



Course Snapshot

The Good Society HNRS 1100 003

Term: 2026 Fall

Modality: In Person

Meeting Information: TR, 11:10AM-12:30PM, MATT 114

Instructor Information

Name: Sean Ryan

UNT Email Address: Sean.Ryan@unt.edu

Office Hours and Location

I will be available after class meetings for any general questions. I have open office hours Thursdays from 1pm to 2pm. We can meet in-person or through Zoom. Email me with quick questions, or to set up an appointment outside of my normal office hour times.

Office or Department Phone Number: 9405653305

Preferred Contact Method: Email

Expected Response Time: 24 hours

Course Description

1100. The Good Society. 3 hours. Human beings form social groups to meet their common needs, such as order and infrastructure. For thousands of years, thoughtful people have asked questions about the nature of these human societies. This course explores questions of ongoing interest and importance, including how good societies deal with poverty, illness, education, environmental issues, and criminal behavior.

Human rights, biodiversity, and war are also considered. The course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of these topics, and seeks to provoke critical thought rather than offer answers. MEETS UNIVERSITY DISCOVERY CORE REQUIREMENT. Prerequisite(s) : Admission to Honors College ; Freshman or sophomore standing or permission of the dean of the Honors College.

Course Structure

This course is designed as an in person, active learning experience. Class meetings will combine discussion, collaborative activities, experiential learning, quizzes, presentations, and other activities that ask students to engage directly with course concepts and with one another. Almost all graded assignments and assessments will be completed during scheduled class meetings.

Work outside of class will primarily consist of assigned readings, podcasts, videos, and other materials that prepare students for class discussions and activities. Students are expected to complete these materials before class and arrive prepared to actively participate.

The primary exception will be assignments associated with the Reacting to the Past role playing game. Students may complete role specific work outside of class to prepare for their participation in the game. Because much of the learning and assessment in this course takes place through activities that cannot be replicated outside of the classroom, regular attendance and active participation are important to success in the course.

Instructor Welcome and Course Orientation

This is my 16th year at UNT and with the Honors College. My academic background is in the study of education, with a particular focus on higher education policy, organizational theory, and decision making. More recently, my academic interests have focused on questions surrounding

public and private goods, including how societies determine what should be provided collectively, what should be left to individuals or markets, and how those choices reflect different ideas about the role of government and our responsibilities to one another. These interests inform many of the questions and topics we will explore together throughout this course.

Learning Outcomes and Alignment

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Integrate ideas from multiple disciplines to analyze how different theories define a “good society,” focusing on the balance between individual rights, collective responsibility, and public and private goods.
2. Examine historical and contemporary case studies to understand how societies organize political, economic, and social institutions, and how these choices shape outcomes in areas such as education, healthcare, and sustainability.
3. Strengthen critical thinking and communication skills by participating in discussion, debate, collaborative activities, and reflective writing that require listening to others, articulating ideas clearly, and engaging respectfully with differing viewpoints.
4. Compare approaches to social organization in the United States and Denmark, evaluating how cultural values, institutional structures, and policy decisions shape social outcomes and definitions of collective well-being.

Course Materials



A History of Denmark

ISBN: 9781137611796

Authors: Knud J. V. Jespersen

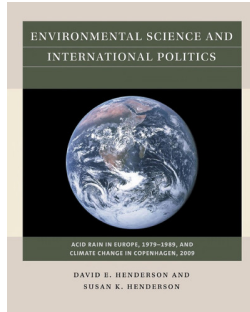
Publisher: Bloomsbury Academic

Publication Date: 2019

Edition: 3

Notes

Look for used copies on Amazon or
AbeBooks.com



Environmental Science and International Politics

ISBN: 9781469640303

Authors: David E. Henderson; Susan K. Henderson

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press

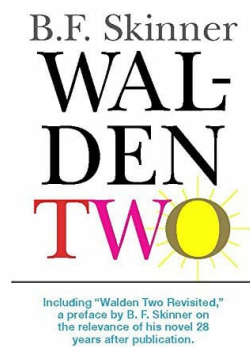
Publication Date: 2018-03-01

Edition: 7

Notes

Look for used copies on Amazon or

AbeBooks.com



Walden Two

ISBN: 9780872207783

Authors: Burrhus Frederic Skinner

Publisher: Hackett Publishing Company

Publication Date: 2005

Notes

Look for used copies on Amazon or

AbeBooks.com

Course-Specific Technology

Canvas Use

Because most assignments and assessments in this course will be completed during class meetings, Canvas will primarily serve as a repository for course materials rather than as the primary location for submitting assignments. Class notes, presentation slides, and other materials used during class will be posted to Canvas for student reference. Students may also use the Canvas Gradebook to monitor their grades and progress throughout the semester.

For assignments completed outside of class, such as those associated with the Reacting to the Past game, students will receive specific instructions regarding submission requirements and due dates.

Major Assignments and Assessments

Homework for this course will primarily consist of assigned readings, podcasts, videos, book chapters, journal articles, and other materials that prepare students to actively engage in class. Students are expected to complete all assigned work prior to class so they are prepared to participate in discussions, activities, and collaborative learning experiences.

Most graded work will be completed during scheduled class meetings and may include participation assignments, quizzes, presentations, and other experiential learning activities. Students will also complete a Midterm Exam covering material from the first half of the semester and a Final Exam covering material from throughout the course. Unless otherwise noted, all in class assignments, quizzes, and examinations will be completed using Green Books provided by the instructor. These will be distributed at the beginning of class and collected before students leave.

The course will also include a Reacting to the Past role playing game in which students will assume different roles and participate in a series of class sessions centered on debate, negotiation, decision making, and other activities related to the game. As part of the game, students will complete assignments specific to their assigned roles and responsibilities. Because different roles require different forms of preparation and participation, the nature and number of these assignments may vary. These assignments will be the primary graded work completed outside of class beyond assigned readings and preparation for class discussions. Additional instructions, expectations, and due dates for individual role assignments will be provided in class prior to the start of the game.

Because this course emphasizes active learning, discussion, and collaborative engagement, regular attendance is essential. Many in class activities are designed to build upon interactions with classmates and cannot be meaningfully replicated outside of class. As a result,

participation assignments and most in class activities may not be made up if a student is absent.

Requests to make up quizzes and examinations will be considered on a case by case basis. Depending on the circumstances, students may be permitted to complete an alternate assessment or may receive a grade reduction. Students should communicate with the instructor as soon as possible regarding any anticipated or unexpected absences.

Occasionally, students may be assigned take home assignments. Unless otherwise indicated, these assignments must be submitted via email before the beginning of class on the assigned due date. Late work must be approved by the instructor in advance and, when accepted, will generally receive a five point deduction for each day it is late.

Grading and Feedback

Participation Assignments & In-Class Activities

Daily participation is a core component of this course and may take several forms, including short individual writing prompts, quizzes, small-group activities, structured discussions, or applied exercises connected to course readings. Most participation assignments will be completed in class using a Blue Book or a worksheet provided by the instructor. These activities are designed to help students practice critical thinking, communication, and collaborative problem-solving.

Reacting to the Past Assignment

Students will complete role specific assignments connected to their participation in the Reacting to the Past game. Assignment requirements will vary based on each student's assigned role. Specific instructions, expectations, and due dates will be provided in class.

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will take place on Thursday, Oct. 8th. This exam will be completed in person and will include a combination of multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions. The midterm is designed to assess students' ability to synthesize theoretical frameworks, historical context, and comparative case studies covered in the first half of the course.

Final Exam

The final exam will take place during the final class meeting on Thursday, 12/10 at 10:30am during finals week. Like the midterm, the final exam will be completed in person using a Blue Book and will include multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions. The final exam will emphasize synthesis across the entire course, including theory, case studies, Danish history, and comparative analysis.

Grades

Final grades in this course are based on performance across multiple forms of assessment, including in-class writing, participation, quizzes, exams, and group work. The table below outlines the major assignments, their due dates, and the total points possible for each. Detailed instructions and grading criteria for individual assignments will be provided in class or through Canvas as appropriate.

Course Schedule

Date	Assignment Name	Type	Points
	In-Class Participation Assignments	In Class Assignments	400
10/8/26	Midterm Exam	Midterm	200

Date	Assignment Name	Type	Points
11/19/26	Reacting to the Past	RTTP Assignment	200
12/10/26	Final Exam	Final	200

Course Calendar

The following schedule provides a general outline of the topics, readings, case studies, and activities planned for the semester. The schedule may be adjusted based on the pace of the course, class discussions, or other circumstances. Any significant changes to assignment or examination dates will be communicated in class.

Week 1 | August 18 & 20

Course Introduction and Social Contract Theory

- Syllabus and course introduction
- The State of Nature
- Introduction to Social Contract Theory

Week 2 | August 25 & 27

Social Contract and Rational Choice

- Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau
- Rational Choice Theory
- Introduction to Denmark

Week 3 | September 1 & 3

Culture, Values, and Social Reality

- Culture and values
- Objective, subjective, and intersubjective reality
- Dialectical thinking
- The existential function of the social

Week 4 | September 8 & 10

Markets, Productivity, and the Role of Government

- The Wealth of Nations and productivity
- Markets and economic organization
- Denmark: Domestic Policy

Week 5 | September 15 & 17

Healthcare Case Study

- Introduction to the Healthcare Case Study
- Neoliberalism
- Casuistry activity

Week 6 | September 22 & 24

Healthcare Case Study

- Healthcare systems and policy
- John Rawls and Justice as Fairness

Week 7 | September 29 & October 1

Healthcare Case Study and Behavioral Engineering

- Conclusion of the Healthcare Case Study
- U.S. and Denmark healthcare comparison
- B. F. Skinner, behavioral engineering, and Walden Two

Week 8 | October 6 & 8

Midterm

- Midterm review
- Midterm Exam

Week 9 | October 13 & 15

Education Case Study

- Introduction to the Education Case Study
- Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Harrison Bergeron
- Denmark: Church, education, and N. F. S. Grundtvig

Week 10 | October 20 & 22

Education Case Study

- Pragmatism
- John Dewey, democracy, and education

Week 11 | October 27 & 29

Education Case Study

- Continued exploration and conclusion of the Education Case Study

Week 12 | November 3 & 5

From Social Engineering to Sustainability

- Walden Two discussion
- Denmark: Economic Conditions
- Introduction to the Sustainability Case Study
- Reacting to the Past roles, assignments, and preparatory readings

Week 13 | November 10 & 12

Sustainability Case Study

- Sustainability and collective action
- Reacting to the Past game preparation
- Reacting to the Past Game Session 1

Week 14 | November 17 & 19

Sustainability Case Study

- Reacting to the Past Game Session 2
- Game conclusion and debrief
- Sustainability Case Study conclusion

Thanksgiving/Fall Break | November 23–27

No scheduled class meetings.

Week 15 | December 1 & 3

Course Conclusion

- Denmark: Conclusion
- Connections across course themes and case studies
- Final Exam review

Week 16 | December 10

Final Exam

- Cumulative Final Exam

Authorized Absences Policy

An absence will be excused by the university for: a. religious holy day, including travel for that purpose; b. participation in an official university function; c. required military service, including travel for that purpose; d. pregnancy and parenting under Title IX; and e. when the University is officially closed.

For more details and procedures regarding UNT Authorized Absences, please see [Policy 06.039](#).

Absences that do not fall under Title IX, Required Military Service, and Official University Absences (religious holy days, participation in an official university function, and when the University is officially closed), are deemed a matter between the student and their faculty member. If the absence is due to an illness or extenuating circumstance that exceeds 5 consecutive days, the faculty member may request for the student to provide documentation through the Dean of Students' office.

Course Level Absence Practice

This is an in-person course and attendance is expected each day. In-Class Participation Assignments cannot be made up. Requests to make up the Midterm Exam or the Final Exam will be considered on a case by case basis.

Assignments are due by the dates and times listed in the syllabus or provided by the instructor. Late assignments will be penalized one grade

level for each class period they are late, unless an extension has been approved by the instructor in advance. Take home assignments must be submitted according to the instructions provided and, unless otherwise indicated, are due before the beginning of class on the assigned due date.

Students should communicate with the instructor as soon as possible regarding anticipated or unexpected absences that may affect their ability to complete course requirements. Advance communication does not automatically excuse an absence or waive a late penalty, but timely communication will be considered when determining whether an exception or alternative arrangement is appropriate.

UNT Academic Integrity Policy

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.

AI Use Practice

This course is designed to prioritize in-class thinking, writing, and discussion, with most graded work completed during class using Blue Books provided by the instructor. Because of this structure, students are expected to rely primarily on their own preparation, reasoning, and engagement with course materials.

For assignments completed outside of class, students may use AI tools (such as ChatGPT or similar platforms) only as a secondary support, similar to a peer reviewer or writing assistant. Acceptable uses include checking clarity, organization, grammar, or helping identify areas where an argument may need further development. AI tools may not be used to

generate original ideas, arguments, or written responses that are submitted as the student's own work.

Any use of AI must be clearly acknowledged and cited in the assignment. Students should briefly describe how the tool was used (e.g., "AI was used to review organization and clarity"). Failure to disclose AI use, or using AI as a substitute for original thinking and writing, will be treated as a violation of academic integrity.

The goal of this policy is not to prohibit technology, but to ensure that students develop the critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills that are central to the purpose of this course and the Honors College.

This AI policy reflects the expectations for this course only and may differ from policies used in other classes. Students are responsible for understanding and following each instructor's individual guidelines regarding AI use in all of their coursework.

Course Level Practices

Discussion based courses are excellent opportunities to engage with material while learning about the experiences of others in the classroom. Discussing contemporary topics, especially those related to a good society, can be very powerful and hit close to home for many of us. I want all students to contribute and feel that their voice can be heard. To ensure we can accomplish this, here are a few class guidelines:

- Take care of yourself.
- Freedom of expression is a fundamental right and an essential component of any good society. But, any communication that is cruel and derogatory will not be tolerated.
- Respect each other and the instructor, especially when their opinions differ from yours. This includes in-person and online interactions.
- Treat others as you want to be treated.
- Use "I" statements to share thoughts and feelings.
- Use critical thinking skills to challenge other people's ideas, as well as your own.

- Avoid individual attacks, instead engage with other people's ideas.
- Proofread and fact-check your sources.
- What you put online can be permanent, so use good judgement and caution.

Academic Support and Student Services

Technology Support

Part of working in the online environment involves managing the inconveniences and frustrations that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT, we have a [Student Help Desk](#) that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues:

- Phone: 940-565-2324
- Email: helpdesk@unt.edu
- Current list of [Student Help Desk hours](#)

Academic Support Services

- The [UNT Academic Resource Center](#) provides links to the bookstore, registration and advising information, tuition information, financial aid, and more.
- The [UNT Academic Success Center](#) offers academic support services and free individual tutoring.
- [UNT Writing Lab](#)
- [UNT Libraries](#)

Student Services

- [Counseling and Testing Services](#)
- [Student Affairs Care Team](#)
- [Student Health and Wellness Center](#)
- [Student Legal Services](#)
- [UNT Food Pantry](#)

Civil Discourse

As a leading public university, the University of North Texas has a fundamental responsibility to create enduring value for the public good. The fulfillment of our mission as a university depends upon the free exchange of ideas in the pursuit of knowledge. We bring these commitments into action by centering civil discourse in our culture and curriculum. We define civil discourse as the practice of constructive dialogue to broaden understanding, grounded in our shared values and deep respect for each other's potential. By committing to this practice, we seek to equip every student with skills and mindsets to engage, contribute, and lead—at UNT and throughout your lives.

Engaging with different ideas, asking questions, and debating are essential to a university education. This course may include ideas you disagree with, find unwise, or even find offensive – that we include for purposes of academic inquiry and critical examination. You may be asked to demonstrate understanding of these ideas without being required to believe or endorse them. My role as an instructor is to help you build understanding and foster critical thinking. If any claim – mine, yours, or a fellow student's – seems unclear or unsupported, we should be able to ask each other to explain it. Vigorous debate is welcome. Speech that violates the Student Code of Conduct, including speech that harasses a specific individual or disrupts the course is not. You may expect that views expressed in class will not be attributed to specific individuals outside of class, and that you will be evaluated fairly based on the learning objectives of this course.

University Policies

ADA Accommodation 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 at disability.unt.edu.

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 the UNT Learning Management System (LMS) 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 Blackboard 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.

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 Dean of Students 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 deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

Access to Information – Eagle Connect: Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail: eagleconnect.unt.edu/.

Student Evaluation Administration Dates: Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. 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. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website at spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

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.

Pregnancy Modifications Under Title IX and Parenting Resources:

UNT is committed to supporting students who may need pregnancy and parenting modifications in compliance with Title IX. If you are a pregnant student or have a pregnancy related condition, please visit report.unt.edu and complete the 'Request Pregnancy/Parenting Modifications' form.

Parenting students who may need resources can seek support and guidance from the Dean of Students and the Eagle Engagement Center. [Pregnant and Parenting Students Policy number 16.008](#).

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