

**PSCI 1040.001: American Government—Laws and Institutions
Spring 2013
TR 12:30 pm–1:50 pm, ESSC 255**

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.

Instructor

Professor Bethany Blackstone

- Email: blackstone@unt.edu
 - Office: Wooten Hall 154
 - Office Hours: Mondays, 8:00 am–10:00 am, Tuesdays 2:00 pm–4:00 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.

TA	Elliot Montagano	Melda Ozsut	Flora Yin
email	ElliotMontagano@my.unt.edu	MeldaOzsut@my.unt.edu	ShuyangYin@my.unt.edu
Office	Wooten 331	Wooten 337	Wooten 337
Office Hours	Thursdays, 2:00–5:00 pm	Thursdays, 9:00 am–12:00 pm	Fridays, 1:00–4:00 pm

Supplemental Instruction (SI)

The UNT Learning Center provides Supplemental Instruction for this course. SI Leaders are UNT students that have 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. You may contact Ayasha by email at ayashanichole@hotmail.com. Once Ayasha's session schedule is finalized, SI sessions will be added to the course calendar in Blackboard.

PSCI 1040 Online

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. Some course assignments will be submitted in Blackboard and student grades will be posted in Blackboard.

Aplia

Aplia is an online course supplement. If you buy the textbook at the bookstore or from CengageBrain.com, it will come with an Aplia access code. If you purchase online access to the textbook, you will also receive access to Aplia. Aplia houses an electronic version of the textbook as well as supplementary exercises. Some graded course assignments will be completed in Aplia. You will need to create an account at Aplia.com and register your access code to access and complete Aplia problem sets.

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/502876359763369/>. 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 Aplia Content. Neither the TAs nor I can answer questions about technical problems with Blackboard or the Cengage/Aplia materials over email. You can contact the UIT Helpdesk for assistance with Blackboard (<http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/hours.htm>) and you can contact Aplia support by clicking on the "Support" link and submitting a case. 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.

I will send regular emails to the class through Blackboard. Messages initiated in Blackboard are automatically delivered to your UNT email account; set up email forwarding if you want your messages to be delivered to another address. Please check Blackboard for announcements and your UNT email account regularly to ensure that you receive all course-related information.

Course Materials

1. Text + Aplia (*Required*). John G. Geer, Wendy J. Schiller, Jeffrey A. Segal, and Dana K. Glencross. 2013. *Gateways to American Democracy: The Essentials*, 2nd edition. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

See the handout distributed in class and posted in Blackboard for information about textbook purchasing options.

2. Readings on Texas government will come from *Texas Politics*—a free online text provided by the Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Service at the University of Texas at Austin. Links to specific readings are provided in the course outline section below. The homepage for the Texas politics readings is <http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu>.
3. You will be assigned between 4 and 8 news articles per week. Links to assigned news stories will be emailed to you each Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday morning.

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 300+ 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 to have 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 80% of your course grade. The remaining 20% of your grade will be based on the completion of exercises related to the textbook readings (in Aplia) and quizzes on the weekly news articles (in Blackboard).

	Exams Only Option	Exams + Option
	Percent of Course Grade	Percent of Course Grade
Exams (3)	100	80
Aplia Problem Sets	0	10
Weekly News Quizzes	0	10
Total	100	100

At the end of the semester, I will calculate your grade using both formulas and give you whichever grade is higher. Due dates for Aplia Problem Sets and News Quizzes 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. I strongly encourage all students to begin the semester as though they will be graded under the Exams Plus scheme; if after the first exam you are confident that you can earn the grade that you want based solely on your exam performance, then switch to Exams Only.

Your grades for various elements of the course will be posted in Blackboard within 1 week of the due date of the work. If you believe there is an error, you must report it to me within 1 week of the time the grades are made available to you in 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. Exams will cover material from all lectures and required readings (those from the textbook, the *Texas Politics* readings, and assigned news articles). The exams are closed book and closed notes.

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.

Exams 1, 2, and 3 will each consist of 50 multiple-choice questions. Exam 4 will consist of 75 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.

Aplia Problem Sets (in Aplia)

There are problem sets in Aplia associated with each assigned chapter of the textbook. These problem sets include multiple choice, matching, and fill-in-the-blank style questions. The questions require you to analyze information and to apply key concepts. You are allowed to attempt each question up to three times; your score for each question is the average of your attempts. The first Aplia Problem Set is an Introduction To Using Aplia Assignments. This assignment will explain how to answer different types of questions in Aplia and how grades are calculated.

All Aplia Problem Sets are due at 11:45 pm on the dates listed on the syllabus. (With one exception, these due dates are on Sundays.) There are 10 Aplia Problem Sets assigned during the semester; your lowest score will be dropped.

Weekly News Quizzes (in Blackboard)

Each week, you will be assigned readings from various news outlets on current political events. These readings are intended to highlight the real-world implications of topics we discuss in class and to promote

political competence. Keeping abreast of political developments will increase your understanding of how various rules structure political interactions and show you the various ways that individuals and groups try to influence political outcomes. To use the theme of your textbook, this assignment allows you to see various gateways and gates to democracy in action.

I will email students 1–2 links to news stories on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings. On Friday, I will post a weekly news quiz in Blackboard. Each quiz will include between 5 and 10 questions and must be completed by 11:59 pm on Sunday evening. These quizzes are timed; you have 20 minutes for each attempt. (Do the readings before you open the quiz.) Once you begin the test, it must be completed in one sitting. You may attempt each quiz twice. Your highest score will be recorded.

There are 13 quizzes assigned during the semester; your lowest score will be dropped.

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 lecture presentations available to students in Blackboard but they are not sufficient to prepare you for the course exams.

Class starts at 12:30 pm and ends at 1:50 pm. I expect you to be in class and ready to begin at 12:30 pm. I expect you to stay until 1:50 pm. 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 University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to

verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation.

Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

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/7-Student_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 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 <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1, Monday, January 14–Sunday, January 20: Politics in America

- Reading: Syllabus.
- Reading: *Gateways*, Chapter 1, “Gateways to American Democracy” for Thursday.
- Problem Set: “Introduction to Using Aplia Assignments.” Due in Aplia by 11:45 pm on Sunday.
- News Quiz 1: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 2, Monday, January 21–Sunday, January 27: Politics in America (continued)

- Reading: *Texas Politics*, “Texas Political Culture,” for Thursday.
- Problem Set: “Gateways to American Democracy.” Due in Aplia by 11:45 pm on Sunday.
- News Quiz 2: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 3, Monday, January 28–Sunday, February 3: Constitutions

- Reading: *Gateways*, Chapter 2, “The Constitution” for Tuesday.
- Reading: *Texas Politics*, “The Constitution,” for Thursday.
- Problem Set: “The Constitution.” Due in Aplia by 11:45 pm on Sunday.
- News Quiz 3: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 4, Monday, February 4–Sunday, February 10: Federalism

- Reading: *Gateways*, Chapter 3, “Federalism” for Tuesday.
- News Quiz 4: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 5, Monday, February 11–Sunday, February 17: Federalism (continued)

- Problem Set: “Federalism.” Due in Aplia by 11:45 pm on Sunday.
- News Quiz 5: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 6, Monday, February 18–Sunday, February 24: Exam 1 / Civil Liberties

Exam 1–Tuesday, February 19

- Reading: *Gateways*, Chapter 4, “Civil Liberties” for Thursday.
- News Quiz 6: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 7, Monday, February 25–Sunday, March 3: Civil Liberties / Civil Rights

- Reading: *Gateways*, Chapter 5, “Civil Rights” for Thursday.
- Problem Set: “Civil Liberties.” Due in Aplia by 11:45 pm on Sunday.
- News Quiz 7: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 8, Monday, March 4–Sunday, March 10: Civil Rights / The Legislative Branch

- Reading: *Gateways*, Chapter 11, “Congress” for Thursday.

Week 9, Monday, March 11–Sunday, March 17

Spring Break: No class meetings or assignments.

Note that you will have two problem sets due the week after Spring Break. Plan accordingly!

Week 10, Monday, March 18–Sunday, March 24: The Legislative Branch

- Problem Set: “Civil Rights.” Due in Aplia by 11:45 pm on Sunday.
- Problem Set: “Congress.” Due in Aplia by 11:45 pm on Sunday.
- News Quiz 8: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 11, Monday, March 25–Sunday, March 31: The Legislative Branch / Exam 2

- Reading: *Texas Politics*, “The Legislative Branch,” for Tuesday.

Exam 2–Thursday, March 28

- News Quiz 9: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 12, Monday, April 1–Sunday, April 7: The Executive Branch

- Reading: *Gateways*, Chapter 12, “The Presidency” for Tuesday.
- Problem Set: “The Presidency.” Due in Aplia by 11:45 pm on Sunday.
- News Quiz 10: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 13, Monday, April 8–Sunday, April 14: The Executive Branch

- Reading: *Gateways*, Chapter 13, “The Bureaucracy” for Tuesday.
- Reading: *Texas Politics*, “The Executive Branch,” for Thursday.
- Problem Set: “The Bureaucracy.” Due in Aplia by 11:45 pm on Sunday.
- News Quiz 11: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 14, Monday, April 15–Sunday, April 21: The Judicial Branch

- Reading: *Gateways*, Chapter 14, “The Judiciary” for Thursday.
- News Quiz 12: Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 15, Monday, April 22–Sunday, April 28; The Judicial Branch

- Problem Set: “The Judiciary.” Due in Aplia by 11:45 pm on Sunday.
- News Quiz 13: in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Sunday.

Week 16, Monday, April 29–Sunday, Sunday, May 5: The Judicial Branch / Exam 3

- Reading: *Texas Politics*, “The Justice System,” for Tuesday.

Exam 3–Thursday, May 2

Finals Week: Exam 4–Tuesday, May 7, 10:30 am–12:30 pm