

PSCI 1050D.091: American Government – Law and Institutions

Room: DAL1 102, T/Th: 11:30-12:50

Instructor: Michael Harding

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Office hours: by appointment. Email is the best way to contact me.

Required Texts:

Fiorina, Morris P., Paul E. Peterson, Bertram Johnson and William G. Mayer. *The New American Democracy*, 6th ed. or later. New York: Longman, 2009.

Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison. *The Federalist Papers*. Any edition will do, but I would recommend the Clinton Rossiter/Charles Kesler edition, published by Signet Classics. In addition to being relatively inexpensive, this edition also includes notes explaining many of the (possibly unfamiliar) references to history and classical literature made in the text. This should be easily available at any bookstore or on Amazon.com. It can also be found, freely available, online at: <http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/fedindex.htm>, but you are better off buying the book.

There will also be a number of primary source handouts. Initially, these will be sent out by email, however, once our Blackboard shell has been created, they will be posted there. These should be printed out and brought to class.

Course Goals or Overview:Learning Objectives/Outcomes

At the end of this course, the student will:

1. Be able to discuss the policy processes in the American federal and Texas state governments;
2. Demonstrate the ability to write cogently about major issues in American and state government and public responses to those initiatives;
3. Define roles and processes used to produce policy;
4. Identify past, current and future issues of American government, including differences and similarities in state and federal approaches to major policy initiatives;
5. Be able to discuss individual and mass behaviors of the American electorate.

General Education objectives

6. The course is designed to enhance critical thinking through inquiry and analysis and the creative linking of disparate or similar concepts.
7. The course is designed to enhance written, oral and reading skills to promote communication.
8. 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.
9. The course promotes personal responsibility through discussions of ethical problems and reasoning in the public sphere.

10. 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.

Graded elements of the course: there will be three in-class exams, and one group project. The group project will have two components: a group presentation on the subject *and* a written piece submitted by the individual student. Each exam is worth 20% of your grade; the group project is worth 20% of your grade; the individual written portion is worth 20% of your grade. Exams will cover the assigned reading, even if we have not discussed every particular point of that reading in class. Additionally, classroom participation can be worth a few points on your final average, and can often make the difference between B and an A.

Grade Determination:

A = 90% or better

B = 80 – 89%

C = 70 – 79%

D = 60 – 69%

F = less than 60%

Attendance Policy: Generally, I do not like having an attendance policy and I would rather treat you as responsible adults, but since this is a freshman level course, it is expected. You can miss 4 classes without penalty, for any reason whatsoever. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. Nonetheless, it is *your* responsibility to be here, to know what you need to know, and to be aware of any changes to material, policies, or important dates that are announced in class. Ignorance of such changes due to absence is not an excuse for late work. Which leads us to...

Make-Up/Late Work Policy: I do not accept late work, and I do not give make-up exams, except in the most extraordinarily dire of circumstances (civil war, loss of a limb, etc).

Extra Credit: I do not give extra credit assignments. Do not ask.

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism, collusion, copying, or otherwise cheating on in-class and out-of-class work (exams, presentations, papers, etc) will result in an automatic F for the course regardless of performance in other areas. Additionally, the student will be reported to the appropriate University authorities for disciplinary action. 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.

University Policies and Procedures

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.

Inclement 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.

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. In other words, mind your manners. Criticize ideas and arguments, not people.

Classroom Policies:

Do not come and go from the classroom. Students are expected to remain in their seats for the duration of the class session. In cases of strong physical necessity, students should leave as discreetly as possible. This should be rare.

Computers and other electronic devices **must** be put away (this includes laptops). *Don't send text messages on your phone in class.* It may seem strange to you, but students who focus on their phones while in class tend to do poorly on the exams. It's also rude—both to me and those around you; doing so will affect your grade.

Drinks are permitted if they are consumed silently and cleaned up afterward, but food is not allowed.

Students who arrive late or depart early will lose participation points. You are all adults and you understand the nature of traffic congestion. Plan accordingly. Disruptive students will be asked to leave: everyone here is paying to be here, don't waste their time, and

don't waste mine.

Topics:

Week of Jan. 14:

Introduction to the course

The Nature of Politics: Fiorina, chapter 1; Plato's *Republic*, book VIII (handout, on the kinds of regime); Aristotle's *Politics* book 1 (handout, on politics as natural); St. Thomas Aquinas on the natural law (handout)

Week of January 21:

Nature of Politics, continued: Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Speech on the New Idol (handout)

The American Approach: Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (handout); the Declaration of Independence; Jefferson, preface to a bill on crimes, Jefferson, Virginia Act for establishing religious freedom; Jefferson, Inaugural Address (handouts).

Week of January 28:

The American Approach, continued

Establishing Constitutional Democracy: Fiorina chapter 2; *Federalist* No. 37 (challenges facing the convention), No. 39 (on republican government).

Week of February 4:

Democracy and Participation: *Federalist* No. 10 (on faction), No. 35 (5th paragraph until end, on representative principle), *Federalist* Nos. 48 and 51 (on separation of powers, on enlarged sphere and federal principle), *Federalist* No. 57 (first 14 paragraphs), 58 (last two paragraphs); *Federalist* No. 62 and 63 (on the Senate)

Week of February 4:

Democracy and Participation continued

Catch-up

Week of February 11:

Review

First Exam

Group Media Project Assigned. I will break you up into groups; details will be given out on the day of the exam. This project will be concerned with detecting bias in the media; there will be a presentation component as well as an individual component.

Week of February 18:

Public Opinion: Fiorina, Chapter 5

Voting Behavior: Fiorina Chapter 6; Amendments 15, 19, 23, 24, 26

Week of February 25:

Political Positions: Conservatives, Liberals, Libertarians (handout)

Week of March 4:

Presidential Campaigns: Fiorina chapter 10

Congressional Campaigns: Fiorina chapter 11

Week of March 11:

Spring Break

Week of March 18:

Political Parties and Party Behavior: Fiorina chapter 8, Tocqueville handout on associations; reconsider *Federalist* Nos. 10 and 57

Week of March 25:

Review

Second Exam

Week of April 1:

The Press, Policy, and the Public Agenda: Fiorina chapter 9.

Group Media Presentations due; individual written components due.

Week of April 8:

Group Media Presentations, continued.

On Thursday I will be at the Midwestern Political Science Association annual conference in Chicago, Illinois.

Week of April 15:

Agenda Setting: Fiorina chapter 7

The Policy Process: Fiorina chapter 18; purpose of foreign and domestic policy—reconsider Locke, *Second Treatise* (handout) and the Declaration of Independence; Franklin and Jefferson on poverty and welfare (handout); James Landis, *The Administrative Process* (introduction, handout); John Marini, *The Politics of Budget Control* (handout); ADA and related (handout); Tocqueville on the administrative state (handout); Roger Kimball on rebuilding after Sandy (handout); packet of articles on Federal administrative agencies concerning rats, wildfires and waterways (handout).

Week of April 22:

The Policy Process continued

Government and Economy: Fiorina chapter 19; *Federalist* 35 (last paragraph); Wilson, “The New Freedom;” FDR, “Commonwealth Club Address;” Rex Tugwell, “Planning Must Replace *Laissez-Faire*”

On Thursday I will be at the Association for Core Texts and Courses annual conference in Ottawa, Canada.

Week of April 29:

Foreign Policy: Fiorina chapter 20; Thucydides’ Melian Dialogue (from the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, handout); *Federalist* No. 6, No. 11 (last paragraph), No. 43 (last

five paragraphs); Foreign Policy handout (the Founders, liberals, conservatives, neoconservatives).

Final Exam Review

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 7, 11:00AM-1:00 PM

Nota bene:

The instructor reserves the right to alter, modify, or change this syllabus as he sees fit.