**POLITICAL SCIENCE 2980.001--DISCOVERING POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**A Special Class for New Political Science Majors**



Course Instructor: Dr. Gloria Cox

(Dr. Gloria, Prof Gloria, Prof Cox, Dr. Cox, etc.—all just fine!)

University Distinguished Teaching Professor

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Dear new political scientists! Welcome to Discovering Political Science, a course designed to introduce you to the major you are pursuing and the opportunities it will open for you. I hope you are going to love it, learn a great deal, and increase your understanding of political science while developing your plans for a future career in this exciting field of study. We hope you will begin to build an excellent academic foundation that will serve you well in graduate and/or professional school and in the career to follow.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Over the upcoming weeks, you will

* Discover what political science is and the various subfields that comprise it.
* Meet members of the departmental faculty.
* Get to know some of your fellow students by working with them on a team.
* Become aware of and knowledgeable about the important questions and topics related to the study of political theory.
* Become aware of and knowledgeable about the important questions and topics related to the study of American politics.
* Become aware of and knowledgeable about the important questions and topics related to the study of comparative politics.
* Become aware of and knowledgeable about the important questions and topics related to the study of international relations.
* Learn what your major in political science requires and how to meet those requirements.
* Identify the career fields for which your major in political science prepares you.
* Develop a vocabulary related to political science, and
* Understand enrichment opportunities available to you as a student in this major.

**HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS CLASS**

A great concern of students is whether they will be able to succeed in their classes. Yes, you can, and here are some suggestions that may be of help to you.

* Consider making a commitment to come to (every) class. It really matters whether you show up. In fact, I promise that there is no substitute for it, whether it is for this class or life in general. We have many guest speakers in this class so you can meet departmental faculty, and they may or may not provide PowerPoint slides as part of their presentation. We may not have a backup if you miss class, so please try to attend to hear their remarks.
* Come to class ready to make the most of it. There is no doubt that some students are disengaged, but the opportunity to attend college is a wonderful thing, and I hope you will love it. Please consider getting a notebook and a pen and come to class ready to take good notes. Many students have a separate notebook for each class and keep those notebooks for many years.
* Familiarize yourself with the syllabus so you know what will be taking place in class. It helps to stay connected. Also, please use the syllabus to check on things about which you have questions. Amazingly, most questions are answered in these pages!

**A VERY important reminder**: In the three and a half months that make up a semester, lots of things can happen. A common problem is feeling overwhelmed as assignments come due, seemingly all at once, so that time management becomes a major issue. It is common, too, for students to catch something and be sick for a few days, or to have other minor health issues. More serious things can happen, too, like major illnesses or accidents, or even the illness or death of a loved one. If you find yourself overwhelmed and you are having trouble coping, or if you are having to deal with a difficult personal situation, be sure to talk with me or go online to find out about the many programs and types of assistance available to you here at UNT. Ideally, you will enjoy your college experience and look forward to your classes. Remember that you are beginning the work that will allow you to realize your hopes and dreams! I very much want you to be successful.

**FIRST THING:** please make sure you know how to access Canvas and find this class. We will use **Canvas** for many things, including announcements, weekly homework assignments, posting reviews and slides, and even for our tests. If you have trouble finding it, please let me help you with it. It really is essential for your success, and I am glad to help.

**MATERIALS REQUIRED:** In this class, we will use the online book Introduction to Political Science, available at no charge from Open Stax. The authors are Rom, Hidaka, and Bzostek. The ISBN is 13:978-1-711470-68-9.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** A Quick Summary

* Four tests, each worth 100 points. Total possible toward your grade: 300 points, with lowest score dropped. Details below.
* A Team Project: 100 points. Each member of the class will be part of a team for the entire semester and each team will make a presentation at the end of the semester.
* Homework: 100 points. Assignments will be posted weekly in Canvas for you to complete and earn points. Details in Class
* Attendance and Participation: 100 points. Details below.

**GRADING SCALE:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| 600 to 540 points | 100-90 | Grade of A |
| 539 to 480 points |  89-80 | Grade of B |
| 479 to 420 points |  79-70 | Grade of C |
| 419 to 360 points |  69-60 | Grade of D |
| 359 and fewer points | 59 and lower | Grade of F |

**MORE INFORMATION ON COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**TESTS: Really Important Info**

We will have four tests this semester. I will count your three highest test grades from those four tests. The test dates are on the syllabus and on Canvas. Please go ahead and note the test dates as it is important to take the tests on the assigned date. If you miss one of the tests, please remember that you are permitted just one makeup. Students who take all four tests with the class (no makeups) will receive ten extra credit points at semester’s end.

**HOW TESTS WORK:** On the day of each test, our class will not meet. Instead, you will go to the test center in Sage Hall 311 to take your test. The test center is open from 7:30 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. and you will be able to pick the time that suits you best. When you get to the test center, you will need your UNT ID card. You will also need to know how to access Canvas because I will have posted the test to Canvas.

**If you miss a test:** First, please try not to miss a test. Being present for course requirements is an important part of your responsibility as a student. If you do, though, there will be a makeup one week after the original test date. You are limited to one makeup for the semester, no questions asked. Missing a second test will result in a grade of zero unless the student can provide strong documentation as to why they missed the test. Examples of strong documentation might include a receipt showing that you were a patient at the hospital emergency room at the time of the test or that you were having emergency dental surgery. Scheduling a doctor’s appointment or an advising meeting at the time of the test would not count for this purpose.

**Difficult Situations:** From time to time, unfortunately, a student will experience extraordinary circumstances, such as a serious accident or illness requiring hospitalization or even the death of a parent or other very close relative. Please let me know if something like this happens to you. I will want to work with you so we can make plans for you to complete the class successfully.

**Representing the University**: If you miss a test because you are away from UNT representing the University in an official capacity, such as a University athlete or a member of the Green Brigade, it is your responsibility to let me know you will be missing the test and we will schedule a makeup for you within a week. For a student to qualify for a makeup test, the absence must be officially excused by the University. An official absence is one from the Office of the Dean of Students. Occasionally a student will decide to go someplace, but remember an official absence is one excused by the Office of the Dean of Students.

**TEAM PROJECT AND PRESENTATION:** Each member of our class will be a member of a team, and each team will meet from time to time. Each team will select a topic from the list provided and learn what they can about the topic over the course of the semester. Your team will prepare a 7–10-minute presentation and a handout for the week of November 17 to 21. All members of the team will receive the same grade, with exceptions made for students who do not participate with their team. More on this project in class.

**HOMEWORK:** What I mean by this is something I post on Canvas just about each week for you to do for credit. For instance, I may ask you to read a short article I hand out or post for you, then answer some questions about it. Or when we have a guest speaker, I may post five questions from the presentation. Or I may ask you to read a section in your OpenStax textbook and answer some questions about what you read. Over the course of the semester, I promise to post at least 125 potential points for you to earn. Anything you have over 100 points will count as extra credit.

**NEXT, CREDIT FOR ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION**

Attendance is **required** in this class. Attendance will be checked, and you will receive three points of credit for each class for which you are present in its entirety, up to a total of 99 (100) points. Based on my experience, students who attend regularly are almost always successful while those who do not are much more likely to encounter problems. For that reason, I would like to offer credit for attendance and participation as part of your course requirement. Our class meets 44 times so there is room built in for you to miss the occasional class such as for illness or conflicts.

**A GREAT CLASSROOM WITH EXCELLENT STUDENTS AND RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER**

As political scientists, we value the many perspectives students bring to our campus and to each classroom. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication and mutual respect. As you discuss important issues and ideas, you will learn not only about political science but about civic responsibilities. Learning is an ongoing process, and we are all learning together.

**TOPICS AVAILABLE TO TEAMS FOR YOUR TEAM PROJECT**

* Hungry Children in Texas
* Maternal Health in Texas
* Child Marriage in Texas
* Is College Worth It?
* An Important Contemporary Case Where the Supreme Court Was Wrong
* Birthright Citizenship: Its Meaning and Importance
* The Water Situation in Texas
* Protest as a Constitutional Right
* Political Corruption in Texas
* Religious Influence in Public Life
* Reproductive Rights in Texas
* The Preservation of Public Lands
* Saving Our National Parks
* The Disappearing Middle Class
* Can the Democratic Party Make a Comeback in Texas?
* Vouchers and Financing Public Schools in Texas
* Academic Freedom in Texas Universities
* Safety in Public Schools
* LGBTQ+ Rights
* Air Conditioning and Texas Prisons
* Detention Centers and Border Security in Texas

Is College Really Worth It?

There is lots of talk these days about whether going to college is really worth it. Perhaps you have wondered about it. I want to offer some information you might find interesting and useful. It is from Forbes at <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/student-loans/why-should-you-go-to-college/> and the article is entitled “7 Compelling Reasons Why You Should go to College.”

Among the reasons discussed in the article are the following:

1. You will make more money over your lifetime.

2. You will enjoy increased job security.

3. “More schooling could lead to a happier life,” including longer marriages.

4. You will find it easier to have health insurance and other benefits.

5. “Having a college education can actually help you live longer.”

6. Going to college can help expand your world view, including special interests.

7. Going to college helps you expand your network and get to know people in your chosen profession.

My wish for you: study hard, in the knowledge that it is well worth the effort, and look forward to the day when you will walk across the stage with a college degree in hand. I wish you the best!

COURSE OUTLINE FOR PSCI 2980: Questions and Issues

Political Science is a broad and important field of academic study. This course is designed to let you imagine political science as a circle and identify a large number of important topics that fit within that circle.

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| Week One | August 18: Exploring the syllabus, discussing course requirements, and going over important study skills; Also: A discussion of powerful reasons for attending college—And doing well at it. Imagining what the future might hold (Dr. Cox)August 20: What you need to know about the major and meeting the requirements of the major; Also, getting to know the prof and your classmates; Setting up class teams and choosing team names (Dr. Cox). Mr. Meaders will provide handouts.August 22: Learning about opportunities for leadership and enrichment of the college experience, such as campus organizations, like SGA, Moot Court, Study Abroad, Departmental Internships, NTDC (Dr. Kimi King) |
| Week Two | August 25: When we say “political science,” what does that mean? How does political science relate to good citizenship and prepare you for a great career? (Professor and Department Chair Dr. John Ishiyama)**Reading:** Please read 1.3 Political Science: The Systematic Study of Politics. This reading is short, as most are, but it includes two short videos that I would encourage you to watch. There is one about Palestinian and Israeli women marching together for peace and there is another featuring Neil DeGrasse Tyson explaining the scientific method using the example of whipped cream and hot cocoa.)August 27: What is political theory? If you study political theory, what topics might come up? Whose ideas would you read? (Dr. Richard Ruderman).**Reading:** 3.1 The Classical Origins of Western Political Ideologies and 3.2 The Laws of Nature and the Social ContractAugust 29: The foundation of due process and the rule of law: why we should love the Magna Carta (Dr. Cox). |
| Week Three | Sept 1: LABOR DAY: No class today.Sept 3: Forms of government: what is authoritarianism and what are its key features? (Dr. Sanghoon Kim-Leffingwell).**Reading:** Read 3.4: Nationalism, Communism, Fascism, and AuthoritarianismSept 5: The ideas of John Locke in his own words (Dr. Cox) |
| Week Four | Sept 8: What is democracy? Is the United States a democracy? What makes you think so? (Ms. Madeline Silver, Doctoral Student)**Reading:** Read 3.5: Contemporary Democratic LiberalismSept 10: The American presidency: role model for world leader? (Dr. Cox)**Reading:** Read 10.2: The Executive in Presidential RegimesSept 12: What is local government and does it really matter? (Dr. Brian Hamel). |
| Week Five | Sept 15: The Lowdown on Conspiracy Theories (Dr. O’Dell Tannehill via Zoom)Sept 17: Test One: It’s good to know how you are doing, so we will have a test today on everything we have discussed and read so far. Class will not meet. You will go to Sage Hall 311 to the test center to take your test. You will choose a time that works for you between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m.Sept 19: An Overview of human rights: when did torture give way to human rights, or did it? Is every person entitled to rights? Do animals have rights, too? (Dr. Jacqueline Demeritt)**Reading**: Read 4.1 The Freedom of the Individual and 4.2 Constitutions and Individual Liberties. Also watch video on Declaration of Human Rights in lesson 7.1 |
| Week Six | Sept 22: Generations of Human Rights (Dr. Cox)Sept 24: Genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity—The International Criminal Court. (Dr. James David Meernik)Sept 26: An Overview of international law and courts (Dr. Yu-hsien Sung)**Reading:** 11.3 Types of Legal Systems Around the World and 15.2 International Law |
| Week Seven | Sept 29: What do you consider our most important Constitutional rights and how are they preserved? A discussion of Constitutional guarantees, especially the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments. (Dr. Cox) Oct 1: What are social movements? How do social movements relate to securing rights? **Reading:** 6.2 Political Culture: How People Express their Political Identity. 6.5 Resolving Collective Action ProblemsOct 3: Current rights issues in the United States (Dr. Natasha Altema)  |
| Week Eight | Oct 6: A Discussion of Women’s Rights: “If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, let it be that human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights, once and for all” --Hillary Clinton. “Interestingly, I think there’s an argument to bring back the ‘M-R-S degree,’” Charlie Kirk said, using a slang term that refers to women attending college for the purpose of finding a husband (Dr. Cox).Oct 8: The Rise of ethnic nationalism around the world. (Dr. Roman Hlatky via Zoom)Oct 10: Test Two. Another quick check-up to make sure you are doing just fine. Once again, you will go to Sage 311 at a time of your choice between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. to take your test. The test will cover classes and readings since test one. |
| Week Nine | How Are Things Going? No, Seriously, how are things going?Oct 13: Today will be reserved to discuss how you are doing, including unexpected obstacles you have encountered, problems with time management, and other issues that may be of concern to you during your first semester. (Dr. Valerie Martinez and Dr. Paul Hensel)Oct: 15: Today is Follow-Up Day. We will go back to the ideas and opportunities we introduced in the first week of the semester: questions about the major, opportunities available to you, and questions related to assignments in this class. There is a strong possibility of ice cream today, too.Oct. 17: Teams meet today to go over your research, compare ideas, and design your class presentation. Your presentation should include several power point slides and a handout for the class. Your handout should include a list of at least five sources to which someone might go for additional information about the topic. Handouts should be loaded with interesting information about your topic and can be two-sided. |
| Week Ten | EXPLORING QUESTIONS RELATED TO **COMPARATIVE POLITICS** Oct 20. Let’s say you decide to focus your study on comparative politics. What is that, and what are the topics encompassed by the term? A presentation focused on presidential vs. parliamentary systems (Dr. Ko Maeda)**Reading:** 10.1 Democracies: Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential RegimesOct 22: World Trade, tariffs, and economic development (Dr. Glen Biglaiser)**Reading:** 16.1 The Origins of International Political EconomyOct 24: A World of Haves and Have-Nots: The causes and consequences of poverty (Dr. Cox) |
| Week Eleven | Oct 27: Women’s rights around the world: How women hauling water, giving birth alone, and eating last keep women poor everywhere (Dr. Cox)Oct 29: The movement of people: immigration, refugees, and stateless persons (Dr. Gabriela Okundaye)**Reading:** 4.4: Freedom of Movement.Oct 31: Peace: Everyone talks about peace, but we never see it. Understanding the obstacles to a less violent world (Dr. Idean Salehyan) |
| Week Twelve | Nov 3: Test Three, covering all the material we have talked about since test two. Same process as before! A friendly reminder: Sage 311 between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m.Nov. 5: How and why research will be part of your political science experience (Dr. Michael Greig)EXPLORING QUESTIONS RELATED TO **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**Nov 7: What do we mean when we use the term “international relations?” If you make IR the focus of your studies, what are the topics you might study? (Dr. Marijke Breuning)**Reading:** 14.1 What is Power, and How Do We Measure It? 14.2 Understanding the Different Types of Actors in the International System |
| Week Thirteen | Nov 10: War: How has warfare changed and what is the concept known as Just War? (Dr. Andrew Enterline)Nov 12: UN Sustainable Development Goal: A world without hunger (Dr. Cox)**Reading:** 16.6 Considering Poverty, Inequality, and the Environmental CrisisNov 14: UN Sustainable Development Goal: Clean water and sanitation (Dr. Cox) |
| Week Fourteen | November 17-21: Teams Will Make Their Presentations to the Class This Week. Each Team will have a PowerPoint Presentation and a handout for the class. (The team will produce the handout, send it to me electronically, and I will make copies for everyone.) |
|  | **NOVEMBER 24-28: THANKSGIVING WEEK & FALL BREAK. Happy Thanksgiving to you!** |
| Week Fifteen | December 1: Test Four. This is just the fourth test, not a final exam. Your lowest grade of the four will be dropped, and a zero on this one will be dropped if you choose to stay with your first three grades and skip this one. There is no final exam in this course.December 3: Summarizing the course; Discussing what we have learned and making a list of things we really want to know more about as we make progress through the undergraduate political science program.Some ice cream to share as we talk about what we are grateful for as the semester winds down. I hope everyone will have come to the view that attending college is a wonderful opportunity and that there is much to be gained from this experience. Wishing you a great winter break. Don’t be one of the 31 million—come back next semester! |