Welcome to US Political Behavior and Policy, although this is a required core class I hope you’ll find this course enjoyable and be able to uncover the areas in our lives where these concepts come in to play and effect our everyday life.

Instructor Contact

Melissa McKay
Office - Wooten Hall 127
Phone number - 940-565-2276
Office hours - Tuesday 3pm-6pm (and available by appointment)
Email – melissa.mckay@unt.edu

Teaching Assistants:
Betsy Borseth – for students with last name starting A-M
Office - Wooten Hall 131
Phone number - 940-565-2276
Office Hours – Monday 2pm-5pm (and available by appointment)
Email – betsyborseth@my.unt.edu

Post Basnet – for students with last name starting N-Z
Office - Wooten Hall 131
Phone number - 940-565-3358
Office Hours – Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10:00am-11:00am
Email – post.basnet@my.unt.edu

Course Description
This course explores the connection between the will of the people and the policies implemented by government by focusing on individual political values and attitudes, the mechanisms that connect individual beliefs to government action (parties, interest groups, the media, and elections), and the outcomes of government policy.

This is a course about action. In the political science world, we call it “political behavior”: how the behavior (actions) of individuals and groups come together to form the political landscape. It’s exciting, but it can sometimes be complex. Your instructor and teaching assistants are here to help you understand the material. Even though this is an online class, there will be opportunities for you to ask questions and engage in discussion; I urge you to take advantage of those opportunities.

Pre-requisites
There are no prerequisites for this course

Course Objectives
Students who complete this course 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) demonstrate the relationship between electoral rules/institutions and outcomes
(5) explain the connection between the political process and the policies generated by that process

Required Materials
There is one required text for this course:

Central Ideas in American Government + 1050 Workbook, published by Soomo Publishing

*(please note: this is an ONLINE (digital) book + ONLINE workbook)*

You can purchase a code for this text 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 have an ongoing financial hardship, contact your instructor IMMEDIATELY. If you do not acquire access to the course materials in a timely fashion your grade may be irreparably harmed.

Technical Support
Neither the instructor nor the teaching assistants are technical support resources. If you experience any kind of technical problem, please contact:

Student Helpdesk:
UIT Helpdesk
Sage Hall 130
940-565-2324
helpdesk@unt.edu

If you are having difficulty with the Soomo product, please contact the publisher directly at http://soomolearning.com/support

Please note: If you experience a loss of internet connection, WIFI signal, or your browser freezes up on you during an assignment or exam, you must contact the UNT resources first, then send us an email with the problem you experienced and how you’re addressing it. If you fail to complete an assignment or exam because of technical issues, there is nothing we can do if you do not tell us right away.

Technical Skill Requirements
While this is an online course, the necessary technical requirements are minimal. You will need to navigate our Canvas webpage, follow the link to our online textbook, complete multiple choice and short answer questions in the online textbook, follow links to videos and some external websites, upload/download Word and pdf documents, and post to/comment on discussion boards (in Canvas).
In addition, you will need Adobe Flash on your computer, and you will need the ability to take screen shots (screen captures) of websites or your work that can be saved an uploaded to the course Canvas site.

**Netiquette**

The online environment invites thoughtless and unkind behavior. Please keep in mind that this is a community of scholars, even though we are geographically dispersed. When interacting with your fellow students, instructors, and teaching assistants, you should be polite. When in doubt, pause for five minutes before you hit “submit.” Consider whether you would say something to a person’s face before saying it to them in an electronic format. Also remember that electronic communication does not convey tone well; a well-intentioned comment may be perceived as harsh or offensive. Whether you are the communicator or the recipient, please keep that in mind.

All of this is particularly important in a class on politics. We will, inevitably, touch on topics that are touchy under the best of circumstances.

### Course Requirements

**Assignment**

- Get the Gist Assignments (6) 10%
- Investigation Assignments (10) 15%
- Workbook Assignments (6) 15%
- Discussion Board Posts (6) 10%
- Short Essays (4) 20%
- Unit Exams (2) 30%
- Total 100%

**Grading**

Your final grade will be based on the following scale:

- **A** 90 – 100%
- **B** 80 – 89%
- **C** 70 – 79%
- **D** 60 – 69%
- **F** Below 60%

I use standard mathematical rounding, but I will make no other adjustment of grades. Please remember that your final grade is the culmination of work that you have done over the course of the semester. It is not the product of bargaining at the end of the term. Moreover, I cannot make an exception for one student without making it for all students, and that is never practical.

With respect to all homework, late work will be accepted up to one week late with a 50% penalty. After one week, it will not be accepted. It does not matter why the work is late; this policy is uniform. If you DO have an issue such as a family emergency or illness, your grade will not necessarily suffer; at least one grade is dropped for each type of homework, so having a penalized grade or even a missing grade is not the end of the world.

**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 and interact with your
fellow students,
- and, assisting in maintaining a positive learning environment for everyone.

Course Components

Get the Gist Assignments: Your online textbook has two types of chapters: Central Ideas in
American Government (CIAG) chapters and Workbook chapters. The CIAG chapters have
“study questions” or “Get the Gist” questions at the end of each page. You need to complete
these questions for each chapter. You can reset and repeat the questions until you get them all
correct, so you should aim to get a perfect score! (Once the due date passes, though, don’t
reset the questions because it will override your good score with a late score.) There are 7 Get
the Gist Assignments.
The lowest grade gets dropped, so the highest 6 grades will constitute 10% of your final grade.

Investigation Assignments: In the CIAG chapters, you will also find some breakout
assignments called “Investigations.” These assignments allow you to dig deep and apply what
you know to tougher problems. You only get one crack at investigation questions; you cannot
repeat them to try to do better. There are two investigation assignments in each CIAG chapter
for a total of 14 investigations.
The lowest four grades get dropped, so the highest 10 grades will constitute 15% of your final
grade.

Workbook Assignments: The other type of chapter in your online textbook is called a
workbook chapter. Each workbook chapter consists of four essays that explore some facet of
the topic of the module, and the essays are followed by questions (usually multiple choice, but
sometimes a “poll” (where you can see the summary results of the class) or a short answer
question). An “assignment” involves completing all of the questions for all four essays. There
are 7 workbook assignments.
The lowest grade gets dropped, so the highest 6 will constitute 15% of your final grade.

Discussion Board Posts: You will be posting in a discussion board with the same group of
people all semester (based on your last name). You will be prompted (and required) to post 6
times during the semester (once for each topic we cover). An acceptable post will respond
specifically to the prompt, will be written in at least five full sentences, and will be respectful.
Each week, you must respond to at least one post from one of your group-mates. Your
response must engage the original post on a substantive level (no “I agree” or “good point”),
consist of at least three full sentences, and be respectful. Because we all understand that
things happen, you may miss one post and one response without suffering a grade penalty.
Accordingly, your top 5 grades will constitute 10% of your final grade.
**Short Essays:** In weeks when you are not posting on the discussion board, you will be prompted to complete an “assignment.” Each assignment involves writing a short (250 – 350 word) essay. There are a total of 7 topics throughout the semester, and you are expected to choose 4 of those topics. The topics and due dates are listed at the bottom of this syllabus; I encourage you to look at the due dates in your other classes and plan accordingly.

**Unit Exams:** There are two unit exams in this course. They are both multiple choice; the second is not cumulative (in other words, it only covers material from the second half of the course).

In anticipation of the exams, there will be an exam prep discussion board where you can come to post questions or answers. You can also rate those questions and answers to highlight them for other students.

**Policies**

**Academic Integrity:** [https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/academic-integrity](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/academic-integrity)

**ADA Policy**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You 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 deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty 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 see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at [http://www.unt.edu/oda](http://www.unt.edu/oda). You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

**Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses**

**Federal Regulation**


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.

University of North Texas 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.
## Calendar

*All assignments are due at 11:59pm on **Sunday** unless otherwise specified.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canvas Module</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Public Opinion 1</td>
<td>09/02/2018</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>• Chapter 1 Get the Gist&lt;br&gt;• Discussion Board Forum 1&lt;br&gt;• Am I Blue … Investigation&lt;br&gt;• Exit Poll Investigation</td>
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<tr>
<td>2: Public Opinion 2</td>
<td>09/09/2018</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>• Chapter 2 Workbook&lt;br&gt;• Short Essay on Ideology</td>
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<td>3: Media 1</td>
<td>09/16/2018</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>• Chapter 3 Get the Gist&lt;br&gt;• Discussion Board Forum 2&lt;br&gt;• Making the News Part 1 Investigation&lt;br&gt;• Making the News Part 2 Investigation</td>
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<td>4: Media 2</td>
<td>09/23/2018</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>• Chapter 4 Workbook&lt;br&gt;• Short Essay on Media Bias</td>
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<tr>
<td>5: Participation 1</td>
<td>10/07/2018</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>• Chapter 5 Get the Gist&lt;br&gt;• Discussion Board Forum 3&lt;br&gt;• We the Protesters Investigation&lt;br&gt;• What Does It Take … Investigation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6: Participation 2</td>
<td>10/14/2018</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>• Chapter 6 Workbook&lt;br&gt;• Short Essay on Turnout</td>
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<tr>
<td>7: Review and Exam</td>
<td>10/21/2018</td>
<td>Chapters 1-6</td>
<td>• Chapter 7 Get the Gist&lt;br&gt;• Discussion Board Forum 4&lt;br&gt;• Third Wheels Investigation&lt;br&gt;• 2016 Party Platforms Investigation</td>
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<td>8: Parties 1</td>
<td>10/28/2018</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>• Chapter 8 Workbook&lt;br&gt;• Short Essay on Parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>9: Parties 2</td>
<td>11/04/2018</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Chapter(s)</td>
<td>Assignments</td>
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| **10: Interest Groups 1**     | 11/04/2018 | Chapter 9        | • Chapter 9 Get the Gist  
• Discussion Board Forum 5  
• Evil Lobbyists Investigation  
• American Pizza Community Investigation |
| **11: Interest Groups 2**     | 11/11/2018 | Chapter 10       | • Chapter 10 Workbook  
• Short Essay on Organizing |
| **12: Elections 1**           | 11/18/2018 | Chapter 11       | • Chapter 11 Get the Gist  
• Discussion Board Forum 6  
• Brandon Brown Running for Congress Investigation  
• Getting Into the Electoral College Investigation |
| **13: Elections 2**           | 11/25/2018 | Chapter 12       | • Chapter 12 Workbook  
• Short Essay on the Electoral College |
| **14: Public Policy**         | 12/02/2018 | Chapter 13,14,15 | • Chapter 13 Get the Gist  
• Bombing for Peace Investigation  
• Health Care Quality Investigation  
• Chapter 14 Workbook  
• Short Essay on Income Inequality |
| **FINALS WEEK**               | Week of 12/09/2018 | Chapters 7-15  | FINAL EXAM |
# Short Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>09/09/2018</td>
<td>Now that you have completed a quiz to identify your ideological leaning, completed a quiz to assess your political knowledge, and read about the origins and effects of these factors, reflect on your own political attitudes. In this reflection, you should use your political ideology (from the quiz in Module 1) as a starting point. What was that political ideology? Where do you think that came from? What agents of socialization (family, education, church, friends, etc.) shaped your broad political beliefs? Next, identify two specific political issues that flow from that ideological position (for example, how does your liberal ideology connect to your belief about abortion?).</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/23/2018</td>
<td>This week, you get to play social scientist. Pick an evening (any evening!) and visit these news sites: <a href="http://www.foxnews.com">http://www.foxnews.com</a>; <a href="http://www.msnbc.com">http://www.msnbc.com</a>; <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com">https://www.washingtonpost.com</a>; <a href="http://www.cnn.com">http://www.cnn.com</a> Scan the headlines and pictures, and pick TWO stories on common topics (for example, if there was a big storm, read the coverage of that storm on all four sites). In your essay, identify the day you checked the four sites and the TWO topics of the articles you read in full. Reflect on the similarities and differences between the four sites in their coverage. Were some giving bigger headlines to certain stories? Were they using more charged/loaded pictures? Were they covering different stories entirely? In the stories they had in common, was there a different tone between the sites, or did they emphasize different facts? What did you conclude about the bias of each of the sites based on your examination?</td>
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<td>10/14/2018</td>
<td>This week, imagine you’re the head of a consulting firm called Publius. You’ve been hired by the state of West Dakota to develop a policy to increase voter turnout. It’s up to you to decide whether you want to increase any turnout (you just want bodies in the booth) or whether you want to target specific populations. Do, however, be SPECIFIC about your objective. You should develop and articulate a single policy that you think is best for increasing turnout, explain how it will increase turnout, and explain why it is best (is it the least cost effective? is it particularly effective?). Provide a short conclusion.</td>
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<td>10/14/2018</td>
<td>This week, you should do a little research. First, specify the party that I Side With identified as your closest match. Next, find the official website for that party (not the Wikipedia page dedicated to that party).</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>Choose three issues that matter to you (for example, the environment, the death penalty, and abortion). What is the party’s official stance on each issue and do you agree with it? It’s possible, of course, that the party doesn’t list a position on the issue you have identified; that is okay to report, too. Finally, would you vote for candidates from this party? Why or why not?</td>
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<td>11/11/2018</td>
<td>What is the issue your group chose last week? Imagine that you want to actually start a group that will address that issue. How would you tackle the collective action problem? How would you attract and maintain a membership? What approach to political action would be most appropriate for your organization? Why?</td>
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<td>11/25/2018</td>
<td>There are arguments both for and against the Electoral College. Which side are you on? Should we keep it or pitch it? Your answer should include TWO reasons to support your position. Your answer should also include ONE argument on the other side and a brief explanation of why it is wrong or simply unimportant. [If you support keeping the Electoral College, we’ve always done it this way is not a compelling reason to keep it.]</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/02/2018</td>
<td>In the fourth workbook essay, you learned about the way in which the wealth gap between the very wealthy and the middle class has grown since the Reagan years. Immediately after that paragraph, there is a poll question asking your opinion about taxing and spending priorities: whether you would support raising taxes on the wealthy, lowering taxes on the low- and middle-income Americans, spending more money on social welfare programs, or maintaining the status quo. In this short essay, restate the position you took in the poll and justify it. In other words, move your position from opinion to sound policy. Why would the policy be the best choice in addressing income inequality (or why is income inequality acceptable)? Make sure you provide at least two points in support of your position, and counter at least one of the other positions.</td>
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