

**American Government—Laws and Institutions**  
**PSCI 1040.001 Spring 2011**  
**MWF 9:00-9:50, University Union Lyceum**

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Office: Wooten Hall 154  
Office Hours: Mondays 1:30 pm-4:30 pm and by appointment

**Course Overview**

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.

**Blackboard**

A Blackboard conference is maintained for this course at <https://ecampus.unt.edu>. Students are responsible for checking Blackboard for assignments and notices. You should check Blackboard at least every 48 hours to ensure that you are up to date on all class--related information. Reading quizzes and workbook assignments (discussed in more detail below) will be submitted on Blackboard and student grades will be posted on Blackboard.

**Office Hours**

The TAs and I hold office hours weekly for your benefit. You may stop by our offices without an appointment during these hours; come with questions, concerns, or a desire for further discussion. My office hours are Monday afternoons from 1:30-4:30 pm. During this time, you may visit me in my office. I will also hold "virtual office hours" during this period using the Chat Room feature on Blackboard. If you are unable to get to campus, but have a question for me, just log-on to Blackboard, go to the Chat Room and ask. Be advised that students that come to my office in Wooten Hall will receive priority, so if you are online, you may have to wait a little longer for my attention. If Monday afternoons are not a convenient time for you to meet with me, please email me and we can arrange an alternate time that works for both of our schedules.

**Communication and E-mail**

When e-mailing me or your Teaching Assistant (TA) please include the course number (PSCI 1040) in the subject line of your messages. A note on etiquette: 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. Finally, before you e-mail me or your TA, you should review the syllabus and the course's Blackboard page---it is very likely that you can find an answer to your question(s) by examining the course materials. You may contact me either through Blackboard or at my UNT email address

([blackstone@unt.edu](mailto:blackstone@unt.edu)). If you use e-mail, I strongly encourage you to e-mail from your UNT EagleConnect account to ensure that your message is not caught by a spam filter.

If I need to contact you by e-mail, I will send e-mail through your Blackboard account. Check this account regularly.

## Readings

The following texts are required and are available at the UNT bookstore.

1. *The New American Democracy with Texas Chapters, Volume I*, Custom Edition. New York: Longman. ("Text" on the syllabus.)
2. Gloria C. Cox and Richard S. Ruderman, eds. 2009. *Perspectives on American and Texas Politics: A Workbook for Political Science 1040*. Eighth edition. Denton: University of North Texas Press. (I will usually refer to this book as the "workbook." On the class schedule, it is shortened to "WB.")

## Grading

Grades in this class will be assigned on a fixed scale. There are 500 points possible.

450-500	A
400-449	B
350-399	C
300-349	D
<300	F

Your grade will be based on the following factors:

- 3 Exams 300 points (100 points each)
- 10 Online Reading Quizzes 100 points (10 points each)
- 5 Workbook Assignments 100 points (20 points each)

I rarely change grades unless I have made a computational error, and I will not curve the class. I will not discuss or disclose grades over e-mail or via phone. Your grades for various elements of the course will be posted on Blackboard within 96 hours of submission of the work. If you believe I have made an error, you must report it to me within 96 hours of the time the grades are made available to you on Blackboard.

## Exams

There will be three exams in this course (on February 16, April 1, and May 11). Please note that the third exam will be held during the course's final exam period, which is different than our regular class meeting time. Exam 3 will begin at 8:00 am on Wednesday, May 11.

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. The exams are not cumulative. You should bring a form of photo identification with you to each exam. Exams will cover material from all lectures, textbook, and workbook readings.

Exams 1 and 2 will begin promptly at 9:00 am; Exam 3 will begin promptly at 8:00 am. If you arrive to an exam after another student has turned in an exam, you will not be able to take (or make up) that exam. The exams are closed book and closed notes. During exams, all of your course materials should be out of sight. You may not wear headphones. Phones must be turned off and put away. If I see you with a phone in your hand or visible during the exam, I will take your exam and you will receive a 0.

Students are expected to take exams at the scheduled times. Make-up opportunities for missed exams will generally only be allowed when an absence is due to observance of a religious holiday or participation in a university-sponsored activity. Arrangements for make-up exams should be made prior to a scheduled absence whenever possible.

If an unforeseeable emergency prevents you from taking an exam and you would like to request the opportunity to take a make-up exam, you should notify me as soon as is possible to discuss the circumstances surrounding your absence. I will determine on a case-by-case basis if a make-up exam is appropriate and will require documentation to verify your excuse. All make-up exams will be administered on Monday, May 9, 2011.

#### Online Reading Quizzes

You will be expected to take a quiz on each of the units on the syllabus in Blackboard. These quizzes are usually due before we cover the material in class. Quizzes are due by 9:00 am on their due dates.

The quizzes are designed to make sure you have done the reading and mastered the basic factual information in the chapters. You may take each quiz up to 5 times and your highest score will be recorded. Your ten highest quiz scores will count towards your course grade. If you complete more than 10 quizzes, your lowest scores will count as extra credit. You can earn up to 5 points for each "extra" quiz. (If you earn 10s on all 12 quizzes, you will earn 10 points for each of the first 10 quizzes and 5 points for each of the "extras" for a total of 110 points.)

#### Workbook Assignments

You must complete five of six workbook assignments; one may be skipped without penalty. Each workbook assignment consists of 3-4 exercises.

Workbook assignments must be submitted electronically in Blackboard and are due by 9:00 am (the start of class) on their due date. Late assignments 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.

Remember that the processes of SAVING and SUBMITTING your work in Blackboard are separate. Be sure to SAVE your answers in each exercise before you select FINISH to submit them.

### Extra Credit

You are required to complete 10 online reading quizzes and 5 workbook assignments. There are 12 reading quizzes on the syllabus and 6 workbook assignments. You may earn up to 5 extra credit points for each “extra” reading quiz and workbook assignment that you complete. Additionally, at various points during the semester, you will be able to earn extra credit by participating in in-class activities. These activities will not be announced beforehand. In-class activities will be worth up to 2 points each.

These are the only opportunities for extra credit in the course; I will not offer extra credit to individuals beyond that which is offered to the entire class.

### 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 or your TA 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 to the lectures, read the book, complete the quizzes and workbook 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 will not make my PowerPoint presentations or notes available to students; nor will the Teaching Assistants.

Class starts at 9:00 and ends at 9:50. I expect you to be in class and ready to begin at 9:00. I expect you to stay until 9:50. 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. Remember, I am not tracking your attendance; if you do not plan to pay attention, you may as well stay home.

#### Supplemental Instruction

This course has been assigned a Supplemental Instruction Leader. Supplemental Instruction is available to all students as an additional resource to help you master the course material. SI sessions are led by a student who has already successfully completed this course and who has been trained to facilitate group sessions where students can meet to compare class notes, review and discuss important concepts, develop strategies for studying, and prepare for exams. Attendance at SI sessions is free and voluntary. Students may attend as many times as they choose. SI sessions begin the second week of class and continue throughout the semester.

Our SI for PSCI 1040.001 is Harrison Wicks. A session schedule will be announced in class and posted in Blackboard.

Accommodations

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 (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

The Political Science Department cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA). The ODA makes formal recommendations regarding necessary and appropriate accommodations based on specifically diagnosed disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, you should contact the ODA as soon as possible at 940.565.4323. Please present your written accommodation request to me on or before January 31. Information regarding disabilities is treated in a confidential matter.

Academic Integrity

I encourage you to study for exams together and to seek help from your classmates if you are having trouble with material. However, all work submitted for evaluation must be your own. This means that you should not collaborate on your reading quizzes or workbook assignments.

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). Violations of academic integrity in this course will be addressed in compliance with the penalties and procedures laid out in this policy.

**Class Schedule**

*(Shaded cells indicate an online assignment is due.)*

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Due by 9:00 am</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>
W January 19		Syllabus	Welcome
F January 21	Reading Quiz 1 (syllabus quiz)	Text Chapters 1 and TX-1 WB Chapters 1 and 2	Politics in the United States and Texas
M January 24	Reading Quiz 2		
W January 26		Text Chapters 2 and TX-2	U.S. & Texas Constitutions
F January 28			
M January 31	Reading Quiz 3		
W February 2			Federalism
F February 4	Reading Quiz 4	Text Chapter 3	

		WB Chapter 4	
M February 7			
W February 9	WB Assignment #1: Exercises 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, and 4-6		
F February 11			Catch Up
M February 14			Review for Exam 1
<b>Wednesday, February 16—Exam 1</b>			
F February 18	Reading Quiz 5	Text Chapter 12 WB Chapter 5	Congress
M February 21			
W February 23			
F February 25	WB Assignment #2: Exercises 5-4, 5-5, and 5-6.		
M February 28			
W March 2			
F March 4	Reading Quiz 6	Text Chapter 13 WB Chapter 6	The Presidency
M March 7			
W March 9	WB Assignment #3: Exercises 6-1, 6-3, 6-5, and 6-6		
F March 11	Reading Quiz 7	Text Chapter 14 WB Chapter 7	The Federal Bureaucracy
M March 14	Spring Break—No Class		
W March 16			
F March 18			
M March 21	WB Assignment #4: Exercises 7-1, 7-2, 7-3, and 7-4		The Federal Bureaucracy (continued)
W March 23	Reading Quiz 8	Text Chapters TX-3 and TX-4	Texas Executive and Legislature
F March 25			
M March 28			Catch Up
W March 30			Review for Exam 2
<b>Friday, April 1—Exam 2</b>			
M April 4	Reading Quiz 9	Text Chapter 15 WB Chapter 8	The Federal Courts
W April 6			
F April 8			

M April 11	Reading Quiz 10	Text Chapter TX-5	Texas Judiciary
W April 13	Reading Quiz 11	Text Chapter 16 WB Chapter 9	Civil Liberties
F April 15			
M April 18	WB Assignment #5: Exercises 9-1, 9-2, 9-3 and 9-4		
W April 20			
F April 22	Reading Quiz 12	Text Chapter 17 WB Chapter 10	
M April 25			Civil Rights
W April 27			
F April 29	WB Assignment #6: Exercises 10-1, 10-3, 10-4, and 10-5		
M May 2			
W May 4			Catch Up
			Review for Exam 3
<b><i>Friday May 6—Reading Day, No Class</i></b>			
<b><i>Wednesday May 11, 8:00 am-10:00 am, Exam 3</i></b>			