Ayasha's session schedule is finalized, SI sessions will be added to the course calendar in Blackboard.

## **Blackboard**

A Blackboard conference is maintained for this course at <https://learn.unt.edu/>. Students are responsible for checking Blackboard for assignments and notices. You should check Blackboard every day to ensure that you are up to date on all class-related information. Assignments will be submitted in Blackboard and student grades will be posted in Blackboard.

## **Facebook**

I have created a Facebook group for students enrolled in PSCI 1040. I will post links to news stories related to American and Texas government and announcements related to the course to the Facebook group. Students are also welcome to post information relevant to class. Joining the group is optional and will not impact your grade. If you wish to join the group, go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/334069170013915/>. Be advised that information you share in the course Facebook page is governed by Facebook's privacy policies. Also, note that I do not guarantee that I will read and respond to every post in the Facebook group; if you have a question that only I can answer, email me or see me in my office.

## **Office Hours**

Office hours for myself and the Teaching Assistants are listed above. You may stop by our offices without an appointment during these hours; come with questions, concerns, or a desire for further discussion. We hold office hours for your benefit. If none of these times are convenient for you, please email to arrange an alternative meeting time. We can also schedule a time to "chat" about the course through Blackboard's instant messenger client, Blackboard IM. (You can download Blackboard IM from the course Blackboard page and use it to chat with me or other students.) During my office hours, I will be available in person and on Blackboard IM.

## **Communication and E-mail**

When e-mailing me or one of the Teaching Assistants, please include the course number (PSCI 1040) in the subject line of your message. Please sign your messages with your first and last name, and include an appropriate salutation. (Hint: you can't go wrong with "Hi Professor Blackstone.") Please articulate the content of your message clearly—do not use text message or instant message speak.

*A Special Note About Technical Problems with Blackboard and/or the Pearson Content.* Neither the TAs nor I can answer questions about technical problems with Blackboard or the Pearson materials over email. During the first two weeks of class, the Political Science Department has scheduled 20 hours of Tech Support sessions in GAB 550A so students may receive help accessing course materials. Links to Pearson Tech Support are available in Blackboard. You can contact the UIT Helpdesk for assistance with Blackboard (<http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/hours.htm>). If, after consulting those resources, you are unable to resolve your technical issue, you should see me or one of the Teaching Assistants in person.

If I need to contact you, I will send you a message through Blackboard. Messages initiated in Blackboard are automatically delivered to your UNT email account. Please check Blackboard for announcements and your UNT email account regularly to ensure that you receive all course-related information.

## **Course Materials**

1. **Textbook** (*Required*). Fiorina & Dye. The New American Democracy with Texas Chapters, Volume I, Custom Edition. New York: Pearson.

This is a custom textbook created for PSCI 1040. It includes material on the U.S. Government and Texas Government. Chapters on the U.S. Government are authored by Fiorina et al. and appear at the

front of your book. Chapters on Texas Government are written by Dye et al. and are numbered TX–1, TX–2, etc. They appear after the Fiorina chapters in your text.

You can purchase a hard copy of this book at the UNT bookstore or an electronic copy through the course Blackboard page. A copy of this book will be placed on reserve at Willis Library for student use.

2. **eWorkbook** (*Recommended*). Gloria C. Cox and Richard S. Ruderman, eds. 2011. PSCI 1040 eWorkbook. Ninth edition. New York: Pearson.

The eWorkbook includes short readings designed to get students to think critically about concepts introduced in lecture and the textbook. Students will have the option to answer questions about these readings to earn class points. (See *Grading* section below for more information.)

The workbook is available only in electronic format. When you purchase the textbook at the bookstore, you will be able to choose whether or not you want to purchase the textbook with or without an access code for the eWorkbook. You can also purchase access to the eWorkbook in Blackboard (with or without an electronic version of the textbook).

### Purchasing Options for Books

1. **Online copy of Fiorina/Dye textbook and eWorkbook. Cost: \$51.60.** (Available only through Blackboard course site.)
2. Paper copy of Fiorina/Dye textbook with eWorkbook access code. Cost \$109.75. (Available at the local bookstores.)
3. Paper copy of Fiorina/Dye textbook without eWorkbook access code. Cost \$79.00. (Available at the local bookstores.)
4. eWorkbook only. Cost \$37.50 (Available only through Blackboard course site.)

*Note: Options 1, 2, and 4 above also include access to Pearson’s MyPoliSciLab, an online supplement to the textbook that includes practice test questions and other multimedia resources. If you do not mind doing your textbook readings online, I encourage you to choose Option 1—that is by far the best value for all materials.*

### **Grading**

Course grades will be rounded to the nearest percent and assigned according to the scale below:

90–100%	A
80–89%	B
70–79%	C
60–69%	D
<60%	F

*Choose Your Own Adventure:* In a class of 200+ students, individuals will undoubtedly have different preferred learning styles. Accordingly, you may choose either of the following bases upon which to be evaluated. You may choose an “Exams Only” grading scheme. Under this option, your grade will depend only on your performance on exams. If you prefer a more participatory experience and more opportunities to apply the course material, you can choose the “Exams Plus” option. You will still take the course exams, but they will be weighted less heavily. Under this option, exams will be worth 75% of your course grade. The remaining 25% of your grade will be based on the completion of 3 homework assignments (based on

the recommended readings from the eWorkbook) and regular participation in an online discussion group.

	Exams Only Option	Exams + Option
	Percent of Course Grade	Percent of Course Grade
Exams (3)	100	75
eWorkbook Assignments (3)	0	10
Discussion Group Participation (online)	0	15
Total	100	100

You are not required to formally commit to the Exams Only or Exams Plus options. At the end of the semester, I will calculate your grade using both formulas and give you whichever grade is higher. Due dates for eWorkbook assignments and discussion group participation are firm; late assignments will not be accepted and you cannot later in the semester decide to complete assignments for which the due dates have passed.

Your grades for various elements of the course will be posted on Blackboard within 1 week of submission of the work. If you believe I have made an error, you must report it to me within 1 week of the time the grades are made available to you on Blackboard. This means that all grade disputes must be handled within 2 weeks of the original assignment due date. After that time, grades will not be reviewed.

### Exams

Four exams will be given—3 regular exams and a final exam. Your top three exam scores will be used to calculate your final grade. The final exam will be comprehensive and will be held during our course’s assigned final exam period.

No make-up exams will be given unless you have a university-excused absence or a family or medical emergency which is documented and verifiable. Since you may drop your lowest exam grade, if you miss an exam due to illness, lack of preparation, travel, oversleeping, etc., then you may miss that exam and use it as your lowest grade (i.e. the “drop”). If you miss a second exam, you will receive a zero for that exam grade.

If you will miss an exam because of a university-approved absence, you should make arrangements to take the exam early if you know about your absence ahead of time. Students that will miss an exam due to travel with UNT athletic teams or performance groups, or for observance of a religious holiday, for example, should make arrangements to take their exams prior to their absences.

If a student has taken the first 3 exams, he/she may take the comprehensive final in an attempt to raise his/her grade. (This will provide the opportunity to drop a previous exam.) The final is optional if a student has scored to his/her satisfaction on the first three exams.

Each exam will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions. You will use a scantron to answer these questions, so you MUST bring a #2 pencil and an eraser to the exam. You should bring a form of photo identification with you to each exam. Exams will cover material from all lectures and required readings. The exams are closed book and closed notes.

### Workbook Assignments

There are 3 eWorkbook assignments. Each assignment consists of a set of multiple choice and true/false questions based on readings from the eWorkbook. Workbook assignments must be submitted electronically in Blackboard and are due by 10:00 AM on their due dates. Late submissions will not be accepted. You should plan for possible computer and/or network problems by not waiting until the last minute to turn in your work. Should you encounter computer problems, you should contact the appropriate IT support person.

### Discussion Group

We will use online discussions to provide an opportunity for you to reflect on topics presented in class and to engage with your classmates. Students will be assigned to discussion groups in Blackboard and will use the group discussion board to converse with other students about the course material. There are 11 discussion topics. Each discussion topic is open for one week and closes prior to class on a Monday morning. For each discussion topic there are two discussion prompts on the syllabus. You may respond to either or both prompts. That is, your three (or more) posts can be split across the two prompts.

Keep the following in mind as you contribute to your group's discussions:<sup>1</sup>

1. Postings should be evenly distributed during the discussion period (not concentrated all on one day or at the beginning and/or end of the period). Earning an A or B for discussion requires that you post at least 3 times in each discussion and that posts are made in time for others to read and respond. A good guideline is to post an initial post by Tuesday, a second post by Thursday, and a third post by midday Sunday.
2. Remember that the idea is to have a *discussion*, read and respond to your colleague's posts. Keep your discussions on-topic and post messages as replies in the appropriate threads in Blackboard.
3. Postings should be a minimum of one short paragraph and a maximum of two paragraphs.
4. Avoid posting that are limited to "I agree" or "great idea," etc. If you agree (or disagree) with a posting then say why you agree by supporting your statement with concepts from the readings or by bringing in a related example or experience.
5. You may bring in outside references but do not simply copy and paste links. Explain your arguments in your own words. Provide a citation when you are paraphrasing an idea from another source.
6. Bring in related prior knowledge (work experience, prior coursework, readings, etc.)
7. Use proper etiquette (proper language, typing, courtesy, etc.) Treat your group members with civility. You can disagree without being disagreeable.

The rubric below<sup>2</sup> explains the basis of evaluation for discussion participation.

- A Discussion (90–100): Distinguished/Outstanding

Students earning an "A" for discussion activities have participated 3 or more times during the week and have posted outstanding information. A discussion postings

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from Nada Dabbagh. 2003. "Online Discussion Protocols and Rubrics." <http://mason.gmu.edu/~7Endabbagh/wblg/online-protocol.html> (August 17, 2012)

<sup>2</sup>This rubric is adapted from: Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Teaching Excellence. 2009. "Using Discussion Boards in Online Classes." [http://www.vcu.edu/cte/resources/OTLRG/05\\_04\\_DiscussionBoards.html](http://www.vcu.edu/cte/resources/OTLRG/05_04_DiscussionBoards.html) (August 16, 2012).

1. Are made in time for others to read and respond,
  2. Deliver information that is full of thought, insight, and analysis,
  3. Make connections to previous or current course content or to real-life situations, and
  4. Contain rich and fully developed new ideas, connections, or applications
- **B Discussion (80–89): Proficient**  
Students earning a “B” for discussion activities have participated at least 3 times during the week and have posted proficient information. B discussion postings:
    1. Are made in time for others to read and respond,
    2. Deliver information that shows that thought, insight, and analysis have taken place,
    3. Make connections to previous or current content or to real-life situations, but the connections are not clear or are too obvious, and
    4. Contain new ideas, connections, or applications, but they may lack depth and/or detail
  - **C Discussion (70–79): Basic**  
Students earning a “C” for discussion activities have participated at least 1 time during the week and have posted basic information. C discussion postings:
    1. May not all be made in time for others to read and respond,
    2. Are generally competent, but the actual information they deliver is thin and commonplace,
    3. Make limited, if any, connections, and those are often in the form of vague generalities,
    4. Contain few, if any, new ideas or applications; often are a rehashing or summary of other comments.
  - **D–F Discussion (10–69): Below Expectations**  
Students earning a “D–F” for discussion activities have participated at least 1 during the week and have posted information that was below expectations. D–F postings
    1. May not all be made in time for others to read and respond,
    2. Are rudimentary and superficial; there is no evidence of insight or analysis
    3. Contribute no new ideas, connections, or applications, or
    4. May be completely off-topic
  - No participation in a discussion board activity will result in a zero for that activity.

### Extra Credit

There are no opportunities for extra credit in the class. Plan accordingly and focus on earning the grade you want. If you need a particular grade to graduate, keep a scholarship, etc., then ensure that you are exerting the effort necessary to earn that grade. If problems arise, address them early before they become unresolvable.

### A Final Note About Grades and Grading

*Take your education into your own hands. If you do poorly on the assignments and exams, you need to see me and/or one of the TAs as soon as possible to ensure that you understand what you can do to improve your*

*grade. Begging for a higher grade after you complete all the assignments will not do you any good. I will not give you a special opportunity for extra credit simply because you are not doing as well in the class as you would like. The only way to get the grade you want is to pay attention and participate in lecture, read the book, complete your assignments and study for the exams.*

## **Other Class Policies**

### Attendance

Because I will cover material in class that is not discussed in the texts, I strongly encourage you to attend each class session. If you are absent from a class session, it is your responsibility to obtain lecture notes from a classmate. I make my PowerPoint slides available to students in Blackboard but they are not sufficient to prepare you for the course exams.

Class starts at 10:00 am and ends at 10:50 am. I expect you to be in class and ready to begin at 10:00 am. I expect you to stay until 10:50 am. I expect you to be attentive. Things like arriving late, leaving early, surfing the web, playing on your phone and talking to your neighbor are distracting to me and to your fellow students. Don't do them. If you are disruptive, I will ask you to leave the class. Repeated or egregious instances of classroom disruption will result in referral to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether student behavior violates the Code of Student Conduct.

For course drop information: see schedule at <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html>.

Policies on academic dishonesty are available at <http://www.vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>.

### Department of Political Science 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 (beginning of the second week of classes).

### Department of Political Science 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 failure of all fields of the exam.

Determination of cheating or plagiarism shall be made by the instructor in the course, or by the field faculty in the case of departmental exams. Cases of cheating or plagiarism on graduate departmental exams, theses, or dissertations shall automatically be referred to the departmental Graduate Studies Committee. Cases of cheating or plagiarism in ordinary coursework may, at the discretion of the instructor, be referred to the Undergraduate Studies Committee in the case of undergraduate students, or the Graduate Studies Committee in the case of graduate students. 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 any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

#### Department of Political Science Policy on Academic Integrity

The Political Science Department adheres to and enforces UNT's policy on academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and sabotage). Students in this class should review the policy (UNT Policy Manual Section 18.1.16), which may be located at [http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7Student\\_Affairs-Academic\\_Integrity.pdf](http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7Student_Affairs-Academic_Integrity.pdf). Violations of academic integrity in this course will be addressed in compliance with the penalties and procedures laid out in this policy. Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Policy Manual Section 18.1.16 "Student Standards of Academic Integrity."

#### Department of Political Science Statement on 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).



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Daily Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b> <i>(Readings should be completed prior to class on the day they are listed.)</i>	<b>Assignments Due</b> <i>(all assignments are due at 10:00 am)</i>
<b>29-Aug</b>	Course Introduction		
<b>31-Aug</b>	Introduction to Politics in the United States and Texas	Fiorina Chapter 1: Democracy in the United States	
<b>5-Sep</b>	Introduction to Politics in the United States and Texas	eWorkbook Chapter 1: Liberty and Security (recommended)	Discussion Topic 1 Posts
<b>7-Sep</b>	Introduction to Politics in the United States and Texas	Fiorina Chapter 4: American Political Culture and eWorkbook Chapter 2: Alexis de Tocqueville and American Political Culture (recommended)	
<b>10-Sep</b>	Introduction to Politics in the United States and Texas	Dye Chapter TX-1: The Social and Economic Milieu of Texas Politics	Discussion Topic 2 Posts
<b>12-Sep</b>	The U.S. and Texas Constitutions	Fiorina Chapter 2: Establishing a Constitutional Democracy and the U.S. Constitution	
<b>14-Sep</b>	The U.S. and Texas Constitutions	Dye Chapter TX-2: The Texas Constitution	
<b>17-Sep</b>	The U.S. and Texas Constitutions	eWorkbook Chapter 3: Comparative Constitutions (recommended)	Discussion Topic 3 Posts
<b>19-Sep</b>	Federalism	Fiorina Chapter 3: Federalism	
<b>21-Sep</b>	Federalism	eWorkbook Chapter 4: Evolving American Federalism (recommended)	
<b>24-Sep</b>	Federalism		Discussion Topic 4 Posts
<b>26-Sep</b>	Review for Exam 1		Unit 1 eWorkbook Assignment
<b>28-Sep</b>	Exam 1		
<b>1-Oct</b>	Congress	Fiorina, Chapter 12: The Congress and Its Work	
<b>3-Oct</b>	Congress		
<b>5-Oct</b>	Congress		

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<b>8-Oct</b>	Congress	eWorkbook Chapter 5: Representation and Religion (recommended)	Discussion Topic 5 Posts
<b>10-Oct</b>	Congress		
<b>12-Oct</b>	Presidency	Fiorina Chapter 13: The Presidency: Powers and Practice	
<b>15-Oct</b>	Presidency	eWorkbook Chapter 6: Understanding Presidential Power (recommended)	Discussion Topic 6 Posts
<b>17-Oct</b>	Presidency		
<b>19-Oct</b>	Bureaucracy	Fiorina Chapter 14: The Bureaucracy	
<b>22-Oct</b>	Bureaucracy	eWorkbook Chapter 7: From Criticism to Understanding: The Federal Bureaucracy (recommended)	Discussion Topic 7 Posts
<b>24-Oct</b>	Texas Legislative and Executive Branches	Dye Chapter TX-3: The Texas Legislature	
<b>26-Oct</b>	Texas Legislative and Executive Branches	Dye Chapter TX-4: The Texas Executive and Bureaucracy	
<b>29-Oct</b>	Review for Exam 2		Discussion Topic 8 Posts and Unit 2 eWorkbook Assignment
<b>31-Oct</b>	Exam 2		
<b>2-Nov</b>	Courts	Fiorina Chapter 15: The Courts	
<b>5-Nov</b>	Courts	eWorkbook Chapter 8: How Did the Supreme Court Get to Be "Supreme?" (recommended)	
<b>7-Nov</b>	Courts		
<b>9-Nov</b>	Courts		
<b>12-Nov</b>	Courts	Dye Chapter TX-5: The Texas Judiciary	Discussion Topic 9 Posts
<b>14-Nov</b>	Courts		

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<b>16-Nov</b>	Civil Liberties	Fiorina Chapter 16: Civil Liberties	
<b>19-Nov</b>	Civil Liberties		Discussion Topic 10 Posts
<b>21-Nov</b>	Civil Liberties	eWorkbook Chapter 9: The Right to Privacy in Historical Perspective (recommended)	
<b>26-Nov</b>	Civil Rights	Fiorina Chapter 17: Civil Rights	
<b>28-Nov</b>	Civil Rights	eWorkbook Chapter 10: The Quest for Equality (recommended)	
<b>30-Nov</b>	Civil Rights		
<b>3-Dec</b>	Review for Exam 3		Discussion Topic 11 Posts and Unit 3 eWorkbook Assignment
<b>5-Dec</b>	Exam 3		
<b>12-Dec</b>	Exam 4 @ 8:00 AM		