

American Government: Laws and Institutions
PSCI 1040-010
Fall 2009

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Class: TR 12:30-1:50pm, ESSC 255
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Course Overview

This course focuses on an introduction to the Constitution and Institutions of American and Texas governments. We will study the structure of government, including its constitutional foundations and the branches of federal and Texas governments. We will pay particular attention to the constitutional issues of federalism, civil rights, and civil liberties. We will also apply our understanding of American and Texas government to current events and topics.

Course Goals

- 1) To develop a broad understanding of American and Texas governments, their constitutions, institutions, rights, and liberties.
- 2) To encourage students to think critically about political events, current and past.

Required Reading

Edwards, George C., Martin P. Wattenberg, and Robert L. Lineberry. 2009.
Government in America Brief Edition, 10th brief edition. Pearson/Longman.

Cox, Gloria C., and Richard S. Ruderman, eds. 2009. *Perspectives on American & Texas Politics: A Workbook for Political Science 1040*, 8th edition. University of North Texas.

Course Assignments

1. Exam 1	25 %
2. Exam 2	25 %
3. Exam 3	25 %
4. Workbook Assignments	25 %

Course Policies and Procedures

Grading: Grading will follow a standard scale: 90% is an A, 80% is a B, 70% is a C, and 60% is a D. ***I do not change grades unless I make a computational error.*** Moreover, I do not reveal grades via e-mail or telephone and ***there are no opportunities for extra credit***, except those mentioned herein or announced by me in class. I post exam grades on Blackboard, <http://ecampus.unt.edu/>, usually within 48 hours after exam time. I will submit your final grades, for view at my.unt.edu, as soon as I grade final exams.

If you do poorly on any of the assignments, I advise you to see me as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to seek my help if you need it. Pleading for a higher grade after you complete all assignments will not avail you.

Communications: If you have any questions about the class, please see me during my office hours. If you cannot make my office hours, please schedule an appointment to see me. You are more than welcome to e-mail me as well, but you must understand that it is much easier to communicate about class in person. For security reasons, including network vulnerabilities to viruses and spam, I will not answer e-mail that does not clearly specify a class-related subject on the subject line of your e-mail. Because I do not reveal grades or schedule makeup exams via e-mail you should see me in person about these issues. If you choose to e-mail me, it is your responsibility to check e-mail frequently for my response.

Exams: The three in-class exams will test your understanding of assigned readings and lecture material. Each exam will have 50 multiple-choice questions. The third exam (**on 12/17**) is not a comprehensive exam, and will cover material after the second exam. You will have the entire class period to complete each exam.

Exam Schedule: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/fall/final.html>

We will give you a scantron on exam day; but you must bring a pencil to take the test. Once you receive your exam form, you must write in your name and form letter so that your exam may be graded accurately. You may certainly put your name on the test form if you wish. ***If you arrive to the exam after the first exam is turned in, you will not be allowed to take the exam.*** I do not return exams. If you would like to review your exam, please stop by to see me before the next exam.

Make up exams will only be given in light of a university excused absence or at the discretion of the professor. Inform me of your absence before or within 48 hours after the examination date, either in person or by e-mail. I will need specific, written documentation to verify the nature and legitimacy of your absence. You must present this documentation to me, in person, during my office hours (or make an appointment) and before the makeup examination. At that time, I will determine whether you are eligible to take a makeup exam.

You will have one hour to complete the makeup exam, which consists of answering *one essay question*. *All makeup exams will take place during prefinals week.*

Workbook Assignments: Students must complete five of six workbook assignments; one may be skipped without penalty. Your answers must be written on the original workbook sheet, torn out, stapled, and turned in to your TA at the beginning of class (i.e., within the first ten minutes of class). Assignments may be turned in early, but they will be accepted late only with penalty. Students with access to a scanner may scan their workbook assignments into an electronic file and e-mail that file as an attachment. Only scanned attachments are acceptable for e-mailed workbook assignments, which must arrive prior to class time to be accepted as on time.

You may pick up your workbook assignments from your TA after they are graded. For privacy reasons, they will not be returned to you in class. You may also view your workbook assignment grades on Blackboard. Please direct any grading questions to your TA. Any late assignments should be placed in your TA's mailbox. *Assignments that are not stapled will be docked 10 percentage points.* Late assignments will be penalized 10 percentage points for each day they are late. *An assignment will be considered one-day late if it is turned in after the first ten minutes of class.* All discrepancies concerning workbook grades must be addressed prior to the due date of the next assignment, so check your grades regularly. It goes without saying that these are not group projects, so do your own work.

Extra Credit: If you complete all six workbook assignments, your lowest grade will be counted as extra credit, up to 2.0%. If your lowest workbook assignment grade is 75%, for example, then we will add an extra 1.5% ($.75 * 2.0$) to your final grade.

Attendance: Attendance is expected, but not required for this class. Attending class will help your course performance, just as *you are responsible for all materials covered in class.*

Exam Preparation: The optimal way to succeed in this class is to attend class regularly, take good notes, and keep up with the readings. As the exam material will be covered in lecture, I recommend that you master your notes and rely on the textbook for supplemental information and explanation. Your notes will alert you to the material that I think is most important and, therefore, is most likely to be on the exam. As there will be no Texas politics textbook for this class, please visit the following website for more material supplemental to the lectures: <http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/>

Dropping Courses: Please link <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/fall/calendar.htm> for information concerning drops, withdraws, and other administrative information.

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement: The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, you must contact the Office of Disability Accommodation before accommodations can be given.

Students who wish to utilize the testing center must first complete an Alternative Test Request form from the Office of Disability Accommodations that must be signed by the instructor for each course and exam that he or she wishing to take at ODA Testing Center. The form must then be turned in to ODA's main office at the University Union Suite 322A at least 72 hours prior to any regularly scheduled exam and 1 week before a final exam. Please see <http://www.unt.edu/oda/index.html> for information.

Scholastic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty refers to the use of any unauthorized assistance, the acquisition (without permission) of academic material belonging to a faculty member, dual submission or resubmission of a paper or project without permission of the professor and knowingly or negligently using paraphrase or direct quotation without full and clear acknowledgement. Misconduct for which students or groups or organizations are subject to discipline also includes knowingly furnishing false or misleading information to any university official (including faculty) and unauthorized entry to or use of university premises (including offices and buildings after or a professor's office without permission). All graded work must be completed according to the strictest standards of academic integrity. <http://www.vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>

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 expressly grant permission.

Course Schedule

INTRODUCTION

August 27	Course Introduction
September 1	Introduction to American Government Read: Edwards, Chapter 1

CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS

September 3-10	U.S. Constitution Read: Edwards, Chapter 2; Cox, Chapters 1 and 3
	September 10: Cox, Exercises 1-4 and 3-4
September 15-17	Federalism Read: Edwards, Chapter 3; Cox, Chapter 4
	September 17: Cox, Exercises 4-1 and 4-2
September 22	Texas Origins and Constitution

September 24

EXAM 1, IN CLASS

