
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS
PSCI 1040.001
COURSE SYLLABUS
FALL 2009
MWF 8:00-8:50
EAGLE STUDENT SERVICES CENTER ROOM 255

Instructor: Professor Collins

Office: Wooten Hall 133

Office Hours: 9:00-10:30 Mondays and Wednesdays and by appointment

E-mail: pmcollins@unt.edu

Information regarding the Teaching Assistants and the Supplemental Instructor will be announced in class and on the course's Blackboard page.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the roles of the U.S. and Texas governments in the American political system. We will consider the institutions, processes, and decisions of political actors that define American and Texas government. In addition, we will focus particular attention on a multitude of issues, including the U.S. and Texas constitutions, civil rights and liberties, federalism, as well as the three branches of government.

READINGS

Please purchase the following books from the UNT bookstore:

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

Fiorina, Morris P., Paul E. Peterson, Bertram Johnson, and William G. Mayer. 2009. *The New American Democracy*. 6th ed. New York: Longman. (hereafter Fiorina)

In addition, a number of the readings relating to this course are available on the internet. Links to those readings are provided in the course schedule section below.

All readings are required and listed the day they are expected to be read in the course schedule section. I suggest you prepare questions to bring to class if you have any trouble understanding the readings.

GRADES

Final grades will be computed on the following basis:

90-100% = A	60-69% = D
80-89% = B	0.0-59% = F
70-79% = C	

Exams (Exam 1 – 25%; Exam 2 – 25%; Exam 3 – 25%)

There will be three examinations in this class. All exams are closed book. Exams will utilize a multiple choice format. Scantrons will be provided, but students must bring a pencil with them to the examinations. In addition, students must bring their student identification cards with them to the examinations. The final exam will not be cumulative. Rather, it will cover material addressed during the last third of the semester. For the examinations, students are responsible for all lectures, textbook, workbook, and on-line readings. I will make review sheets for each exam available to students on the course's Blackboard page no later than the Monday preceding each exam.

Workbook Assignments (25%)

Students will complete five workbook assignments. The due dates for the workbook assignments are delineated in the course schedule section below. Each workbook assignment will contribute 5% to the student's grade. Workbook assignments must be completed on the original workbook pages. Thus, photocopies of workbook pages will not be accepted. Students must ensure that they procure the 8th Edition of the workbook. Workbook assignments will be turned into the student's Teaching Assistant on the day they are due in class. Workbook assignments must be stapled. Failure to staple workbook assignments will result in a 10 point penalty on the grade for the unstapled workbook assignment.

Late assignments will be penalized 5 points for each calendar day they are late, starting at 8:50AM on the day the assignment is due. If you wish to turn in your workbooks assignments early or late, you will give them to your Teaching Assistant or place them in your Teaching Assistant's mailbox in the Department of Political Science main office (Wooten Hall 125). If you intend to submit your workbook assignment to your Teaching Assistant's mailbox, you must have the receptionist in the Department of Political Science time stamp your assignment. If you submit your workbook assignment to your Teaching Assistant's mailbox and it is not time stamped, your assignment will be considered submitted on the date and time your Teaching Assistant actually receives the assignment (which may be some time after it was submitted).

Due to the size of this class, workbook assignments will not be returned in class. They may be picked up during your Teaching Assistant's office hours.

Extra Credit

There is one opportunity for extra credit in this class. The extra credit assignment is due in class by October 30, 2009 and may be submitted earlier than this date. Extra credit assignments should be turned into the student's Teaching Assistant. Extra credit assignments that are late will not be accepted. For the extra credit assignment, students will write a five page (double spaced) paper that discusses four newspaper articles related to one or more of the topics discussed in class. To receive full credit, students should make it clear how the newspaper articles are related to the topic(s)

covered in class. The extra credit assignment is worth up to 3 points on the student's final grade in this class. Full details on the extra credit assignment are available on the course's Blackboard page.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- 8/28 General Course Information
- 8/31 American Government and Politics
Fiorina, Chapter 1
- 9/2 The U.S. Constitution I
Fiorina, Chapter 2
- 9/4 The U.S. Constitution II
Cox, Chapter 1
- 9/7 No Class (Labor Day)
- 9/9 The U.S. Constitution III
Cox, Chapter 3
- 9/11 Federalism I
Fiorina, Chapter 3
- 9/14 Federalism II
Cox, Chapter 4
- 9/16 Federalism III
Fiorina, Federalist 10 and 51 (pages 620-627)
Workbook assignment due: Exercises 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, and 4-6.
- 9/18 Texas Origins and Constitution
http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/7_1_0.html (Read "Introduction" through "Conclusion" sections).
- 9/21 The Presidency I
Fiorina, Chapter 13
- 9/23 The Presidency II
- 9/25 The Presidency III
Cox, Chapter 6
Workbook assignment due: Exercises 6-2 through 6-5.
- 9/28 The Presidency IV
- 9/30 Catch Up and Review for Exam 1

- 10/2 Exam 1
- 10/5 The Federal Bureaucracy I
Fiorina, Chapter 14
- 10/7 The Federal Bureaucracy II
Cox, Chapter 7
- 10/9 The Federal Bureaucracy III
- 10/12 The Texas Executive and Bureaucracy
http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/1_1_0.html (Read “Introduction” through “The Plural Executive” sections).
Workbook assignment due: Exercises 7-1 through 7-4.
- 10/14 The U.S. Congress I
Fiorina, Chapter 12
- 10/16 The U.S. Congress II
Cox, Chapter 5
- 10/19 The U.S. Congress III
- 10/21 The U.S. Congress IV
- 10/23 The U.S. Congress V
- 10/26 The Texas Legislature
http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/2_1_0.html (Read “Introduction” through “Conclusion” sections).
- 10/28 Catch Up and Review for Exam 2
- 10/30 Exam 2
- 11/2 The Federal Courts I
Fiorina, Chapter 15
- 11/4 The Federal Courts II
Cox, Chapter 8
- 11/6 The Federal Courts III
- 11/9 The Federal Courts IV
- 11/11 The Texas Judiciary I
http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/3_1_0.html (Read “Introduction” through “Organization of the Courts” sections).

- 11/13 The Texas Judiciary II
http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/3_1_0.html (Read “Selection and Qualifications” through “Conclusion” sections).
- 11/16 Civil Liberties I
Fiorina, Chapter 16
- 11/18 Civil Liberties II
Cox Chapter 9
Workbook assignment due: Exercises 9-1 through 9-4.
- 11/20 Civil Liberties III
- 11/23 Civil Liberties IV
- 11/25 Civil Rights I
Fiorina, Chapter 17
- 11/27 No Class (Thanksgiving Break)
- 11/30 Civil Rights II
Cox, Chapter 10
- 12/2 Civil Rights III
- 12/4 Civil Rights IV
Workbook assignment due: Exercises 10-1, 10-4, 10-5.
- 12/7 Civil Rights and Liberties in Texas
- 12/9 Review for Final Examination
- 12/16 Final Examination (8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.)

Miscellaneous Information

Cell Phones: Cellular telephones are ubiquitous on college campuses. While there are a myriad of appropriate times and places to use one’s cell phone, during a class period is not one of them. Therefore, students are prohibited from using their cell phones during class, regardless of whether they are used for calling or for text messaging purposes. Cell phones should be turned off and stowed away at all times in the classroom.

Laptop Computers: Students are free to use laptop computers for note taking purposes during class. If a student is discovered using his or her laptop for any other purposes, such as surfing the internet, that student will forfeit the opportunity to use his or her laptop for the remainder of the semester. Note that the Teaching Assistants will periodically observe students’ use of laptop computers to ensure compliance with this policy.

Classroom Decorum: A university setting is a fertile ground for the exchange of ideas. I certainly encourage students to express their thoughts relevant to this class. However, students must do so in a respectful manner. If a student is unable to conduct him or herself in a means that is conducive to a learning atmosphere, that student will be removed from class. This includes demonstrating respect for your fellow students, as well as for the Professor and Teaching Assistants. For example, it is unacceptable to come to class late, leave class early, sleep during class, or surf the internet during class.

Email Etiquette: Email is the preferred means of communication for the Professor and Teaching Assistants outside of office hours. When you email the Professor or your Teaching Assistant, you need to follow some basic rules. First, insert the course title and number into the subject line of your message. Second, plainly identify yourself and articulate the content of your message clearly. This means you should not use text message or instant message speak. Finally, before you email the Professor or your Teaching Assistant, you should review the syllabus and the course's Blackboard page. It is very likely that you can find an answer to your question(s) by examining this syllabus or the Blackboard page. Failure to follow these simple rules will generally result in a non-response from the target of your email communication.

Attendance and PowerPoint Presentations: While attendance in this class is not required, because I will cover material in class that is not discussed in the texts, I strongly encourage you to attend each class session. If a student is absent from a class session, it is that student's responsibility to obtain lecture notes from a classmate. I will not make the PowerPoint presentations or notes available to students under any circumstances, nor will the Teaching Assistants.

Blackboard: Student's are responsible for all materials posted on Blackboard (e.g., workbook assignment policies, details on the extra credit assignment, etc.). All handouts distributed in class will be made available on the course's Blackboard page (<http://ecampus.unt.edu>). I bring this to your attention because handouts distributed in class will not be made available at subsequent meetings. Also, a student's grades will be available for viewing on the course's Blackboard page.

Grade Disputes: A great deal of time is invested in grading student assignments. If a student wishes to dispute a grade, he or she must do so in writing. Students must articulate a clear explanation as to why they feel a different grade is in order, as well as what grade they believe to be more representative of their work. Merely "wanting" or "needing" a higher grade is not a sufficient reason. Students should also note that if work is reviewed for a grade dispute, the entire work is reviewed, not simply the specific aspect being disputed by the student. All grade disputes are due in writing to the student's Teaching Assistant within two calendar weeks after the graded work is returned in class. Grade disputes will not be considered if submitted past the two week statute of limitations. Note that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits the Professor and the Teaching Assistants from discussing grades via email. Accordingly, grade disputes should be handled during office hours.

Make Up Policies: Students are expected to complete all assignments by the due date and take all examinations at the scheduled times. Make up exams will be permitted only under the severest of circumstances. As a general rule, make up exams will not be offered. Failure to appear for a scheduled exam without prior notification and an acceptable reason will result in a score of zero (0) for that exam. Students should be aware that the makeup exam, if allowed, may not be the same as

the original examination. While the material to be tested will stay the same, the exact questions and format may differ.

Office Hours: Office hours are currently scheduled from 9:00-10:30 Mondays and Wednesdays. If these times prove to be inconvenient, special appointments are available. Students should contact me via email to schedule special appointments.

Accommodations: If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, please notify me by the second week of class. You are also encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Accommodation at (940) 565-4323. The ODA makes formal recommendations regarding necessary and appropriate accommodations based on specifically diagnosed disabilities. Information regarding disabilities is treated in a confidential manner.

Statement of ADA Compliance: The Political Science Department cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request on or before the sixth class day (beginning of the second week of classes).

Religious Holidays: In accordance with University policy, I will excuse any absences that result from religious observances, provided that you notify me in advanced of your planned absence.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. Incidents of plagiarism and/or cheating will result in a failing grade for the class and further penalties per the University's judicial process. Students are advised to review the policies established in the Code of Student Conduct regarding academic honesty (http://www.unt.edu/csrr/student_conduct/index.html). If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, see the Professor or your Teaching Assistant. Finally, students agree that, by taking this course, all required assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to www.turnitin.com or a similar plagiarism prevention system.

The UNT Department of Political Science Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism: The UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline defines cheating and plagiarism as the use of unauthorized books, notes, or otherwise securing help in a test; copying others' tests, assignments, reports, or term papers; representing the work of another as one's own; collaborating without authority with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work; or otherwise practicing scholastic dishonesty.

Normally, the minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a grade of "F" in the course. In the case of graduate departmental exams, the minimum penalty shall be failure of all fields of the exam. Determination of cheating or plagiarism shall be made by the instructor in the course, or by the field faculty in the case of departmental exams.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism on graduate departmental exams, theses, or dissertations shall automatically be referred to the departmental Graduate Studies Committee. Cases of cheating or plagiarism in ordinary coursework may, at the discretion of the instructor, be referred to the Undergraduate Studies Committee in the case of undergraduate students, or the Graduate Studies Committee in the case of graduate students. These committees, acting as agents of the department Chair, shall impose further penalties, or recommend further penalties to the Dean of Students, if

they determine that the case warrants it. In all cases, the Dean of Students shall be informed in writing of the case.

Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

Stipulation: I reserve the right to change this syllabus as I see fit at any point in the semester.