

**PSCI 1041: Honors American Government–Laws and Institutions**

**Fall 2016**

**TR 9:30–10:45 AM, Sage 355**

Professor Bethany Blackstone

blackstone@unt.edu

---

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.

---

**Being in Touch**

*Office Hours in Sage Hall*

I will hold office hours in the study area on the 1st floor of Sage Hall on Tuesdays from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm and on Thursdays from 12:15 pm to 1:45 pm. If these times are not convenient for you, please send me a message in Piazza (more information below) to schedule a meeting.

*Class Discussion and Questions*

We will be using Piazza for class discussion. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates and from me. Rather than emailing questions that might be of relevance to the entire class, you should post your questions on Piazza. If you have a question that is private in nature, you should send a private message in Piazza, rather than email. Create an account using the link in Blackboard. If I need to contact you, I will send you a message through Piazza. Check Piazza regularly to ensure you receive all course-related information.

*Blackboard*

A Blackboard conference is maintained for this course at <https://learn.unt.edu/>. Some assignments will be submitted in Blackboard and student grades will be posted in Blackboard.

*Remind*

Students that wish to receive course-related reminders via email or text can sign up to receive notifications at this link: <https://remind.com/join/bstone1041>.

*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 politics to the Facebook group. You 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/bstone1041/>.

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, post in Piazza or see me during office hours.

## Course Materials

### 1. A college-level American government textbook

All students will need a college-level American government textbook. The bookstore will have Barbour and Wright's *Keeping the Republic*, 6th Brief Edition in stock if you want to purchase that one. The ISBN is 9781483381138. If you have another college-level American government textbook from another class or can borrow one from a friend that has taken PSCI 1040/1041 or PSCI 1050/1051, that is fine.

If you are borrowing a book from someone else, make sure that it isn't a custom edition for PSCI 1050/1051; if it is, it probably won't include the information that you need.

An off-the-shelf college-level American government textbook from a reputable publisher will be fine. Some good publishers include Pearson, CQ/Sage, Wadsworth/Cengage, McGraw-Hill, and Soomo. Post in Piazza or bring a borrowed book to class if you'd like me to verify that a title is appropriate.

### 2. Richard J. Ellis and Michael Nelson. 2014. *Debating Reform: Conflicting Perspectives on How to Fix the American Political System*, second edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

ISBN is 978-1452240022.

- This book is available at the UNT bookstore. The price of the text at the UNT bookstore will range from \$22.85 (to rent) to \$57.15.00 (for a new hard-copy).
- You may rent or purchase electronic or hard-copies of the text from Amazon.com or other online retailers.

### 3. REEF Polling Account (*free for all UNT students*)

We will use REEF polling (a student response system) in class this term. Students should create (or log-in to an existing) REEF account in Blackboard and then use REEF polling to respond to questions in class using a personal electronic device. If you do not have a personal electronic device that you can use in class (smartphone, tablet, or computer) and wish to earn credit for REEF participation, please see me right away.

Other assigned readings will be posted in Blackboard.

## Assignments and Grading

All assignments and exams in the course will be assessed as Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory, with the specifications required for Satisfactory articulated on each assignment. In general, Satisfactory should not be viewed as "minimally competent," but rather as a mark of having achieved the assignment's learning goals and specifications. An assignment meets the goals, or it does not—there is no gradation of assessment. The only letter grade that will be given in the course will be your final grade, and it will reflect the "bundles" of assignments and requirements you have satisfactorily accomplished in the class. That final letter grade is not an assessment of your intelligence, your abilities, or your value as a person. Rather, the grade reflects what you demonstrated that you learned in the course: no more, no less.

Built into this system is a good deal of choice as to how much you wish to learn and how hard you want to work to demonstrate and apply that learning. You might choose that passing the course with a C is sufficient for your goals—it is perfectly appropriate and worthy of respect for you to make that choice, especially if it allows you to proactively allocate your time to other endeavors. If you strive to get an A in the course

and maximize your learning, you should know that you are taking on that work and challenge yourself, and should make sure you are in a personal and academic situation to achieve that level of engagement.

### ***Grading Bundle Information***

- ***A Bundle***

Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of A. The work required to complete this bundle provides strong mastery of course material.

- Satisfactorily complete basic portions of both exams.
- Satisfactorily complete advanced portions of both exams.
- Earn 85% of available REEF points.
- Satisfactorily complete at least 6 quizzes.
- Satisfactorily complete 6 reflection essays; at least 3 reflections must be experiential.
- Satisfactorily complete Recognizing Plagiarism Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Annotated Bibliography Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Debate Paper Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete 3 Debate Prep Assignments.
- Satisfactorily complete In-Class Debate Assignment.

- ***B Bundle***

Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of B. The work required to complete this bundle provides good mastery of course material.

- Satisfactorily complete basic portions of both exams.
- Satisfactorily complete advanced portion of one exam.
- Earn 85% of available REEF points.
- Satisfactorily complete at least 5 quizzes.
- Satisfactorily complete 4 reflection essays; at least 2 reflections must be experiential.
- Satisfactorily complete Recognizing Plagiarism Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Annotated Bibliography Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Debate Paper Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete 2 Debate Prep Assignments.
- Satisfactorily complete In-Class Debate Assignment.

- ***C Bundle***

Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of C. The work required to complete this bundle provides fair mastery of course material.

- Satisfactorily complete basic portions of both exams.
- Earn 70% of available REEF points.
- Satisfactorily complete at least 4 quizzes.
- Satisfactorily complete 2 reflection essays; at least 1 reflection must be experiential.
- Satisfactorily complete Recognizing Plagiarism Assignment.

- Satisfactorily complete Annotated Bibliography Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete 1 Debate Prep Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete In-Class Debate Assignment.

- ***D Bundle***

Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of D. The work required to complete this bundle provides minimal mastery of course material.

- Satisfactorily complete basic portions of both exams.
- Satisfactorily complete Recognizing Plagiarism Assignment.

- ***F Bundle***

Students failing to meet the requirements for the D bundle will receive a grade of F for the course.

### ***Tokens & Flexibility***

Every student starts the course with 3 virtual tokens that can be “exchanged” for some leniency or opportunities for revision.

- For 1 token: Submit an assignment up to 48 hours late.
- For 1 token: Be awarded all REEF points for a class period.
- For 2 tokens: Be awarded “Satisfactory” credit for a skipped or “Unsatisfactory” quiz.
- For 2 tokens: Revise and resubmit an Unsatisfactory assignment.
- For 2 tokens: Re-take the basic section of the midterm exam.
- For 2 tokens: Re-take the advanced section of the midterm exam.

### ***Exams***

There will be two exams in the course. Each exam will consist of two sections—a Basic Section and an Advanced Section.

- Basic Section
  - Will include questions that require students to remember, understand, and apply course material.
  - Question types will include a combination of multiple choice, multiple answer, true/false, matching, and ordering questions.
  - The Basic Section of each exam will be administered as a closed-book/note test during a regularly scheduled class meeting.
  - In order to Satisfactorily complete the Basic Section of an exam, you must earn 70% of the available points.
- Advanced Section
  - Will include questions that require students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information using course material.

- Question types will include a combination of multiple choice, multiple answer, true/false, matching, ordering, and short essay questions.
- The Advanced Section of each exam will be administered as a take-home, open-book/note test.
- In order to Satisfactorily complete the Advanced Section of an exam, you must submit the exam on time and earn 80% of the available points.

### ***REEF Polling***

During every class period students will be presented several questions using REEF polling. To earn a grade of A or B in the course, students must earn at least 85% of the available REEF points. To earn a C, students must earn at least 70% of available REEF points.

### ***Quizzes***

I will give announced and unannounced quizzes during the semester. Unannounced, in-class quizzes on assigned readings may be given any time you have a reading assignment. These quizzes are closed book, but you may use notes that you have taken on the assigned readings as long as they are printed in hard copy. (You cannot use a laptop, tablet device, or phone during quizzes.) Some quizzes will be announced ahead of time and may be completed outside of class time. Occasionally, unannounced or announced in-class activities may be administered for quiz points. Missed quizzes and in-class activities cannot be made up.

### ***Reflection Essays***

Students completing the A, B, and C bundles are required to write a number of reflective essays. These reflective writing assignments ask you to think about course concepts and the ways in which they apply to your life and/or to contemporary political debates. Some reflection prompts are classified as *experiential*; these prompts require you to attend, watch, or listen to an event and then reflect on what you witnessed. For each grade bundle, half of the required reflection essays must respond to experiential prompts. Students may only submit 1 reflection essay per week.

To earn credit for a reflection essay, (1) the essay must be submitted in Blackboard as a Word or PDF document; experiential reflections must be submitted within 7 days of the observed event, (2) the response must address all components of the prompt, (3) the response must be a minimum of 375 words, and (4) the response can include no more than 3 grammatical or spelling errors per page (250 words).

### ***Identifying Plagiarism Assignment***

All students must complete an online certification verifying that they are able to recognize various forms of plagiarism. Detailed instructions are posted in Blackboard.

### ***Debate-Related Assignments***

Students completing the A, B, and C bundles will lead a class debate on a proposed reform to the American political system. The remaining assignments in the course are related to these debates.

- *Annotated Bibliography Assignment* (required for A, B, and C bundles)  
Students will identify academic resources to construct arguments to support their assigned position and to rebut opposing arguments. This assignment requires students to identify appropriate resources and summarize the authors' arguments in their own words.
- *Debate Paper Assignment* (required for A and B bundles)  
Students will write an 8–10 page research paper on their debate topic.

- *Debate Preparation Assignments* (Required for A, B, and C bundles)  
To ensure the class is prepared to evaluate and participate actively in the Q&A portion of each debate, students are required to complete a number of debate preparation assignments prior to the in-class debates. (The C bundle requires 1 debate preparation assignment. The B bundle requires 2 debate preparation assignments. The A bundle requires 3 debate preparation assignments.)
- *In-Class Debate Assignment* (Required for A, B, and C bundles)  
In most cases, students will work in teams of two for the debates. I will assign teams, topics, and perspectives (pro/con) by Tuesday, October 4. Details about debate logistics will be discussed in class and the criteria for evaluation will be posted in Blackboard.

## **Other Policies**

### ***Academic Integrity***

Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of F in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at: <http://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity>.

### ***Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance***

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable 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 a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. 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.

### ***Classroom Conduct.***

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 classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.

### Reading, Assignment, and Exam Due Dates

*Readings TBA indicates that additional readings will be added to this schedule; additional readings will typically be related to current events and/or students' interests.*

---

#### *Topic: Course Introduction*

---

- |                 |                          |                  |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| August 30 (T)   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read syllabus    |
| September 1 (R) |                          | No Class Meeting |
- 

#### *Topic: American Political Culture and the Constitution*

---

- |                  |                          |  |
|------------------|--------------------------|--|
| September 6 (T)  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read introductory chapter of your textbook                 |
|                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read textbook chapter on the U.S. Constitution             |
| September 8 (R)  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read Federalist 10   |
|                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read Federalist 51   |
|                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read Bessette, <i>The Mild Voice of Reason</i> , Chapter 2 |
| September 13 (T) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Readings TBA   |
- 

#### *Topic: Federalism*

---

- |                  |                          |                                     |
|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| September 15 (R) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read textbook chapter on federalism |
| September 20 (T) |                          |                                     |
| September 22 (R) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Readings TBA                        |
- 

#### *Topic: Civil Liberties & Civil Rights*

---

- |                  |                          |  |
|------------------|--------------------------|--|
| September 27 (T) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read textbook chapter on civil liberties |
| September 29 (R) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Readings TBA                             |
| October 4 (T)    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read textbook chapter on civil rights    |
| October 6 (R)    |                          |  |
| October 11 (T)   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Readings TBA                             |
- 

#### *Midterm Exam*

---

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| October 13 (R)       | Basic Section of Midterm Exam administered in class            |
| October 16 (Sunday ) | Advanced Section of Midterm Exam due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm |
-

### Reading, Assignment, and Exam Due Dates

*Readings TBA indicates that additional readings will be added to this schedule; additional readings will typically be related to current events and/or students' interests.*

---

#### *Topic: Congress*

---

- October 18 (T)      Read textbook chapter on Congress  
October 20 (R)      Read pages 10–32 of The Congress Foundation's Report—Life in Congress: The Member Perspective.  
October 25 (T)      Readings TBA

#### *Topic: The Presidency and the Federal Bureaucracy*

---

- October 27 (R)      Read textbook chapter on the presidency  
November 1 (T)      Readings TBA  
November 3 (R)     *No Class Meeting; Use time to work on your annotated bibliographies*  
November 8 (T)      Read textbook chapter on the bureaucracy  
                              Annotated Bibliographies due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm

#### *Topic: Texas Legislative and Executive Branches*

---

November 10 (R)

#### *Topic: Courts*

---

- November 15 (T)      Read textbook chapter on the judiciary  
November 17 (R)  
November 22 (T)      Readings TBA  
  
November 23 (W)      Debate Papers due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm  
November 24 (R)     *No Class Meeting; Happy Thanksgiving!*

#### *Debates & Debriefing*

---

- November 29 (T)     In-Class Debates / 3 chapters from *Debating Reform* (chapters will depend on selected debate topics)  
December 1 (R)     In-Class Debates / 3 chapters from *Debating Reform* (chapters will depend on selected debate topics)  
December 6 (T)     In-Class Debates / 3 chapters from *Debating Reform* (chapters will depend on selected debate topics)  
December 8 (R)     Course De-Brief

#### *Final Exam*

---

- December 15 (R)     Basic Section of Final Exam administered during scheduled exam period (8:00–10:00 am)  
December 16 (F)     Advanced Section of Final Exam due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm
-



### Track Your PSCI 1041 Progress

Use this checklist to track your progress in PSCI 1041. To earn a grade, you must satisfactorily complete all items in that grade's column and all columns to the left.

- To earn a C, you must complete all items in the C and D columns.
- To earn a B, you must complete all items in the B, C, and D columns.
- To earn an A, you must complete all items in the A, B, C, and D columns.

	D	C	B	A
Exams: Basic Section	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
Exams: Advanced Section			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REEF: Earn 70% of Available Points		<input type="checkbox"/>		
REEF: Earn 85% of Available Points			<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quizzes		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reflection Essays (1/2 must be experiential)		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Recognizing Plagiarism Assignment	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Annotated Bibliography Assignment		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Debate Paper Assignment			<input type="checkbox"/>	
Debate Preparation Assignments		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In-Class Debate Assignment		<input type="checkbox"/>		

Tokens Available: