

University of North Texas at Dallas
Fall 2012
SYLLABUS

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| PSCI 1040D.090: American Government – Law and Institutions | | | |
| 3 Hrs. | | | |
| Department of | Social Sciences | Division of | Liberal Arts and Life Sciences |
| Instructor Name: | Professor Curtis McDowell | | |
| Office Location: | Building 2: Adjunct Faculty Room | | |
| Office Phone: | 972.863-3038 (I only answer and check phone messages when I am in the office from 9am-5pm. Please communicate by official university email if you want a prompt reply.) | | |
| Email Address: | curtis.mcdowell@unt.edu (do not use Blackboard for email communication) | | |
| Office Hours: | Thursday: | 6pm – 7pm and by appointment | |
| Virtual Office Hours: | None, but you may email at any time. I will try to answer within 24 hours. | | |
| Classroom Location: | Building 2, Rm. 213 | | |
| Class Meeting Days & Times: | Thursdays 7:00 pm – 9:50 pm | | |
| Course Catalog Description: | | | |
| Prerequisites: | None | | |
| Co-requisites: | | | |
| Required Text: | Fiorina, Morris P., Paul E. Peterson, Bertram Johnson and William G. Mayer. 2009. <i>The New American Democracy</i>, 6th ed. or later. New York: Longman. | | |
| Recommended Text and References: | Additional online readings linked to homework assignments and quizzes will be assigned. | | |
| Access to Learning Resources: | UNT Dallas Library: phone: (972) 780-3625; web: http://www.unt.edu/unt-dallas/library.htm UNT Dallas Bookstore: phone: (972) 780-3652; e-mail: 1012mgr@fheg.follett.com | | |

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| Course Goals or Overview: | |
| Learning Objectives/Outcomes: At the end of this course, the student will: | |
| 1 | Be able to discuss the different approaches taken by the framers of the United States and Texas constitutions and the motivations behind the structure of each charter; |
| 2 | Demonstrate the ability to write cogently about major issues in American and state government ad public responses to those initiatives; |
| 3 | Define roles and processes used in governing institutions in Texas and the United States; |
| 4 | Identify past, current and future issues of American and Texas government, including differences and similarities in state and federal approaches to major policy initiatives; |
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| General Education objectives | |
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| 5 | The course is designed to enhance critical thinking through inquiry and analysis and the creative linking of disparate or similar concepts. |
| 6 | The course is designed to enhance written, oral and reading skills to promote communication. |
| 7 | The course is designed to ensure UNT Dallas graduates are socially responsible, interculturally competent, and civically engaged through enhanced knowledge of local and global governments and issues, and through various culture-based approaches underlying government institutions and policy. |
| 8 | The course promotes personal responsibility through discussions of ethical problems and reasoning in the public sphere. |
| 9 | Taken together, these general education objectives are designed to achieve the ultimate goal of the university, to provide a foundation and skills for you to continue learning long after you have left the university. |

Course Outline

This schedule is subject to change by the instructor. Any changes to this schedule will be communicated by the instructor in class and by posting on Blackboard.

| TOPICS | TIMELINE |
|---|--------------------------------|
| General course info/ introductions/writing for this class | Aug. 30 |
| Democracy and government (Fiorina ch1) | Sept. 6 |
| The permanent campaign | |
| Constitutions (Fiorina, ch2) | |
| US Constitution | Sept. 13 |
| A different approach: Texas Constitution of 1876 (online LAITS reading) | |
| A House Divided: Federalism (Fiorina, ch3; Federalist 10,51: pp 620-627) | Sept. 20 |
| New Federalism | |
| Review | Sept. 27 |
| Midterm exam 1 | Oct. 4 |
| The popular presidency (Fiorina, ch13) | Oct. 11 |
| The imperial presidency | |
| Federal bureaucracy (Fiorina, ch14) | Oct. 18 |
| The Texas Executive and Bureaucracy (online LAITS reading) | |
| The First Branch: Congress (Fiorina ch12) | Oct. 25 |
| Do we really hate Congress? | |
| The Texas Legislature (online LAITS reading) | Nov. 1 |
| Campaign ads | |
| Myths of the robe: (Fiorina ch15) | Nov. 8 |
| Review | |
| Midterm exam 2 | Nov. 15 |
| The federal courts | Nov. 22 |
| The Texas Judiciary (online LAITS reading) | |
| Civil Liberties: the Bill of Rights (Fiorina ch16) | Nov. 29 |
| The First Amendment | |
| Privacy | |
| The struggle for civil rights (Fiorina ch 17) | Dec. 6 |
| Review | |
| Final exam | Dec. 13: 7 pm - 9:50 pm |
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Course Evaluation Methods

This course will utilize the following instruments to determine student grades and proficiency of the learning outcomes for the course.

- **Exams** – Written tests include identification, multiple choice, short answer and essay questions, and are designed to measure knowledge of presented course material.
- **Class Participation** – weekly participation in class discussions.

Grading Matrix:

| Instrument | Value (points or percentages) | Total |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Midterm exam 1 | 15 percent | 15 |
| Midterm exam 2 | 15 percent | 30 |
| Final exam | 20 percent | 50 |
| Homework assignments | 30 percent | 80 |
| Public affairs quizzes (online) | 5 percent | 85 |
| Chapter quizzes (online) | 5 percent | 90 |
| In class assignments | 5 percent | 95 |
| Class participation | 5 percent | 100 |
| Total: | 100 percent | |

Grade Determination:

A = 90% or better
B = 80 – 89%
C = 70 – 79%
D = 60 – 69%
F = less than 60%

University Policies and Procedures

Students with Disabilities (ADA Compliance):

The University of North Texas Dallas faculty is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with documented disabilities are responsible for informing faculty of their needs for reasonable accommodations and providing written authorized documentation. Grades assigned before an accommodation is provided will not be changed as accommodations are not retroactive. For more information, you may visit the Student Life Office, Suite 200, Building 2 or call Laura Smith at 972-780-3632.

Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness Policy:

The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SETE to be an important part of your participation in this class.

Assignment Policy:

Assignments come in several flavors. 1. At least five readings will be assigned, with associated quiz questions that focus on reading mastery and critical thinking. These will be handed out at the start of classes and may be submitted at any time, up to the deadline noted in the syllabus. Late assignments will be penalized 20 percent per day late. 2. Each Wednesday, I will post an online quiz on current affairs drawn from major national and state news media. You have until midnight Thursday to complete the quiz. Five percent of the grade will be drawn from the cumulative sum of these quizzes. If you do not complete the weekly quiz on time, you will get a zero for that quiz. 3. For each chapter and LAITS reading beginning with Fiorina Chapt. 2, a quiz will be posted online. Each quiz must be complete before the due date for the reading: this means that the online quiz will close at midnight of the day the reading is due. No credit is given for missed quizzes. 4. Format and citation requirements will be included on written and posted assignments on Blackboard. An American Political Science Association citation sheet provides details of bibliography and citation form, and it is posted on the class pages on Blackboard under the Writing folder.

Exam Policy:

Exams should be taken as scheduled. No makeup examinations will be allowed except for documented emergencies (See Student Handbook).

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is a hallmark of higher education. You are expected to abide by the University's code of Academic Integrity policy. Any person suspected of academic dishonesty (i.e., cheating or plagiarism) will be handled in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. Refer to the Student Code of Academic Integrity at http://www.unt.edu/unt-dallas/policies/Chapter%2007%20Student%20Affairs.%20Education.%20and%20Funding/7.002%20Code%20of%20Academic_Integrity.pdf for complete provisions of this code.

In addition, all academic work submitted for this class, including exams, papers, and written assignments should include the following statement:

On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance that violates the UNTD Academic Integrity Policy.

You will be required to sign the pledge to authenticate it.

Bad Weather Policy:

On those days that present severe weather and driving conditions, a decision may be made to close the campus. In case of inclement weather, call UNT Dallas Campuses main voicemail number (972) 780-3600 or search postings on the campus website www.unt.edu/dallas. Students are encouraged to update their Eagle Alert contact information, so they will receive this information automatically.

Attendance and Participation Policy:

The University attendance policy is substantially in effect for this course. However, you will be treated as responsible adults for most of the semester: you miss class at your own peril. Details of attendance policy will be discussed in class during the first session.

Class attendance and participation is expected because the class is designed as a shared learning experience and because essential information not in the textbook will be discussed in class. The dynamic and intensive nature of this course makes it impossible for students to make-up or to receive credit for missed classes. Attendance and participation is essential to your ability to demonstrate proficiency in the subject.

If you must miss a single, isolated class, you need not notify the instructor, but it becomes your responsibility to obtain notes of the missed class from your colleagues. I do not post the notes of my lectures. Before you ask the professor what was missed, you should have reviewed notes for the missed class.

In the case of extended absences due to illness or crises, you are expected to inform the instructor as soon as possible about the extent of your absence, preferably before the absence occurs. You may be required to produce written evidence of the reasons for your absence.

In all cases, missing exams and other assignments requires a good-faith effort on your part to inform the instructor of your absence beforehand. Unless you have a rock-solid reason for missing the test, you will not be permitted to make it up.

Diversity/Tolerance Policy:

Students are encouraged to contribute their perspectives and insights to class discussions. However, offensive & inappropriate language (swearing) and remarks offensive to others of particular nationalities, ethnic groups, sexual preferences, religious groups, genders, or other ascribed statuses will not be tolerated. Disruptions which violate the Code of Student Conduct will be referred to the Office of Student Life as the instructor deems appropriate.

Optional Policies:

- **Do not attempt to communicate through the Blackboard mail function.** I do not check it and I will not respond. Communicate through my official university e-mail listed at the top of this syllabus. I communicate with you by responding to whatever e-mail address you use to send your message. General notices are posted as announcements on Blackboard and/or as email to your official university address. Failure to check your email is no excuse for missing changes in test dates or assignments.
- **Students are expected to attend class**, since much of the material is not drawn from the readings. The university wants instructors to take attendance (see above), so an attendance sheet will circulate at the end of class or at the beginning, varying on different days. Attendance does not enhance your grade, but failure to attend will lead to lower grades as much of the course material is not in the books. Missing class will also mean missing pop quizzes based on the readings.
- Entering class late is sometimes unavoidable. **If you enter late, you are expected to do so as unobtrusively and quietly as possible.** Please take a seat on the fringes of the class and do not disrupt the lecture by taking a first row seat. Do not attempt to hand in homework while the lecture is going on. If you must leave class, do so quietly.
- **Cell phones must be turned off.** Texting and twittering are not permitted.
- **Computers are a useful tool for taking notes in class, but these machines are often used for a number of other purposes such as emailing, web-surfing, game-playing etc. Note-taking on a computer is permitted in class, but secondary uses are not. Students who are found to be using their computers for activities other than note-taking will be banned from using the computer in class for any purpose. If we should have a guest speaker, everyone will go computer-free for that session.**
- Students are expected to have **read the assigned material before class.**
- Students are encouraged to participate frequently in discussions in class. Participation will make the instructor's calls on borderline grades easier to make.
- **There are no 'right' answers to many of the issues we will discuss**, and you will not be graded on your opinions. However, please take into account that opinions supported by facts are more persuasive than opinions supported by more opinions. Make your arguments accordingly.
- Students are expected to be considerate of others. This means silencing cell phones, arriving on time, not leaving early and being respectful of others during discussion and debate. **Flaming or intimidating fellow students will not be tolerated.** Opinions and arguments are fair game; the speaker is not. Listening courteously is a real world skill, and I have a commitment to civil discourse that I will enforce.
- I support my classes with PowerPoint presentations. However, **you will not have access to these presentations outside of class.** There are several reasons for this:
 - 1) One-time use of images and charts for teaching is fair use under current legal rulings, but were I to allow you permanent access to those images, I would have to secure formal permission from the owner of every image.
 - 2) Some students substitute post-lecture PowerPoint downloads for attending class or note-taking. Others substitute verbatim regurgitation of PowerPoint material on tests and quizzes for the thoughtful analysis that earns high grades. Studies show that note-taking does enhance student performance, so please develop that skill.

3) There is potential for an ownership dispute over course content posted online. The presentations constitute my work product, virtually all of which was assembled before I began teaching at UNTD. Many universities are now enamored with online courses, and some attempt to claim legal ownership of work prepared by individuals employed at the school or posted on university websites, whether or not the content was compiled on university time or published during university employment. My lectures were compiled by me over years of study, reading and research outside the UNTD environment and existed before I began teaching these courses. Previously assembled presentations were adjusted to fit UNT course requirements and mandated texts.