American & Texas Government: Institutions
INET PSCI 2306.903 (4896)
Summer 2023 (5wk2)
Instructor: Prof. Andrew J. Enterline
Dept. of Political Science
Email: Canvas Email System Only

Course Description
This course provides an introduction to American and Texas politics. The course focuses primarily on the institutions central to federal and state decision making, including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the bureaucracy, as well as civil rights and liberties.

Teaching Assistants (Assigned by Student Last Name)
TBA (A-I);
TBA (J-Q); and
TBA (R-Z).
Communication with TAs: Through the Canvas Email System Only.

Communication
We use Canvas Email exclusively to communicate. If you are logged into Canvas, the "Inbox" for the Email is located on the left-hand, vertical toolbar. Click on "Inbox", click on the button "compose new message", and then select me (Enterline) or your assigned TA in the drop down menu in the "To" field.

Syllabus Revisions
I reserve the right to revise this syllabus during the semester.

General Course Format
The online format of the course affords a significant degree of flexibility for the enrolled student and is designed with this quality in mind. There are three components to the course discussed in the remainder of the syllabus:
   •   Soomo Webtext & PSCI Workbook (and exercises embedded therein);
   •   2 Exams (1 Miderm & 1 Final, non-cumulative); and
   •   1 Letter to an Editor.

The student's work in the course each week is anchored to the Webtext and PSCI Workbook and exercises therein. There are 22 such exercises, and upon completion grades are automatically logged into Canvas Grades. There will be no formal lectures in the course. There are two exams, a midterm and final, that are non-cumulative and taken by the student online via Canvas Quizzes. Finally, the student writes and submits a letter to an Editor. These course components are discussed in greater detail, in turn.

Soomo/PSCI Webtexts (Contributes 45% to Student's Final Course Grade)

The required materials for the course are as follows:
Title: *Central Ideas in American Government 12e with Texas Politics 9e and 2306 Workbook*
ISBN: 978-1-954890-00-8
Soomo provides a free 3-week trial period that allows students to access the first three chapters of the webtext. This free trial allows you to complete assigned webtexts as the semester begins. However, once the free trial expires, you must purchase the webtext to complete the webtext exercises and log your grades in Canvas Grades. You can purchase access at the UNT bookstore or via Soomo directly through the course link.

Each topic includes exercises (or quizzes) from each webtext (you complete a set of exercises after reading the assigned material). East set of exercises is worth 100 points and is due at 11:59 pm on the assigned date (see the course calendar, below; or the date recorded in Canvas Assignments). Given the structure of the chapters in the webtexts (there are 22 of them), there are 2200 total points for these exercises. Said exercises will contribute 45% to your final grade for the course.
The Webtext exercises are useful because they require the student to move through the material gradually. Additionally, the material covered in the exercises will comprise the bulk of the questions on the two exams. So, gradual absorption of the course material serves to help the student pre-study for the exam.
You take a given webtext exercise as many times as you wish, thereby allowing you to refine your knowledge and improve your total credit for an exercise. However, once the due date passes for a given exercise (or exercises), you cannot return and complete it. Webtexts are due by the date specified in Canvas.

Please Note: It is important that you complete the webtext exercises once you begin a chapter. Do not log out of the system mid-exercise, drift away for lengthy periods of time, etc., or you grade may not be logged correctly in Canvas.

If you wish to compute your current grade for this component of the course, simply identify the total exercise points reported in Canvas Grades that you've earned and then divide this value by the total points available by a given date (e.g., you earned 280 points and 300 are available to be earned by said date, so your current grade is 93% (280/300), or a letter grade of an ``A''.) The exercises are an individual exercise, so you are to do your own work with your own brain. Do not collaborate with anyone else.
Please Note: It is the student's responsibility to alert via Canvas Email of their TA of missing or erroneous webtext grades within 48 hrs. of their due date in Canvas Assignments. Put differently, the student cannot return after the 48 hr window argue that a given webtext was completed and Canvas failed to log the grade accordingly.

Midterm and Final Exams (Contribute 25% Each [50% Total] to Student's Final Course Grade)

There will be two, non-cumulative exams in this course:
- Midterm exam **Monday, July 25**; and
- Final exam on **Friday, August 12**.

Each exam requires that the student answer multiple-choice questions drawn from the required webtext readings. Each exam will be taken by the student online via Canvas on the appointed date and completed anytime between 6am--11:59pm on said date. Each exam is an individual exercise, so you are to do your own work with your own brain. Put differently, do not collaborate with anyone. Each exam will contribute 25% (combined 50%) toward your final course grade.

Please Note: In order to maintain the integrity of the midterm and final exams, no early exams will be administered.

Please Note: The exams are available to students in Canvas Quizzes. But, I make these exams myself and do so as the semester progresses, so they may not be visible to the student in Canvas until the appointed exam day and 6am--11:59pm window.

Policy-maker Letter (Contributes 5% to Final Course Grade)
This course is part of the UNT academic core. As such, UNT requires that we assess Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for students enrolled in the course. To assess the SLOs for the course students fulfill the assignment of a Policy-maker Letter. The policy-maker letter is due by 11:59 on Thursday, July 28.
Said assignment is detailed as follows:
Letter Assignment
One of the overarching themes of PSCI 2306 is the division of policy-making power among the various branches and levels of government. Another is the importance of representation and having a government that reflects the will of the people. This assignment requires you effectively demonstrate core competencies of critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, and personal responsibility within the context of civic engagement in the U.S. political process.
In this assignment, you will
- <u>Do not resubmit a letter that you wrote previously under any conditions</u> (e.g., for another course, online, to a newspaper), as you will receive not credit for doing so;
- Identify a current political issue that affects you and your community;
- Educate yourself about the issue by reading at least three articles from reputable news sources about the issue;
- Determine which policy-maker is in the best position to represent your interests with respect to that issue. That could be your representative in the U.S. House of Representatives, your representative in a state legislature, or some member of the executive branch. The key is that you identify a person who has some policy-making authority with respect to the issue you have chosen and a person who might listen to your position (for example, choosing your own representative to the U.S. House rather than some other representative);

- identify yourself as one of the politician's constituents;
- identify the political issue about which you are concerned;
- clearly state a position on that issue (what should the policymaker do or not do); and
- Provide an explanation for your position that will persuade the policymaker to agree with you; and
- After you draft your letter and feel comfortable with both the content and format of your letter, submit the letter as the body of an e-mail addressed to your policymaker.

Via Canvas you will submit the following documents for grading by December 31 by 11:59 pm:
- a .doc, .docx, or .pdf version of your letter; and
- a .doc, .docx, or .pdf document listing the three articles you read.

For tips on writing a letter to Congress, visit: Writing Effective Letters to CongressLinks to an external site.

Your assigned TA (see above) will grade your Policy-maker Letter materials by the following 21 evaluation criteria assigned to the course by the UNT Core Team. Therefore, it is advisable to peruse these criteria prior to fulfilling the assignment so that you know what it is you are writing to in terms of fulfillment.

Please Note: For reasons beyond my control the total number of points assigned by the Core Team for this assignment in Canvas is 176. However, I have been instructed that any point total of 101--176 receives 100% of the 5% of this component of your final course grade. Point totals of 0-100 will be evaluated in the standard fashion, with 100 points receiving 100% of the 5% of this component of your final course grade, 90 points receiving 90% of the 5% of this component of your final course grade, 85 points receiving 85% of the 5% of this component of your final course grade, and so on.

The evaluation criteria for the Letter are reported in the Assignment link for this assignment.

Please Note: Given the difficulty in grading this assignment, no late submissions of the letter will be accepted.

Please Note: You cannot submit a letter that you have written elsewhere (e.g., for another course [PSCI2306], to a newspaper or online platform). And you cannot use writing published previously anywhere (e.g., a course paper). This assignment employs the Turnitin.com system to vet the originality of your submission. Submissions that are not original to you and the course will not receive credit.

Missed Exams, Missed Webtext Exercises, Etc.
Permission to complete missed exams, webtext exercises, and the policy-letter will be provided only in the case of a documented excuse acceptable to the UNT Dean of Students and evaluated as such. In such cases, please email your assigned TA.

Posting Grades in Canvas

Grades will be reported via Canvas Grades. We do our best to keep the grade book up to date. Please let your assigned TA know if you detect any issues or problems in the grade book. It is your responsibility to police the grades in Canvas Grades. A missing or erroneous grade must be reported to your assigned TA within 48 hrs. of the due date for the given assignment.

Computing your Final Course Grade (Numeric)

To compute your final course numeric grade, please do the following:
- "Letter to the Editor":
  - divide value in the column by 100 and then multiply result by 5 (for the 5% contribution to your final grade);
- "Midterm Exam":
  - divide value in the column by 35 and then multiply result by 25 (for the 25% contribution to your final grade);
- "Final Exam":
  - divide value in the column by 35 and then multiply result by 25 (for the 25% contribution to your final grade);
- Webtexts (in multiple columns):
  - sum the values from each chapter webtext (there are 22 such values) and divided by 2200. Multiply the result by 45 (for the 45% contribution to your final grade); and
- Sum the resulting values from the above 4 steps. The resulting value is your final numeric course grade.

The "Final Course Letter Grade" is the grade that will be uploaded to the UNT Registrar. This letter grade will never be lower than the standard corresponding numeric value that I compute for the course (e.g., you earned a numeric value of 95, but I awarded you a letter grade of "C"). However, this letter grade may be greater than the standard corresponding numeric value (e.g., you earned a numeric value of 88, but I awarded you a letter grade of "A").