

## Political Science 2305: US Political Behavior and Policy

Professor Paolino  
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Office hours  
Mon 5:00-6:30  
Fri 1:00-2:30  
or by appointment

### Teaching Assistants

The teaching assistants for this class are **Melissa McKay** (Melissa.McKay@unt.edu, Wooten 131, Office Hours Mon 3:30-6:30) and **Jiong (Jack) Yao** (JiongYao@my.unt.edu, Wooten 161, Office Hours Wed 9-12). If you have questions about the course, please **contact them first**. Additionally, if your last name begins with A-L, Melissa is your contact; if your last name begins with M-Z, Jack is your contact; although, you are most welcome to show up for any of our office hours.

### Supplemental Instruction

There are also supplemental instruction sessions for this class. The student leading these sections is **Caryn Grider** (CarynGrider@my.unt.edu). She will provide more information to you about these sessions and information will be posted to Blackboard.

### Pedagogical Goals

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the basic processes of the American political system. The course will provide students with an understanding of the means by which public preferences are formed, communicated to political officials, and translated into public policy. The primary aim of the course is to make students “critical consumers” of public affairs by way of introducing them to “social science” as a way of thinking about politics. In this approach, students should gain an understanding of why a ‘high school civics book’ view of politics is simplistic and, instead, acquire the ability to evaluate how (and when) the interactions of various self-interested political actors produce the (often undesirable) political outcomes that we observe.

### Course Requirements

Students are responsible for all of the material in the readings and discussed in lectures. Required texts for the course are: Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, and Tolbert, *We the People* and the accompanying *Workbook* for 2305. Additional materials may be posted to Blackboard as circumstances arise. Grades for the course will be based upon 2 in-class exams (each worth 25% of the final grade), a final (worth 25% of the final grade), and exercises from the workbook (worth 25% of the final grade—I will drop your lowest workbook score). Questions on the exams will be drawn from both the readings and the lectures. Makeup exams will be given only for **documented** absences. Workbook assignments **need to be completed by class time (6:30 pm)** of the day listed on the syllabus. There will be no extensions of the Workbook assignments, so plan your time accordingly to take into account your own schedule and any unexpected technological problems with Blackboard.

Grades will be posted on Blackboard in a timely fashion. In the event of discrepancies with those grade records, discrepancies must be resolved within two weeks of their posting and students must be able to document the discrepancy. If I do not have a record of your taking an exam or doing an assignment and you cannot produce the evidence that you did the work, your grade on that exam or assignment will be 0. Finally, keeping apprised of your standing with respect to your grades is your responsibility. Use the percentages above to calculate a rough estimate of your current grade. The TA and I will not calculate your overall grade during the semester.

### *Extra Credit and Grades*

You should *not* expect extra credit. If I do offer extra credit, it is only when I can make it available to everyone in the class and when it furthers some educational goal that complements the goals of the course curriculum. I will not offer it as a “do-over” to students who have not completed their work satisfactorily. If you need a particular grade to graduate, maintain a particular GPA, etc. make sure you are putting in the effort to get that grade. If your grade for the first exam does not meet your needs, be sure to seek help before the second exam. If you wait until after that exam, you may already be in too deep of a hole.

### **Classroom Policies**

With respect to classroom policies, I assume that you are adults who are either capable of making your own decisions regarding your best interests or at the time when you need to start learning how to make such decisions. I also assume that most, if not all, of you are in college to prepare yourself in some way for professional life beyond college. As such, you should ask yourself whether your actions in this class are preparing you to conduct yourself successfully in that life.

Attendance is not required. Whether or not you attend lecture is your decision. You are solely responsible for any consequences of missing lecture. If you miss lecture, check with your classmates or Blackboard for any announcements, lecture slides, and other materials that can help you catch up on what you missed. All information from the lectures is fair game for exams.

Please help make the classroom environment conducive to learning. Show respect for others’ opinions, even when you do not agree. Also show respect for your classmates by arriving to class on time and not getting up to leave or go out before class is over. In rare situations when you cannot make it on time or need to leave early, please make your entrance/exit as unobtrusive as possible. Students who repeatedly interrupt class in this manner will be asked to leave or not return. You are free to use laptops for taking notes (even though research increasingly shows that retention is significantly better if you take notes by hand), but if your use of your laptop distracts others, then I will ask you to shut it down. Finally, please remember to turn off and put away your cell phones before lecture. The first time a cell phone is out, you will be asked to put it away. The second time, you will be asked to leave. During exams, cell phones and any other electronic devices should be turned off and placed in your bags or under your seats. If you take these items out during an exam, you will receive a grade of zero for the exam. Other disruptive behavior not mentioned specifically here will also be treated in a similar manner.

### **Disabilities Accommodation**

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>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of F in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at: <http://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity>.

## **1 Introduction (Aug. 28)**

⇒ No class for Labor Day holiday (Sep. 4)

## **2 Mass Political Behavior**

### **2.1 Public Opinion (Sep. 11-18)**

This lecture discusses how we measure public opinion, the manner in which the public forms attitudes, and the influence of political elites upon the public's attitudes. This lecture provides the foundation for understanding the ability of the public to influence public policy.

- a. *We the People* Ch. 6.
- b. *Workbook* Ch. 1 (due Sep. 11).

### **2.2 Political Participation (Sep. 18-25)**

This lecture continues to describe the means by which citizens can influence public policy, though through their actions, rather than their beliefs. In particular, this lecture discusses the different forms of political participation, how these forms can influence public officials, and the factors that influence which types of people engage in the different forms of participation.

- a. *We the People* Ch. 8.
- b. *Workbook* Ch. 2 (due Sep. 18).

## **3 Linkage Institutions**

### **3.1 The News Media (Oct. 2-9)**

This lecture examine how the news media connects the mass public to public officials. In particular, these lectures focus upon how the news media cover politics, the media's effect upon public opinion, and the interaction of the news media with the public and political leaders.

- a. *We the People* Ch. 7.
- b. *Workbook* Ch. 3 (due Oct 2).

### **3.2 Interest Groups (Oct. 9-16)**

This lecture looks at the role that interest groups play in the political system. Specifically, these lectures will examine factors that influence how interest groups form to represent special interests, the means that interest groups use to influence public policy, and the implications for representation.

- a. *We the People* Ch. 11.
- b. *Workbook* Ch. 4 (due Oct. 9).
- c. Federalist #10 (see under Course Content as well as innumerable places on-line).
- \*\*d. The first exam will be held during class on Oct. 16.

### **3.3 Political Parties (Oct. 23)**

This lecture will examine the functions that political parties fulfill in democracies and the development of political parties in the United States. This lecture will also discuss the ways in which the parties provide a link between the public and political leaders in ways that differ from interest groups.

- a. *We the People* Ch. 9.
- b. *Workbook* Ch. 5 (due Oct. 23).

## **4 Campaigns & Elections**

### **4.1 Presidential Elections (Oct. 30-Nov. 6)**

This lecture will explore how elected representative are chosen in the United States, for both the presidency and for Congress. These lectures will address issues related to both the primary and general elections, such as the rules governing each stage of the process as well as differences in voters' decision-making at each stage.

- a. *We the People* Ch. 10.
- b. *Workbook* Ch. 6 (due Oct. 30).

### **4.2 Congressional Elections (Nov. 6-13)**

This lecture will compare the process by which members of Congress are elected with that by which the president is elected. Special attention will be paid to the role of candidate quality, progressive ambition, and campaign finance in congressional elections and the implications for political representation.

- \*\*\*a. The second exam will be given during this class on Nov. 13.

## **5 Public Policy**

### **5.1 Domestic Policy (Nov. 20)**

This first of three sets of lectures on public policy will discuss the different kinds of social welfare policies and the process by which policy is developed. This lecture will also address the relationship between different types of social policy and support for these policies. Attention will also be paid to the goals and nature of regulatory policy.

- a. *We the People* Ch. 17.
- b. *Workbook* Ch. 7 (due Nov. 20).

### **5.2 Economic Policy (Nov. 27)**

This lecture provides an overview of the goals of economic policy-making, the major approaches to economic policy, focusing upon a comparison of neo-Classical economics and Keynesian economics, and the tools by which political leaders try to influence the economy.

- a. *We the People* Ch. 16.

### **5.3 Foreign and Defense Policy (Dec. 4)**

This lecture examines the goals and tools of American foreign policy. Attention will also be paid to the various political actors who can influence foreign policy and how their actions are, in turn, influenced by their political constituencies.

- a. *We the People* Ch. 18.
- b. *Workbook* Ch. 8 (due Dec. 4).

### **Final Exam (Dec. 11)**