

# Honors U.S. Political Behavior and Policy



**PSCI 2315**

**Spring 2018 - Rawlins Edition**

## YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Professor Bethany Blackstone

## CLASS MEETINGS

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 pm - 1:50 pm

Rawlins Multi-Purpose Room

## OFFICE HOURS

Tuesdays and Thursdays,  
2:15-3:15 pm, Wooten 154 and  
4:50 to 5:20 pm, BLB Lobby

## CANVAS

UNT is in the process of switching from Blackboard to Canvas. Our course site is on the Canvas platform. Some assignments will be submitted in Canvas and student grades will be posted in Canvas. Access the site at [unt.instructure.com](http://unt.instructure.com)

## SLACK

We will use Slack for all class-related communication. Slack can be used for full class, small group, and one-on-one conversations. Please use Slack rather than email to communicate with Dr. Blackstone. Join using your UNT email using the link in Canvas. Access the site at [psci2315.slack.com](http://psci2315.slack.com).

In this course, we will explore the connection between the will of the people and the policies implemented by government by focusing on individual political values and attitudes, the mechanisms that connect individual beliefs to government action (political parties, interest groups, the media, and elections), and the outcomes of government policy.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### In this course, you will

- \* Demonstrate familiarity with core concepts related to the topics listed above.
- \* Evaluate the credibility and persuasiveness of politically-relevant information and arguments from diverse sources.
- \* Formulate and articulate arguments supported by appropriate evidence.
- \* Apply knowledge to make evidence-based policy recommendations.
- \* Identify avenues of access and barriers to the political system for individuals and groups.
- \* Formulate strategies to increase political participation.
- \* Organize arguments and evidence coherently.
- \* Demonstrate conciseness, clarity, accuracy, and readability while avoiding wordiness and ambiguity in writing.
- \* Locate, evaluate, and incorporate insights from primary and/or secondary research materials into writing.
- \* Engage fairly and accurately with source material and your own ideas.
- \* Demonstrate familiarity with different forms of plagiarism.
- \* Correctly and consistently employ the citation format most widely used in your field of study (or in political science).

# RAWLINS HALL MISSION STATEMENT

*We aim to engage students in a safe and inclusive learning environment which fosters a constructive exchange of ideas and promotes the intellectual, personal, and social development of our residents.*

## What You'll Do in PSCI 2315

1

### TEAM-BASED LEARNING & READINESS ASSURANCE TESTS (RATS)

This course uses a team-based learning approach that emphasizes your ability to apply course concepts and to solve problems. Course requirements are designed to ensure that individuals are prepared for team work and minimize the likelihood of typical "group work" problems (individuals shirking their responsibilities, other individuals dominating the group, or the division of labor to avoid group interaction).

Course grades will be based on work from individuals and teams. You will be assigned to a team during the first day of class.

At the beginning of each course unit, you will take an **individual Readiness Assurance Test (iRAT)**. You will then take the same **Readiness Assurance Test as a team (a tRAT)**. After the RATs, we will explore the unit's topic through short lectures and team application exercises.

4

### FINAL EXAM

There will be one exam in the course. The exam will be administered during the course's scheduled final exam period: Thursday, May 10 at 10:30 am.

2

### PEER EVALUATIONS

You will complete peer evaluations of your teammates at multiple points during the semester. You will be evaluated on both the quality of feedback you provide about your teammates' performances and on how your teammates evaluate your performance.

3

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION PROJECT

Working individually or with a partner, you will formulate a policy intervention designed to address a problem related to American political participation or voting/elections. This project will require that you conduct research on the problem identified and proposed solutions. You will report your recommendation in a 5-6 page paper that draws on social scientific evidence.

Intermediate assignments related to the final research paper will be due throughout the semester. These assignments will include a paper proposal, a plagiarism identification assignment, and an annotated bibliography.

Topics will be chosen in consultation with the instructor. Students will present their recommendations to the class on Thursday, May 3.

## Required Materials

Good news: your textbook for this class is available for free online! If you prefer, you can also get a print version at a low cost.

American Government from OpenStax, ISBN 1938168178, [www.openstax.org/details/american-government](https://www.openstax.org/details/american-government)



Other readings will be posted in Canvas.

## Grading

Your grade will be based on the components described above: individual Readiness Assurance Tests (iRATs), team performance (team Readiness Assurance Tests—tRATs—and in-class activities), peer evaluations, the policy recommendation project, and the final exam. The class will have a role in determining how these assignments are weighted. I have set the assignment weights for team-related course components and set minimum weights for individual work. The class will choose how to allocate the remaining 25% points across the individual course components during our first class meeting.

Assignment Weights

| Component                     | Minimum Weight | Class Points Allocated | Assignment Weight |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Team Performance              | 15             | .                      | 15                |
| Peer Evaluations              | 10             | .                      | 10                |
| iRATs                         | 20             | 5                      | 25                |
| Final Exam                    | 10             | 15                     | 25                |
| Policy Recommendation Project | 20             | 5                      | 25                |
|                               | 75             | 25                     | 100               |

Course assignments will be weighted according to the weights chosen on the first day of class. Scores will be rounded to the nearest whole number and then letter grades will be assigned according to the scale below:

90-100% = A

80-89% = B

70-79% = C

60-69% = D

<60 = F

Late assignments will be penalized 10 points (1 letter grade) for each 24 hour period they are late.

There are no opportunities for extra credit. Plan accordingly.

## Policies

### 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>.

## 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 accommodation 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 letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the ODA website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

## Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, and Assault

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are civil rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: [http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources\\_0](http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0). Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate and she can be reached through e-mail at [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

## Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in an event of emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at [www.my.unt.edu](http://www.my.unt.edu). Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) ensuring you know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas, determining how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and identifying where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, your instructor will communicate with you through Blackboard regarding assignments, exams, field trips, and other items that may be impacted by the closure.

# Schedule

Readings from your OpenStax textbook are denoted TB. Other readings are posted in Canvas and/or linked below. Use the Reading Guides posted in Canvas to guide your pre-class preparation. Some additional short readings may be added to this list for non-RAT days.

## Course Introduction

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January 16 (T) Read Syllabus, join 2315 Slack team

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January 18 (R) Read:

- Amy Erica Smith. 2016. "Do Americans Still Believe in Democracy?" *Washington Post-The Monkey Cage*. April 9. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/04/09/do-americans-still-believe-in-democracy/?utm\\_term=.b9f7238a6dd8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/04/09/do-americans-still-believe-in-democracy/?utm_term=.b9f7238a6dd8) (Accessed January 7, 2018).
  - Cas Mudde. 2017. "What Populism is Not." *vice.com* May 9. [https://news.vice.com/en\\_us/article/vbz874/what-populism-is-not](https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/vbz874/what-populism-is-not) (Accessed January 7, 2018).
  - Tom Nichols. 2017. "How We Killed Expertise. (And Why We Need it Back)." *Politico Magazine*. September/October. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/05/how-we-killed-expertise-215531> (Accessed January 12, 2018).
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## Unit 1: Public Opinion

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January 23 (T)

### iRAT 1 and tRAT 1

- Christine Barbour and Gerald Wright. 2017. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, 8th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. Chapter 11, "Public Opinion."
  - Pew Research Center. 2017. "Video Explainer: Understanding Random Sampling for Public Opinion Surveys." May 12. <http://www.pewresearch.org/2017/05/12/video-explainer-understanding-random-sampling-for-public-opinion-surveys/> (Accessed January 7, 2018).
  - Carl Bialik and Harry Enten. 2016. "The Polls Missed Trump. We Asked Pollsters Why." *FiveThirtyEight.com*. November 9. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-polls-missed-trump-we-asked-pollsters-why/> (Accessed January 7, 2018).
  - Nate Silver. 2017. "The Media Has a Probability Problem." *FiveThirtyEight.com* September 21. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-media-has-a-probability-problem/> (Accessed January 7, 2018).
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January 25 (R)

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January 30 (T)

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February 1 (R) No class meeting

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February 6 (T)

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## Unit 2: Political Parties

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February 8 (R)

### iRAT 2 and tRAT 2

- TB Chapter 9, "Political Parties"
- Raymond A. Smith. *The American Anomaly: U.S. Politics and Government in Comparative Perspective*, 3rd edition. New York: Routledge. Chapter 10, "Political Parties"
- Amanda Skuldt. 2016. "Could a Third-Party Candidate Win the U.S. Presidency? That's Very Unlikely." *Washington Post-The Monkey Cage*. August 2. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/08/02/could-a-third-party-candidate-win-the-u-s-presidency-very-unlikely/?tid=a\\_inl&utm\\_term=.56608db47a26](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/08/02/could-a-third-party-candidate-win-the-u-s-presidency-very-unlikely/?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.56608db47a26) (Accessed January 7, 2018).
- Jack Santucci. 2017. "Maine's Citizens Passed 'Ranked-Choice Voting.' Why did Republicans Shoot It Down?" *Washington Post-The Monkey Cage*. May 31. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/05/31/maines-citizens-passed-ranked-choice-voting-why-did-republicans-shoot-it-down/?utm\\_term=.a9a6abd79160](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/05/31/maines-citizens-passed-ranked-choice-voting-why-did-republicans-shoot-it-down/?utm_term=.a9a6abd79160) (Accessed January 7, 2018).
- Matt Grossman and David A. Hopkins. 2016. "Republicans and Democrats Can't Even Agree About How They Disagree." *Washington Post-The Monkey Cage*. September 7. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/07/republicans-and-democrats-cant-even-agree-about-how-they-disagree/?utm\\_term=.8c31c1b03130](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/07/republicans-and-democrats-cant-even-agree-about-how-they-disagree/?utm_term=.8c31c1b03130) (Accessed January 7, 2018).

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February 13 (T)

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February 15 (R)

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February 20 (T)

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February 22 (R)

No class meeting

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February 23 (F)

Plagiarism Identification Certification Test due by 11:59 pm. Upload a copy of your certificate in Canvas.

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## Unit 3: Interest Groups

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February 27 (T)

### iRAT 3 and tRAT 3

- TB Chapter 10, "Interest Groups & Lobbying"
- Lee Drutman. 2015. "The Solution to Lobbying is More Lobbying." *Washington Post-The Monkey Cage*. April 29. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/04/29/the-solution-to-lobbying-is-more-lobbying/?utm\\_term=.a1e3dd4208cb](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/04/29/the-solution-to-lobbying-is-more-lobbying/?utm_term=.a1e3dd4208cb) (Accessed January 7, 2018).
- John Sides. 2011. "Gauging the Influence of Public Interest Groups." *TheMonkeyCage.org*. October 31. <http://themonkeycage.org/2011/10/gauging-the-influence-of-public-interest-groups/> (Accessed January 7, 2018).

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March 1 (R)

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March 2 (F)

Midterm peer evaluations due by 11:59 pm

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March 6 (T)

## Unit 4: Elections & Voting

March 8 (R)

### iRAT 4 and tRAT 4

- TB Chapter 7, "Voting & Elections"
- Andrew Rudalevige. 2017. "In the U.S. Who Votes and Why? Here's How the Constitution Shapes the Answers." *Washington Post-The Monkey Cage*. August 25. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/24/in-the-u-s-who-votes-and-why-heres-how-the-constitution-shapes-the-answers/?utm\\_term=.3fa7bb912ee4](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/24/in-the-u-s-who-votes-and-why-heres-how-the-constitution-shapes-the-answers/?utm_term=.3fa7bb912ee4) (Accessed January 7, 2018).

March 13 (T)

Spring Break - No class meetings.

March 15 (R)

March 20 (T)

March 22 (R)

March 23 (F)

Paper proposals due in Canvas by 11:59 pm

March 27 (T)

## Unit 5: Media

March 29 (R)

### iRAT 5 and tRAT 5

- TB Chapter 8, "The Media"
- James Hamblin. 2017. "What Do You Mean by 'The Media?'" *TheAtlantic.com* January 24. <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/01/all-possible-realities-are-playing-out-across-infinite-universes/514130/> (Accessed January 7, 2018).
- Niraj Chokshi. 2017. "News Shared on Twitter Can Drive the Conversation, Study Finds." *NYTimes.com* November 9. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/09/business/media/twitter-news-study.html> (Accessed January 7, 2017).

April 3 (T)

April 5 (R)

April 10 (T)

## Unit 6: Domestic Policy

April 12 (R)

### iRAT 6 and tRAT 6

- TB Chapter 16, "Domestic Policy"

April 17 (T)

April 19 (R)

April 20 (F)

Annotated bibliographies due in Canvas by 11:59 pm



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**Unit 7: Foreign Policy**

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April 24 (T)

**iRAT 7 and tRAT 7**

- TB Chapter 17, "Foreign Policy"
  - Stephn Sestanovich. 2017. "The Brilliant Incoherence of Trump's Foreign Policy." *TheAtlantic.com* May. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/05/the-brilliant-incoherence-of-trumps-foreign-policy/521430/> (Accessed January 7, 2018).
  - Judah Grunstein. 2017. "How Trump's Foreign Policy Is Actually Mainstream—With One Exception." *WorldPoliticsReview.com* July 12. <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/22680/how-trump-s-foreign-policy-is-actually-mainstream-with-one-exception> (Accessed January 7, 2018).
  - Peter Feaver. 2017. "Five Takeaways from Trump's National Security Strategy." *ForeignPolicy.com*. December 18. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/12/18/five-takeaways-from-trumps-national-security-strategy/> (Accessed January 7, 2018).
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April 26 (R)

April 30 (M)

Policy Recommendation Papers due in Canvas by 11:59 pm

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May 1 (T)

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**Important End-of-Semester Dates**

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May 3 (R)

Project Presentations

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May 4 (F)

End-of-term peer evaluations due by 11:59 pm

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May 10 (R)

Final Exam

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