

PSCI 2305-481: U.S. Political Behavior and Policy

Fall 2025

Online Asynchronous

Professor Brian Hamel

Brian.Hamel@unt.edu

Office Hours: Th, 9:30-11:30 AM or by appointment

Office: Wooten Hall 157

This is an introductory course in U.S. Political Behavior and Policy. It explores how individuals, like you, form political opinions and engage in action to form the political American landscape. In other words, this course will familiarize you with some of the fundamental building blocks of American politics. In addition to its focus on “regular individuals,” the course will also consider the political behavior of other relevant actors like political parties and interest groups. Finally, the course will investigate the formation and realization of public policies — both domestic and foreign. While this is an introductory course in American politics, it will also familiarize you with the toolkit, both conceptual and methodological, of modern political science, providing an important stepping stone to other courses in the major (as well as in other disciplines).

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Explain the development and measurement of individual values, attitudes, and opinions about politics
2. Interpret the role of individuals in the political process
3. Explain the roles of linkage institutions (parties, interest groups, and media) in connecting individuals to institutions of government
4. Analyze and interpret qualitative and quantitative data to support your arguments.
5. Demonstrate the relationship between electoral rules/institutions and outcomes
6. Explain the connection between the political process and the policies generated by that process

Materials

Students are required to purchase the course webtext:

U.S. Politics with 2305 Workbook, 15th Edition
ISBN: 978-1-954890-89-3

Access to the webtext can be purchased through Canvas by opening one of the the assigned chapters. You can also purchase an access code at the UNT bookstore. Some of the first chapters of the webtext are available as a free preview. You do not need to wait for financial aid to get started with your coursework. Please start right away! If you cannot afford to purchase the webtext, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Structure and Assignments

This is an online, asynchronous class — that means there are no regularly scheduled classes or lectures. All of the required class materials are accessible through the class Canvas page. To access the class materials, you can click on either the “Home” or “Modules” links on the left-hand side of Canvas. Importantly, **this class is largely self-paced**, meaning that, for the most part, you complete the material at your own pace.

Besides exams, all necessary class materials take the form of the above mentioned webtext. The webtext has three types of assignments: (1) readings; (2) investigations; and (3) workbooks. Each webtext assignment is worth 100 points.

There are two exams in this course. Each exam is worth 400 points. Exams consist of 50 multiple-choice questions. You will have 75 minutes to complete the exam. You can only attempt each exam once. You may not consult with other people while taking this test. Violating this rule will result in a grade of “F” for the course. You can, however, refer to your text and notes.

In total, there are 2,900 points you can earn in this course. Your final grade will be calculated by dividing the number of points you have earned by 2,900, and translating that percentage to a letter grade using the following scale:

| Grade | % |
|-------|-------------|
| A | 89.50-100 |
| B | 79.50-89.49 |
| C | 69.50-79.49 |
| D | 60.00-69.49 |
| F | 0-59.99 |

There are only four deadlines in this course:

1. Chapters 1-8 of the webtext are due on **September 5** at 11:59 PM

2. Exam on Chapters 1-8 is due on **September 12** at 11:59 PM
3. Chapters 9-15 of the webtext are due on **October 3** at 11:59 PM
4. Exam on Chapters 9-15 on **October 10** at 11:59 PM

Late work will not be accepted. If you skip a webtext assignment or exam entirely, you will receive a 0 for that assignment. You will not receive an extension — no exceptions. If you start but do not finish an assignment or exam, your grade will reflect the work you completed with points deducted for any questions not answered. You will not receive an extension — no exceptions.

Policies and Resources

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Accommodations for Disabilities

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of 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 accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information, visit the [ODA website](#).

Mental Health Services

Mental health challenges can significantly hinder learning. UNT can support you in overcoming these obstacles. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus [here](#) and [here](#).

Emergency Notification and Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Schedule

Friday, September 5:

Due at 11:59 PM:

- Chapter 1: Public Opinion
- Chapter 1: Public Opinion Investigations
- Chapter 2: Workbook: Public Opinion
- Chapter 3: Voting and Political Participation
- Chapter 3: Voting and Political Participation Investigations
- Chapter 4: Workbook: Political Participation
- Chapter 5: The Media
- Chapter 5: The Media Investigations
- Chapter 6: Workbook: The Mass Media
- Chapter 7: Interest Groups
- Chapter 7: Interest Groups Investigations
- Chapter 8: Workbook: Interest Groups

Friday, September 12:

Due at 11:59 PM:

- Exam on Chapters 1-8

Friday, October 3:

Due at 11:59 PM:

- Chapter 9: Political Parties
- Chapter 9: Political Parties Investigations
- Chapter 10: Workbook: Political Parties
- Chapter 11: Elections and Campaigns
- Chapter 12: Workbook: Elections and Campaigns
- Chapter 13: Public Policy
- Chapter 14: Workbook: Domestic Policy
- Chapter 15: Workbook: Foreign Policy

Friday, October 10:

Due at 11:59 PM:

- Exam on Chapters 9-15