

PSCI 1040/04
American Government: Laws and Institutions

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Office: 165 Wooten Hall

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MWF 11:00-11:50 AM

223 ART

Office Hours: W 4:30-6:30,

F 1:00-2:00

Course Description

This course is meant to introduce students to the government and politics of the United States and Texas. We will focus on the laws and institutions that make up the U.S. and Texas political systems, including the constitution and the three branches of government. We will also examine a number of issues that are affected by these laws and institutions, including questions related to federalism, civil liberties, and civil rights. Upon completion of this course, students should have a broad understanding of the fundamentals of American and Texas government and politics, and they should be able to think critically about current and past political events in these political systems. This should be useful both for being an educated voter and citizen and for taking upper-division courses on the subject.

It should be noted that this is not a course in current events, although some reference will be made to current events. Also, I do not seek to indoctrinate students with my own personal opinions or political views, whatever these might be. Rather, my goal is to provide students with the tools to evaluate events themselves and form their own opinions. Students are expected to attend every class meeting, having already done the assigned reading; class lectures will assume a basic understanding of the readings and will go beyond the content of those readings, rather than simply restating them. Class performance will be measured with three (non-cumulative) exams that combine multiple choice and short answer/identification questions, as well as a series of assignments from the course workbook.

Teaching Assistants: Chris Freeman and Asmara Saleemi

The teaching assistants should be your first resource for any administrative or procedural questions related to the course (such as late assignments, missing homework, or incorrect grades). If you have a complaint, please only contact me after you have spoken with the TA, and be sure to clarify what you and he have already done to try to resolve the problem. Of course, you may always contact either the TA or me with any substantive questions related to the course (and you are especially encouraged to do so during our regularly scheduled office hours).

Chris Freeman

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- Office: 331 WH
- Office Hours: M 9-11 AM, W 9-10 AM
- Office Phone: 565-8733
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Asmara Saleemi

- M - Z
- 136 WH
- M 12-1:50, F 12-1
- 565-2335
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Supplemental Instruction: Heather Williams

A Supplemental Instruction (SI) component is provided for all students who want to improve their understanding of the material taught in this course. SI sessions are led by a student who has already mastered the course material and has been trained to facilitate group sessions where students can meet to compare class notes, review and discuss important concepts, develop strategies for studying, and prepare for exams. Attendance at SI sessions is free and voluntary. Students may attend as many times as they choose. SI sessions begin the second week of class and continue throughout the semester. A session schedule will be announced in class. For information about the program, and session schedule/updates, visit <http://www.unt.edu/lc>..:

Assigned Readings

Required ("text"): Morris P. Fiorina, Paul E. Peterson, Bertram Johnson, and William G. Mayer (2010). *New American Democracy with Texas Chapters*, custom edition, volume I. Boston, MA: Pearson Learning Solutions. (Available at the usual Denton locations.)

Note that this is a custom book for UNT's Political Science department that combines the relevant content from two other books (Fiorina et al.'s The New American Democracy, 6th edition, and Coleman et al.'s Understanding American Politics and Government, Texas edition, 2010 update). This means that students avoid the expense of buying both books and the waste of paying for so many chapters that we won't use in this course -- but it also means that you are unlikely to be able to find the correct edition at online bookstores like Amazon.

Required ("workbook"): Gloria C. Cox and Richard S. Ruderman, eds. (2010). *Perspectives on American and Texas Politics: A Workbook for Political Science 1040*, 8th edition. Boston, MA: Pearson Learning Solutions. (Available at the usual Denton locations)

Course Requirements

(1) **Examinations:** Three (non-cumulative) exams will be given in class. Each exam counts for 25% of the course grade (so the three exams together account for 75% of the total grade), and will draw roughly equally from the assigned readings and the instructor's lectures. Each will contain 40-45 multiple choice questions, and 5-10 short answer/fill-in-the-blank questions. Be sure to be on time to the exam; once the first student leaves the room after the exam starts, anybody else entering to take the exam will lose five letter grades.

(2) **Workbook Assignments:** There will also be five class assignments from the assigned workbook for this course, as listed in the class schedule on this syllabus. Each assignment counts for 5% of the course grade (so the five assignments together account for 25% of the total grade). For full credit they must be turned in before the beginning of lecture on the day when they are due; where there are multiple pages, they must be stapled together, and your name must be clearly written on each page. Assignments that are received after this time will be assessed a late penalty, and if pages are missing it will be assumed that they were never turned in.

(3) **Attendance and Participation:** It is vital that students attend class regularly, starting at the beginning of each class period and staying through the end. Students are also expected to have done the assigned reading before class starts, because class lectures will assume a basic understanding of the readings and will go beyond the content of those readings. Better preparation before class will also allow students to ask better questions and to participate more actively in class discussion, which will make up an important part of most course meetings.

Course Rules

(1) Make-up examinations are given only with prior instructor approval and with appropriate documentation, and take place only during final exam week. Note that the documentation must indicate why you could not be in class *at the exact time of the test*.

(2) Failure to complete any paper assignment or failure to take any exam will result in a failing grade for the entire course; a passing grade requires completion of all course requirements. Late work will be assessed a substantial penalty (one letter grade per day that it is late). Note that no assignments, documentation, or other items will be accepted after the course's final exam.

(3) Students must keep an extra copy of each assignment until the instructor has returned the graded copy of that assignment. Students must also keep graded, returned copies of all assignments. Failure to do so will invalidate any potential question or protest about grades.

(4) All students must treat the instructor, the other students, and the classroom setting with respect. This includes arriving on time and staying for the entire class (or notifying the instructor in advance if this will not be possible), turning off cell phones and similar devices during class, and refraining from reading, passing notes, talking with friends, and any other potentially disruptive activities. This also means showing respect for alternative opinions and points of view, listening when either the instructor or a fellow student is speaking to the class, and refraining from insulting language and gestures.

(5) The instructor's lecture notes and PowerPoint slides will not be posted online or otherwise handed out to students under any circumstances. If you are unable to attend one or more class meetings, make arrangements with another student to borrow or copy their notes.

(6) Failure to abide by these policies will be dealt with in an appropriate manner, which may include a reduction in the course grade. Any exceptions are given at the instructor's discretion, only with prior approval where possible, and only with appropriate documentation.

(7) The instructor's teaching-related policies and expectations are described in more detail at <http://www.paulhensel.org/teachgrade.html>. Failure to visit that web site does not constitute a valid excuse for ignorance of these policies. In particular, note that I do not "round up" grades -- an 89.9 counts as a B rather than an A -- and the only extra credit opportunity will be offered in class on the last class period before Thanksgiving (for fall semesters) or spring break (for spring semesters).

(8) The content of this syllabus may be modified by the instructor at any time during the semester if deemed necessary.

Academic Integrity

The Political Science Department adheres to and enforces UNT's policy on academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and sabotage). Students in this class should review the policy (UNT Policy Manual Section 18.1.16), which may be located at <http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7-Student_Affairs-Academic_Integrity.pdf>. Violations of academic integrity in this course will be addressed in compliance with the penalties and procedures laid out in this policy.

Students should bring possible violations of academic integrity to the attention of the instructor as soon as possible, so that the violations (if any) may be stopped quickly. Violations include (but are not limited to) the use of unauthorized materials on course assignments or examinations, representing another's work or any part thereof (published or unpublished) as one's own, using one's own work for more than one class, assisting another student in committing such an offense, and attempting to commit such an offense. I will act quickly to stop and punish any such offense, consistent with university and departmental guidelines, because these activities give the perpetrators an unfair advantage in course grades and represent a critical challenge to the educational process. At a minimum, the student will receive a failing grade on the assignment in question; depending on the nature and severity of the offense, the student may also receive an automatic failing grade for the course or be referred to appropriate university bodies for further disciplinary action. When in doubt, consult the Citations and Plagiarism page on the instructor's web site for advice on why, when, and how to cite sources consulted for research papers, in order to avoid committing plagiarism (whether intentionally or unintentionally).

Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE)

The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. Like most professors, I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, which is very helpful as I work to improve my teaching. Please take the time to fill out the survey honestly and completely when it is made available to you.

Americans with Disabilities Act

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 by the start of the second week of class.

Instructor's Web Site

The instructor maintains a web site at <<http://www.paulhensel.org>> that includes -- among other things -- teaching policies, solutions to common student writing problems, copies of syllabi

for other courses, and Internet resources for students of international relations. Students are strongly encouraged to become familiar with this web site during the semester. The on-line version of this syllabus can be found either online through Blackboard or at:

<<http://www.paulhensel.org/Teaching/psci1040.html>>.

1. Friday, Aug. 27: Overview of Course

2-4. Monday, Aug. 30 - Friday, Sept. 3: Introduction to American Government and Politics

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter 1 ("Democracy in the United States"), Workbook chapter 1 ("Liberty and Security: The Philosophical Foundations of American Democracy")
- **Workbook Assignment #1: exercises 1-1, 1-3, 1-5 (due Sept. 3)**

5. Monday, Sept. 6: **NO CLASS (Labor Day)**

6-8. Wednesday, Sept. 8 - Monday, Sept. 13: American Political Culture

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter 4 ("American Political Culture"), Workbook chapter 2 ("Alexis de Tocqueville and American Political Culture")

9. Wednesday, Sept. 15: Texas Political Culture

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter TX-1 ("The Social and Economic Milieu of Texas Politics")

10-13. Friday, Sept. 17 - Friday, Sept. 24: The Federal Constitution

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter 2 ("Establishing a Constitutional Democracy"), Workbook chapter 3 ("Constitutional Freedom")
- **Workbook Assignment #2: exercises 2-1, 2-2, 3-4 (due Sept. 24)**

14. Monday, Sept. 27: The Texas Constitution

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter TX-2 ("The Texas Constitution")

15. Wednesday, Sept. 29: Wrapup and Review for Exam

16. Friday, Oct. 1: EXAM #1 (in the regular classroom)

17-20. Monday, Oct. 4 - Monday, Oct. 11: Federalism / State and Local Government

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter 3 ("Federalism: Division of Power among National, State, and Local Governments"), Workbook chapter 4 ("Evolving American Federalism")
- *Optional Readings* Text appendix 4 (James Madison, "The Federalist No. 51")

21-23. Wednesday, Oct. 13 - Monday, Oct. 18: The Federal Legislative Branch: Congress

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter 12 ("The Congress and Its Work"), Workbook chapter 5 ("Representation and Religion")
- **Workbook Assignment #3: exercises 4-1, 5-2, 5-4 (due Oct. 18)**

24. Wednesday, Oct. 20: The Texas Legislature

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter TX-3 ("The Texas Legislature")

25-27. Friday, Oct. 22 - Wednesday, Oct. 27: The Federal Executive Branch (I): The Presidency

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter 13 ("The Presidency: Powers and Practice"), Workbook chapter 6 ("Understanding Presidential Power")

28-30. Friday, Oct. 29 - Wednesday, Nov. 3: The Federal Executive Branch (I): The Bureaucracy

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter 14 ("The Bureaucracy"), Workbook chapter 7 ("From Criticism to Understanding: The Federal Bureaucracy")
- **Workbook Assignment #4: exercises 6-3, 6-5, 7-2 (due Nov. 3)**

31. Friday, Nov. 5: The Texas Executive and Bureaucracy

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter TX-4 ("The Texas Executive and Bureaucracy")

32. Monday, Nov. 8: Wrapup and Review for Exam

33. Wednesday, Nov. 10: EXAM #2 (in the regular classroom)

34-36. Friday, Nov. 12 - Wednesday, Nov. 17: The Federal Judicial Branch: The Federal Courts

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter 15 ("The Courts"), Workbook chapter 8 ("How Did the Supreme Court Get to Be 'Supreme'?")

37. Friday, Nov. 19: The Texas Courts

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter TX-5 ("The Texas Judiciary")

38-41. Monday, Nov. 22 - Monday, Nov. 29: Civil Liberties

40. Friday, Nov. 25: **NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)**

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter 16 ("Civil liberties"), Workbook chapter 9 ("The Right to Privacy in Historical Perspective")
- **Workbook Assignment #5: exercises 8-1, 8-3, 9-1 (due Nov. 29)**

42-44. Wednesday, Dec. 1 - Monday, Dec. 6: Civil Rights

- *Assigned Readings*: Text chapter 17 ("Civil rights"), Workbook chapter 10 ("The Quest for Equality")

45. Wednesday, Dec. 8: Course Wrapup and Review for Final Exam

46. Friday, Dec. 10: NO CLASS (UNT Reading Day)

FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 17, 10:30-12:30 AM (in the regular classroom)