

**PSCI 1040.010: American Government—Laws and Institutions
Fall 2014.
MW 5:00–6:20 pm, Matthews Hall 311
Professor Bethany Blackstone**

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.

	Professor	Teaching Assistant
	Bethany Blackstone	Brandon Zitar
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Office	Wooten Hall 154	Wooten Hall 131
Office Hours	Wednesdays, 1:30–4:30 pm	Tuesdays, 3:00–6:00 pm

Blackboard

A Blackboard conference is maintained for this course at <https://learn.unt.edu/>. Students are responsible for checking Blackboard for announcements and messages. 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.

Team 1040

Instructor

Please contact me if you have substantive questions about the course material. My office hours are listed above and I am available for appointments should you have a scheduling conflict. Email is an excellent way to reach me. If you write me M–F, I should get back to you within 24 hours. If I don't, please feel free to send me a reminder! A note on etiquette: (1) please sign your emails with your name, (2) please include an appropriate salutation, and (3) please ask a specific question if you need a response.

Teaching Assistant

Mr. Brandon Zitar is the teaching assistant for the course. Any problems you have with administrative or procedural matters such as incorrect grades or problems with homework should be discussed first with Mr. Zitar. If you have a complaint, contact me after you have spoken to Mr. Zitar to clarify the problem. If you have trouble with Blackboard, please contact the Student Help Desk at 940.565.2324.

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 performed well. 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 Jose Claudio. You may contact Jose by email at josec1077@gmail.com. Once Jose’s session schedule is finalized, SI sessions will be added to the course calendar in Blackboard.

Required Text

Central Ideas in American Government with PSCI 1040 Workbook. 2014. Soomo Publishing.
(Access to the webtext can be purchased in Blackboard for \$58.75.)

Assignments & Grading

Your course grade will be based on the following components.

Component	Percent of Course Grade
Exams	75
“Get the Gist” Reading Questions	10
Workbook Assignments	15
Total	100

Course grades will be assigned according to the following schedule: $\geq 90\%$ is an A; 80–89% is a B; 70–79% is a C; 60–69% is a D, and $<60\%$ is an F.

Exams

Three exams will be given—2 unit tests and a cumulative final. Exams will cover material from all lectures and required readings. The exams are closed book and closed notes. The exams will include a combination of multiple choice, multiple answer, true/false, and matching questions. Exams will be taken in the UNT computer testing center (330 Sage Hall) at the designated time.

Your top two 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. The final is optional. If you have taken the first two exams and scored to your satisfaction, you may skip the final exam. If you are dissatisfied with your exam scores or missed one of the first two tests, you may take the final exam in an attempt to raise your grade.

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, 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.

On exams days, students may not (1) wear hats, sunglasses, or headphones; (2) eat or drink anything; (3) leave the exam room—even to use the lavatory; (4) answer a phone call; (5) touch, use, or keep in view any electronic devices or class related materials; (6) take the exam after the first student has submitted their exam and left the testing center.

Get the Gist Reading Questions & Workbook Assignments

The web-text includes two types of chapters: textbook chapters and workbook chapters. Every page of each textbook chapter includes a set of “Get the Gist” questions that are designed to help students check their comprehension of the page’s content. Ten percent of your grade will be based on your responses to these questions. *Note: If you miss the Get the Gist questions, you can clear your answers and attempt them again!* Each chapter’s Get the Gist questions are due *prior* to the lecture in which the chapter’s subject will be introduced. There are nine textbook chapters; their associated Get the Gist question due dates are listed on the schedule.

There are eight workbook chapters. Each workbook chapter is organized around the four learning objectives adopted by Texas’s Higher Education Coordinating Board: (1) critical thinking skills, (2) social responsibility, (3) communication skills, and (4) personal responsibility. Workbook chapters provide an opportunity to apply the material covered in the textbook and lecture. Assignments include multiple choice questions, polls, short answer questions, and response board entries (similar to discussion board posts). Workbook assignments are denoted WB on the schedule. Due dates are listed on the schedule.

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.

Laptops. If you elect to use a laptop in class, you must sit in one of the last five rows of the classroom. The reason for this is as follows: recent literature suggests that using laptops in class is negatively associated with student success. I advise against using laptops, but it is up to you. The larger problem is that laptop use negatively affects student success for the people sitting around laptop users. In order to ensure that laptop users do not create distractions, laptop users must sit in the back of the room.

Late Assignments. If for some substantial reason you cannot turn in your assignments at the scheduled time, you should contact me *prior to the due date* to request an extension. Assignments turned in late but before the next exam will be eligible for 50% of the total points. Late assignments received after the next exam will not receive credit for the assignment. Please note that assignments may be turned in early.

Classroom Conduct. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr. The short version is that we must all practice the Golden Rule—treat others as you would like to be treated. Specifically, this means that all students must treat the instructor, the other students, the teaching assistants, and the classroom setting with respect. The same is true for the instructor. Therefore:

- All potentially disruptive electronic devices must be silenced.
- Students should not send text messages, have side conversations, fall asleep, or read irrelevant materials during class. It’s impolite and distracting.
- Students should be on time and stay for the entire period.
- Please show respect for alternative opinions and points of view.
- Please note that expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums.

Extra Credit. Students should not expect or ask for extra credit. *If* extra credit is offered, it will be offered

to the entire class. Note the grading criteria, and plan accordingly for your success. If you need a particular grade to graduate, keep a scholarship, etc., then exert the effort necessary to earn such a grade. If problems arise, address them early before they become unresolvable!

Religious Holidays. In accordance with UNT Policy 15.2.5, students will be excused from class or other activities for the observance of religious holidays, for religions whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20 of the Tax Code. The student is encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible regarding the absence.

Departmental 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.

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.

Course Drop Information. See schedule at <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html>

Week	Dates	Lecture Topic		Readings	Chapter Assignments Due
		<i>Monday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>		
1	August 25-August 29	Course Introduction	Constitutions	Syllabus	
2	September 1-September 5	<i>No Lecture - Labor Day</i>	Constitutions	Chapter 1	Monday, 9/8 at 4:00 pm
3	September 8-12	Constitutions	Constitutions	Chapter 2	Monday, 9/8 at 4:00 pm
				Chapter 3 (WB)	Sunday, 9/14 at 11:59 pm
4	September 15-19	Federalism	Federalism	Chapter 4	Monday, 9/15 at 4:00 pm
5	September 22-26	Federalism	Federalism	Chapter 5 (WB)	Sunday, 9/28 at 11:59 pm
6	September 29-October 3	Civil Liberties	Civil Liberties	Chapter 6	Monday, 9/29 at 4:00 pm
				Chapter 7 (WB)	Sunday, 10/5 at 11:59 pm
7	October 6-10	Civil Rights	Civil Rights	Chapter 8	Monday, 10/6 at 4:00 pm
				Chapter 9 (WB)	Sunday, 10/12 at 11:59 pm
8	October 13-17	Exam 1	Texas Legislative and Executive Branches		

Week	Dates	Lecture Topic		Readings	Chapter Assignments Due
		<i>Monday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>		
9	October 20-24	Congress	Congress	Chapter 10	Monday, 10/20 at 4:00 pm
10	October 27-October 31	Congress	Congress	Chapter 11 (WB)	Sunday, 11/2 at 11:59 pm
11	November 3-November 7	The Presidency	The Presidency	Chapter 12	Monday, 11/3 at 4:00 pm
				Chapter 13 (WB)	Sunday, 11/9 at 11:59 pm
12	November 10-November 14	The Bureaucracy	The Bureaucracy	Chapter 14	Monday, 11/10 at 4:00 pm
				Chapter 15 (WB)	Sunday, 11/16 at 11:59 pm
13	November 17-November 21	The Courts	The Courts	Chapter 16	Monday, 11/17 at 4:00 pm
14	November 24-November 28	The Courts	<i>No Lecture - Happy Thanksgiving!</i>	Chapter 17 (WB)	Sunday, 11/30 at 11:59 pm
15	December 1-December 4	Exam 2	Final Exam Review		
	December 8, 1:30 pm-3:30 pm	Final Exam			