

US Political Behavior and Policy

PSCI 2305.REC

Fall 2026

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Course Overview

This course focuses on an introduction to the political behavior and public policies of American and Texas governments. We will examine policymaking within the American constitutional and federalist system, noting the important stages of policymaking. We will pay particular attention to the behavior of parties, interest groups, and the media as they connect the public and their policy preferences to policymakers in both American and Texas governments. We will also apply our understanding of American and Texas government to current events, topics, and public policies.

Course Learning Objectives and Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to do each of the following:

1. Explain the development and measurement of individual values, attitudes, and opinions about politics (critical thinking, civil discourse)
2. Interpret the role of individuals in the political process (social responsibility, critical thinking, civil discourse)
3. Explain the roles of linkage institutions (parties, interest groups, and media) in connecting individuals to institutions of government (critical thinking, communication)
4. Demonstrate the relationship between electoral rules/institutions and outcomes (critical thinking)
5. Explain the connection between the political process and the policies generated by that process (critical thinking, social responsibility)

Required Materials: Political Behavior Workbook + Central Ideas In American Government + Texas Politics, 9th edition (Soomo)

Course Grade Distribution

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| 1. Online Engagement Assignments | 35% |
| 2. Two Exams (taken at testing center) | 25% |
| 3. In-person Class (recitation) Assignments | 40% |

Course Policies, Procedures, and Assignments

Grading: Grading will follow a standard scale: 90% is an A, 80% is a B, 70% is a C, and 60% is a D.

Extra Credit: There will be no opportunities for extra credit outside those described in the syllabus or announced in class and offered to the entire class.

Communications: If you have any questions about the class, please see me or your TA during office hours or schedule an appointment to see one of us. You may choose to email either of us directly or message us in Canvas. Feel free to use both methods if your request is urgent. If you choose to email us, please use your UNT email address to communicate about this class. You must see me in person to discuss any makeup exam.

Exams: There are two exams for this course, and no comprehensive final exam. These exams will test your understanding of assigned workbook readings and lecture material. **You will take both exams at the testing center on your class day, anytime beginning at 8am and ending at 8p.** You will answer 40 multiple-choice questions from randomly selected questions over the readings and videos. You will have 60 minutes to complete your exam. **There is no in-class meeting during exam week.**

The **Sage Hall Computer-Based Testing Center** is located in 331 Sage Hall, on the third floor, across the hall from the elevator. The exam will be protected and monitored by UNT staff. You will not be allowed any materials with you while you take the exam; you are not allowed bathroom breaks, either, so plan ahead. Bring your student ID with you and be sure to check out at the testing center before you leave.

Makeup Exams: The opportunity to take a makeup exam is limited to rare circumstances, such as a university excused absence (UNT Policy number 06.309). Therefore, it is imperative that you plan ahead and make sure you can take both scheduled exams. **You must see me before the scheduled exam, in person, and in my office to request a makeup exam opportunity.** In the unlikely event that I agree to a makeup exam, **it will be a comprehensive essay exam.**

Exam Preparation: The exam questions will be taken randomly from the webtext chapters and recorded video lectures. Therefore, the optimal way to succeed is to keep up with the webtext assignments and review them regularly. In this way, you will have access to all possible questions that I may ask on the exam. It is up to you to take the time you need to be able to learn the material and demonstrate your mastery of it on the exams.

Recitation Engagement Activities (In class): Each week's recitation section will center around the topics associated with each weekly module. Some weeks will involve an attendance check, others will be fully in class assignments, and some weeks will ask you to complete an additional task online before class. The weeks associated with public policy will be designed to prepare you to write a letter to a policymaker. Specifically, week 13 will guide you into researching your topic and you will write your letter during your week 14 class session.

There is no opportunity to makeup missed in class assignments. Nevertheless, since there are 12 substantive in-class sessions, and **you may drop your TWO lowest grades** (excepting weeks 13

and 14), each week is worth FOUR percent of your in-class grade. If you receive credit for every in-class session, you will receive up to TWO percentage points of extra credit added to your final grade.

Attendance: Attendance is part of course expectations and will be graded weekly. Exceptions follow UNT Policy number 06.039, Student Attendance and Authorized Absences.

Content Engagement Activities (Online): Each weekly module includes assigned readings plus short videos or other media associated with each topic. All assignments are to be completed before your recitation sections, due at 11:59pm on each Monday evening. Your assignments include questions from the Central Ideas in American Government (CIAG) chapters and Workbook chapters. The CIAG chapters have multiple choice questions at the end of each page. These multiple-choice questions *may be attempted three times*, so aim to get the highest score you can! 100% correct should be your goal. Each workbook chapter is organized around the four learning objectives adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (critical thinking, communication, personal responsibility, and social responsibility). Each chapter includes four essays that expound upon course concepts and give students an opportunity to apply those concepts. These multiple choice questions *may be attempted three times* so aim to get the highest score you can! 100% correct should be your goal. At the end of each chapter, there is a chapter quiz for which you are allowed two attempts per question. (Once the due date passes, though, don't reset the questions because it will override your good score with a late score.)

Homework Due Dates and Late Homework Policy: All graded content for both the Central Ideas in American Government (CIAG) and Workbook chapters are due each Monday at 11:59pm. These assignments will be accepted with a penalty of 50% for up to one week. No credit will be given for late work after the one-week late penalty period. All other content engagement activities, which primarily included graded video quizzes, are also due each Monday at 11:59p. Although there will be no late penalties associated with these assignments, the window for completing these assessments will close one week after each due date, and no additional time will be allowed to complete them.

Webtext Access: You may purchase an access code from the bookstore, or you may buy access to the workbook online through the workbook 2305 course link on Canvas. There is a trial that will last for 30 days or 3 chapters. If you have any questions or issues, please contact your TA. If you are having difficulty with the Soomo product, please contact the publisher directly at <http://soomolearning.com/support>

Technical Skill Requirements: The online portion of this class requires minimal technical expertise. You will need to navigate our Canvas webpage, follow the link to our online textbook, and complete multiple choice and short answer questions in the online textbook. You may need to follow links to videos and some external websites, upload or download Word and pdf documents, and post comments in the workbook. In addition, you may need to be able to take screen shots of websites or your work that can be saved and uploaded to the course Canvas site. Primarily, you need to have reliable internet access to complete this class. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have timely and consistent access to the internet. If you experience any kind of technical problem, please contact helpdesk@unt.edu.

Course Schedule

Week 1, August 17	Introductions and Expectations
Week 2, August 24	Public Opinion
Week 3, August 31	Political Participation
Week 4, September 7	Voting
Week 5, September 14	Media
Week 6, September 21	Interest Groups
Week 7, September 28	Exam 1, at Testing Center (no class meeting)
Week 8, October 5	Political Parties
Week 9, October 12	Political Parties in Texas
Week 10, October 19	Elections and Campaigns
Week 11, October 26	Elections and Campaigns in Texas
Week 12, November 2	Public Policy
Week 13, November 9	Texas Public Policy
Week 14, November 16	Domestic and Foreign Policy
Week 15, November 23	Thanksgiving Break (no class meeting)
Week 16, November 30	Exam 2, at Testing Center (no class meeting)
December 4	Last Day to Complete Any Assignments not Past Due

Assignment Deadlines: All assignments are due by 11:59p on the date listed unless otherwise noted in Canvas. In-class assignments will be made available to you no later than the week before they are due.

University Policies and Procedures

Dropping Courses: Please link <http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/summer-registration-guide> for information concerning drops, withdraws, and other administrative information.

Course 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 and department to improve the quality of student experiences in the course. **If over 75 percent of the class completes the SPOT**, each student will receive one percent extra credit.

Mobile Device Policy: Although I allow laptops and tablets in class, I do not recommend that 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, which may distract you and others around you from achieving your goals for this class. For similar reasons, I strongly encourage you to silence and store all phones during class.

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.

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.

AI Statement: So that you develop your own critical thinking, and writing skills, **AI use is prohibited in this course.** In other words, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini is not permitted. Although these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be penalized. Additionally, tools like Grammarly are not allowed as they blur authorship and misrepresent your independent work. All work must be your own.

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement: The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing a reasonable academic accommodations must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the student will request their letter of accommodation. ODA will provide faculty with a reasonable accommodation letter via email to begin a private discussion regarding a student's specific needs in a course. Students may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding their accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the

authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access 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.

Acceptable Student Behavior: Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr.

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.

Retention of Student Records: Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you, the professor, and the instructional team can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals.

Course Materials and Copyright Statement: The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, in-class materials review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I grant permission.

Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses

Federal Regulation: To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website](http://www.ecfr.gov/) (<http://www.ecfr.gov/>). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G). The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

UNT Compliance: To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course.

If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

- (1) Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.
- (2) Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

Student Verification: UNT takes measures to protect the integrity of educational credentials awarded to students enrolled in distance education courses by verifying student identity, protecting student privacy, and notifying students of any special meeting times/locations or additional charges associated with student identity verification in distance education courses. See [UNT Policy 07-002 Student Identity Verification, Privacy, and Notification and Distance Education Courses](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002>).