

PSCI 2305.481 (12474): U.S. Political Behavior and Policy

Fall 2026 - 8 Week I | August 17-October 9, 2026

Online Asynchronous | UNT Canvas

Instructor	Ahmed Hamza
Email	ahmedhamza@my.unt.edu
Office Hours	Mondays/Wednesdays from 9 am to 10:30 am; also, you can email me to have a Zoom meeting.
Course Format	Online asynchronous; no required weekly meeting time
Course Site	UNT Canvas - PSCI 2305.481

Course Description

This course explores the connection between the will of the people and the policies implemented by government. We focus on individual political values and attitudes, the mechanisms that connect individual beliefs to government action, including parties, interest groups, the media, and elections, and the outcomes of government policy. In political science, these actions are often studied as "political behavior": how the behavior of individuals and groups comes together to shape the political landscape.

This is an accelerated, eight-week online course. There are no regular in-person class meetings. Students are expected to work through the weekly Canvas modules, complete the assigned Soomo webtext activities by the posted deadlines, and take both exams online during the scheduled windows. Because the course moves quickly, students should plan to engage with the course several times each week.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Objectives

- Explain the development and measurement of individual values, attitudes, and opinions about politics.
- Interpret the role of individuals in the political process.
- Explain the roles of linkage institutions (political parties, interest groups, and the media) in connecting individuals to government institutions.
- Demonstrate the relationship between electoral rules and institutions and political outcomes.

- Explain the connection between the political process and the policies generated by that process.

Required Materials

Required Soomo webtext: Political Behavior Workbook + Central Ideas in American Government + Texas Politics 15e

UNT Department of Political Science | Jocelyn Evans | James R. Henson

ISBN: 978-1-963859-41-6 | Net Price: \$78.75 | Digital webtext and workbook

The Soomo webtext is linked directly through Canvas. Students may purchase access through the official campus bookstore or through the publisher link available in Canvas. Always enter the webtext through the links in our Canvas course so that your work and grades are recorded correctly. If you are using a trial period while waiting for financial aid, obtain full access as soon as possible.

Technical Support and Requirements

Because this is an online course and the required webtext is web-based, students need reliable internet access and regular access to Canvas and Soomo. You should be able to navigate Canvas, complete online multiple-choice and short-answer activities, follow links to videos or external sites, and upload or download common document formats such as Word and PDF files.

- UNT technical support: Student/UIT Helpdesk, helpdesk@unt.edu, 940-565-2324.
- Soomo product support: use the Soomo Support link available from the webtext or Canvas.

The instructor is happy to help with course content, but technical problems with Canvas accounts, devices, or the Soomo platform should be directed to the appropriate support service as soon as possible.

Class Behavior

This course may involve discussion of political issues on which people strongly disagree. Treat classmates and the instructor with respect in all electronic communication. Focus criticism on ideas and evidence rather than on people. Written communication can make tone difficult to interpret, so reread messages before posting and avoid language you would not use in a respectful face-to-face conversation.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following course components:

Course Component	Weight
Soomo Webtext Activities (18 chapters)	70%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%

Soomo Webtext Activities (70%)

The course includes 18 graded Soomo chapters. Depending on the chapter, activities may include embedded multiple-choice questions, investigations or application activities, workbook questions, short responses, and quizzes. Each chapter is worth 100 points in the Soomo gradebook. Your average across the assigned Soomo chapters will count for 70% of your final course grade. Follow the chapter links in Canvas and complete all work before the deadline shown in the schedule.

Exams (30%)

There will be two online multiple-choice exams. Exam 1 covers Chapters 1-8 (Modules 1-4). Exam 2 covers Chapters 9-18 (Modules 5-7) and is not cumulative. Each exam counts for 15% of the final course grade. The exam availability window, time limit, and other instructions will be posted in Canvas. Students are expected to take both exams. Make-up exams will be permitted only for documented, university-excused absences or other serious circumstances approved by the instructor.

Final Grades

Letter Grade	Course Percentage
A	89.5-100%
B	79.5-89.4%
C	69.5-79.4%
D	59.5-69.4%
F	Below 59.5%

Standard mathematical rounding will be used. Final grades reflect work completed across the course and are not adjusted through end-of-term bargaining or individual extra-credit arrangements.

Course Expectations

As the instructor, I am responsible for:

- providing course materials and learning activities that give you a reasonable opportunity to achieve the course objectives;
- providing timely feedback and explaining grading concerns when questions arise; and
- applying course rules and policies fairly and consistently.

As a student, you are responsible for:

- reading announcements and completing course requirements on time;
- checking Canvas and UNT email regularly and remaining engaged throughout the eight-week session;
- seeking help early when course material or circumstances create difficulties; and
- helping maintain a respectful and productive online learning environment.

Course Policies

Communication

Use Canvas Inbox or your UNT email account when contacting me. Please include "PSCI 2305" and a brief description of your question in the subject line. I will normally respond within 24 hours on weekdays. If your question requires a longer conversation, we can meet by Zoom during office hours or by appointment.

Online Participation

There is no attendance requirement because the course is asynchronous. However, asynchronous does not mean self-paced. Students should log in regularly, follow the weekly sequence of modules, and meet the posted deadlines. Waiting until the end of a module or the end of the course to begin the work is likely to create serious problems in an accelerated eight-week format.

Late Work

Unless a different rule is stated for a specific assignment, late Soomo or written work may be accepted up to five days after the deadline with a 50% penalty. After five days, late work will normally not be accepted. The final-week deadlines cannot be extended beyond the end of the 8W1 session without a formally approved incomplete or other university arrangement. Extreme circumstances may be considered when appropriate; contact me as soon as possible rather than waiting until the end of the course.

Academic Integrity and Use of AI

Students are expected to follow UNT standards for academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance, and other forms of misrepresentation. Unless I explicitly state otherwise for an assignment, you may not use

generative AI or other unauthorized tools to answer exam questions or complete graded Soomo activities. Students remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, and proper attribution of all submitted work.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

UNT provides reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations should register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) and provide the appropriate accommodation documentation. Please contact me as early as possible so approved accommodations can be implemented without unnecessary delay.

Acceptable Student Behavior

UNT expectations for student conduct apply to online instructional spaces as well as in-person classrooms. Behavior that interferes with another student's opportunity to learn or with the instructor's ability to conduct the course is not acceptable and may be referred through university conduct procedures.

Student Support

Students are encouraged to use UNT resources when needed, including academic advising, the Writing Center, counseling and mental health services, technology support, and student advocacy resources. Current links to university services and policies are available through UNT and Canvas.

Course Schedule and Due Dates

The schedule is tentative and may be adjusted if necessary. Any change will be announced in Canvas. All deadlines are 11:59 p.m. Central Time unless Canvas states otherwise.

Fall 2026 8W1 runs from August 17 through October 9. The final regular class day is October 8, and the 8W1 final-exam/last-session date is October 9.

Module / Week	Soomo Chapters and Topic	Other Assessment	Due Date
Module 1 / Week 1 Aug. 17-23	Chapter 1: Public Opinion Chapter 2: Workbook: Public Opinion		Sun., Aug. 23
Module 2 / Week 2 Aug. 24-30	Chapter 3: Voting and Political Participation Chapter 4: Workbook: Political Participation		Sun., Aug. 30

Module 3 / Week 3 Aug. 31-Sept. 6	Chapter 5: The Media Chapter 6: Workbook: The Mass Media		Sun., Sept. 6
Module 4 / Week 4 Sept. 7-13	Chapter 7: Interest Groups Chapter 8: Workbook: Interest Groups	Exam 1 Chapters 1-8	Chs. 7-8: Sept. 13 Exam 1: Sun., Sept. 13
Module 5 / Week 5 Sept. 14-20	Chapter 9: Political Parties Chapter 10: Texas: Political Parties Chapter 11: Workbook: Political Parties		Sun., Sept. 20
Module 6 / Week 6 Sept. 21-27	Chapter 12: Elections and Campaigns Chapter 13: Texas: Elections, Voting, and Campaigns Chapter 14: Workbook: Elections and Campaigns		Sun., Sept. 27
Module 7 / Week 7 Sept. 28-Oct. 4	Chapter 15: Public Policy Chapter 16: Texas: Public Policy Chapter 17: Workbook: Domestic Policy		Sun., Oct. 4
Week 8 Oct. 5-9	Chapter 18: Workbook: Foreign Policy	Exam 2 Chapters 9-18	Ch. 18: Thu., Oct. 9 Exam 2: Fri., Oct. 9

Syllabus Change Policy. The instructor may make reasonable changes to the schedule or course procedures when needed. Any substantive change will be announced in Canvas.