

PSCI 2305.005 US Political Behavior and Policy – Fall 2025

Tuesday Thursday 12:30 pm – 1:50 pm - Wooten Hall 222

Instructor: Lanie Richards

Email: LanieRichards@my.unt.edu

Office Hours: T & R: 10:30am -12:00pm – WH 171

Also available by appointment and on zoom

Course Description

This course is an introduction to political behavior and public policy in the United States and Texas. As you begin this course you should keep in mind two things. First, government matters to you. Regardless of your age, citizenship, race, religion, or gender, government policy affects the things you care about. Even if you are only taking this class because it is required, the material we will cover has real-world implications for your life, and mastering this material can give you the tools to protect the things you value, and have a better understanding of the world around you. Second, our actions as individuals and in groups are what form the political landscape. This course will explore the connection that is between the will of the people and those policies that are implemented by government by emphasizing how our political values and attitudes as individuals are the driving mechanism that connects government action (parties, interest groups, the media, and elections), and the outcomes of government policy. This is a course on action, which for political scientists is known as “political behavior,” or how the “actions” of individuals and groups comes together to form the political landscape.

Course Objectives

By taking this course, you should be able to:

- Understand the origins, development, and effects of US and Texas political culture
- Identify, describe, and explain the origin of individual political attitudes
- Demonstrate knowledge about the role and effects of the media on political behavior
- Assess the role of forms of political participation other than voting
- Understand what interest groups are, how they form and the effect they have on American politics
- Understand how elections, voting and participation interact in the Texas political arena
- Understand the relationship between money and elections
- Recognize the stage of the policy making process in different context
- Critique and explain select topics of U.S. domestic/foreign policy

Required Materials

UNT 2305 Department Bundle: U.S. and Texas Politics with 2305 Workbook - Jocelyn Evans, Kristy Michaud, & James Henson ISBN 13: 8220144129883

You can purchase a code for the textbook from the official campus bookstore or **you can purchase it directly from the publisher by clicking on the textbook link in our course Canvas site**. If you are waiting for financial aid, please access the text through Canvas and choose the free trial of the text (three chapters). If you do not acquire access to the course materials in a timely fashion your grade may be irreparably harmed.

Course Expectations

A university course is a joint endeavor between instructor and students. We all have an important part to play.

As the instructor in this course, I am responsible for

- Providing course materials that will give you the opportunity to achieve our course objectives and providing you with the tools to learn.
- Providing timely feedback on your work and explaining concerns you may have with grading, and being fair in my implementation of rules and policies in the course.

As a student in this course, you are responsible for

- Reading and completing all requirements of the course in a timely manner
- Working to remain attentive and engaged in the course.
- Assisting in maintaining a positive learning environment for everyone.

Communication

The fastest way to reach me is via email, **sent from your UNT email address**, or by messaging me through canvas. If you contact me during the week I will do my best to respond within 24 hours, but during the weekend it may be closer to 48 hours. Please keep that in mind before sending a follow-up email. Throughout the semester I will also communicate with the class using canvas messages and announcements. Therefore, it is important to regularly check canvas. My office hours are listed on the top of the syllabus, but you are more than welcome to come in anytime my door is open. I am also available by appointment or over zoom if my office hours conflict with your schedule. I am excited to get to know you this semester.

Grades and Assignments

Grading will follow a standard scale: 90% is an A, 80% is a B, 70% is a C and 60% is a D. There are 4 groups of assignments: exams, workbook, Texas Tribune Quizzes, and the syllabus quiz. Each of these will factor into your final grade as follows:

Exams: 50%

Workbook: 25%

Texas Tribune Quizzes: 20%

Syllabus Quiz: 5%

Exams:

There will be **2 exams** in this course, **each is worth a total of 25% of your grade**. They will consist of 50 questions, a mix of multiple choice and true/false questions. They will cover **content covered in class, as well as the webtext**. The exams are **NOT** cumulative, all material covered before the first exam will be on exam 1, and all material after will be on exam 2. All exams will be in class on the days listed on the schedule. I will provide scantrons but you need to bring a pencil on exam days. **If you need extra time or any other ODA accommodations, you are responsible for setting that up with ODA, and letting me know how about your accommodations. This will be no issue; I just need to know ahead of time!** There is no final exam for this course.

Makeup exams will only be given in light of a university excused absence or at the instructors discretion. Students are expected to inform me of your absence before or within 48 hours after the examination date. I need specific documentation to verify the legitimacy of your absence. I will use that information to determine if you are eligible and we will schedule a time for the makeup. **Makeup exams consist of one essay question that you will have 80 minutes to complete.**

Soomo Webtext and Workbook Assignments:

There are 8 workbook assignments from the online textbook, and they are worth 25% of your final grade. The workbook assignments consists of multiple choice questions throughout the chapter, and a quiz at the end. You will have 3 attempts to get the correct answer on the multiple choice questions throughout the workbook chapter, so please do not lose those easy points! However, you only have 2 attempts on the quiz at the end of each workbook chapter. There are **2 official due dates for the workbook assignments**. The **first four** (Public Opinion, Political Participation, Political Parties and Elections and campaigns) are **due on the Sunday before the first test at 11:59 pm**. The **second set** (Mass Media, Interest Groups, Domestic Policy, and Foreign Policy) are **due the Sunday before Thanksgiving Break at 11:59 pm**. There are recommended due dates on the course schedule, and I recommend that you complete the assignments as we progress through the semester rather than wait until the due date. However, you will not be penalized if you do not complete the chapter by the recommended due dates. **At the end of the semester the lowest workbook grade will be dropped from your final grade.**

The workbooks and webtext chapters are both in the online textbook but only the questions in the workbook are for a grade! However, you do need to read the assigned webtext chapters as well (listed in the course schedule) because **some test questions will cover material from these chapters.**

Texas Tribune Quizzes:

To understand the political system and current events in Texas, we read the Texas Tribune, which is free online. **I will send out a link to a Texas Tribune articles along with some points or questions to get you thinking about the article through the Canvas messaging system at the beginning of each week.** There **will not** be an article sent out on the week of the Texas Tribune quiz or an exam. There are 3 Texas Tribune quizzes in this class, and they make up 20% of your final grade. These quizzes are **online through canvas**, and you will have 20 minutes to answer 10 questions and 2 attempts per quiz. I take the highest score. The questions do come from a quiz bank so if you take the quiz a second time you are not guaranteed the same questions. The quizzes will open on Tuesday the week they are due and you have until the Sunday at 11:59 to complete them.

Syllabus Quiz:

The course syllabus contain information vital to your success in this class, and to encourage you to learn it, your first assignment is a syllabus quiz with 10 questions. You will take this quiz through canvas and you have two attempts (20 minutes each) to get the correct answers. This quiz is due at the end of the second week of classes but is available to you after the first day of class. It is worth 5% of your final grade.

Extra Credit:

Attendance and iClicker: Attendance is not required for this class, however it is **strongly recommended** as coming to class typically result in higher grades. Skipping class can also easily become a habit that spills over into other classes, and is really hard to break. While not for an official grade, this course uses iClicker to check for comprehension and encourage dynamic interaction in class. Throughout the lecture I include questions and polls and you answer through the iClicker app on your phone. This is a free app and UNT provides a license for each student as long as you sign up with your student email. **I use participation in iClicker to occasionally check attendance and engagement and award extra credit that will apply to the exams.** You have to be in class to participate and receive extra credit for iClicker.

Investigations: Investigations are activities embedded in the webtext chapters. They are not for an official grade, but you can **complete up to 6 investigations for extra credit on the exams** (3 investigations for each exam). To receive extra credit the investigations need to be completed by the workbook due date for the corresponding exam. For example, any of the investigations in the chapters covered

SPOT Evaluation: Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is the student evaluation system for UNT and allows students the ability to confidentially provide constructive feedback to their instructor to improve the quality of student experiences in the course. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-

reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. If over **70 percent** of the class completes the SPOT, each student will receive **one percentage point of extra credit on their final grade**.

Late Work:

Please make note of all of the due dates for the quizzes and workbooks and **plan accordingly**. I do not accept late work unless student has documented, extenuating circumstances and provides documentation within 48 hours of the missed deadline.

Course Schedule

Tentative and subject to change.

Date	Topics, Readings, and Assignments
Week 1	Intro to the Course
Aug.19th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to Course and American Politics
Aug. 21st	
Week 2	Political Culture - Public Opinion
Aug. 26th	Syllabus Quiz Due by 8/31 @ 11:59pm
Aug. 28th	
Week 3	Public Opinion - Political Participation and Voting
Sept. 2nd	Required reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 1 Public Opinion Workbook Public Opinion: recommended due date 9/7
Sept. 4th	
Week 4	Political Participation and Voting
Sept 9th.	Required reading:

Sept. 11th – NO CLASS – APSA Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 3 Voting and Political Participation Workbook Political Participation: recommended due date 9/14 Texas Tribune Quiz 1 due by 9/14 @ 11:59
Week 5	Political Parties
Sept. 16th	Required reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 5 Political Parties Ch. 6 Texas Political Parties Workbook Political Parties: recommended due date 9/21
Sept. 18th	
Week 6	Elections and Campaigns
Sept. 23rd	Required Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 8 Elections and Campaigns Ch. 9 Texas: Elections, Voting, and Campaigns Workbook Elections and Campaigns: recommended due date 9/28
Sept. 25th	
Week 7	Money in Politics
Sept. 30th	Watch Dark Money on 10/2 First set of workbooks due by 10/5 @ 11:59pm
Oct. 2nd	
Week 8	Exam Week
Oct. 7th	Exam review 10/7 Exam on 10/9 during class
Oct. 9th	
Week 9th	Media
Oct. 14th	Required Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 11 The Media Workbook Mass Media: recommended due date 10/19 Texas Tribune Quiz 2 due by 10/19 @ 11:59
Oct. 16th	

Week 10	Interest Groups
Oct. 21st	Required Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 13 Interest Groups Workbook Interest Groups: recommended due date 10/27
Oct. 23rd	
Week 11	Policy-making Process – Domestic Policy
Oct. 28th	Required Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 15 Public Policy
Oct. 30th	
Week 12	Domestic Policy
Nov. 4th	Watch Teach Us All Workbook Domestic Policy: recommended due date 11/10
Nov. 6th	
Week 13	Economic Policy
Nov. 11th	Required reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 16 Texas: Public Policy
Nov. 13th	
	Texas Tribune Quiz 3 due by 11/16 @ 11:59
Week 14	Foreign Policy
Nov. 18th	Workbook Foreign Policy: recommended due date 11/24 Second set of workbooks due 11/23 @ 11:59
Nov. 20th	
Week 15th	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Nov. 25th	NO CLASS
Nov. 27th	

Week 16th	Exam Week
Dec. 2nd	Review in Class 12/2
Dec. 4th	
	Exam in class

Technology in Class:

You will need a device, such as a smart phone, to participate in iClicker questions, and if you are concerned about this please come and see me as soon as possible. Laptops and tablets are allowed in class to take notes, although I do not recommend you use them. Growing evidence indicates that taking notes by hand improves retention of materials and their understanding. The use of laptops and tablets often leads to checking email and social media or browsing the internet. They may also distract from in-class discussion. If I find that devices become a distraction, I retain the right to ban them in class.

Civility in Class:

Politics is often characterized by conflict. I do encourage students to participate in class discussions and express their opinions. However, I expect students to treat each other with tolerance and respect.

Academic Misconduct:

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student 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. In line with the UNT Honor Code, all work you submit must be your own. Using GenAI tools to complete assignments violates academic integrity and will be addressed according to university policy

Your first academic integrity violation is subject to a range of penalties, including failing the class. If you commit more than one academic integrity violation, your actions are subject to a review by the Academic Integrity officer. This may involve a hearing in which you are subject to expulsion.

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:

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 see the [ODA website](#).

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004):

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Emergency Notification & 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.

Survivor Advocacy:

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at oeo@unt.edu or at (940) 565 2759.

