# PSCI 3100.001 – Topics in American Government: Advanced Seminar in Political Science (Capstone) 3 Hrs.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of History and Political Science</th>
<th>Division of Liberal Arts and Life Sciences</th>
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<tr>
<th>Instructor Name:</th>
<th>Walt Borges, PhD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office Location:</td>
<td>Founders Hall 221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Phone:</td>
<td>972.338.1552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:walter.borges@untdallas.edu">walter.borges@untdallas.edu</a></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>Office Hours:</th>
<th>Office hours will be set after I have met with all of my classes. I will try to maximize my availability to students. Office hours will be posted on the course Web page. There are no dedicated hours for each class – first come is first served. Making an appointment will guarantee you access at the times that fit your schedule.</th>
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<td>Virtual Office Hours:</td>
<td>None</td>
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| Classroom Location:                        | FH 304                                       |
| Class Days & Times:                        | Monday 4 – 6:50 pm                           |

| Course Catalog Description:                | Research design, literature reviews and writing styles leading to a research paper prepared by students under the supervision of a faculty member. The capstone experience may be based on a particular topic of interest or involve group research and projects. |

| Prerequisites:                             | Completion of PSCI 1040 and 1050 or their equivalents. Completion of Democratic Theory (PSCI 3320) and Public Administration (PSCI 3330) and or six hours of upper level PSCI courses. Completion of Quantitative Research Design and Analysis prior to enrollment is recommended. |

| Co-requisites:                             | None                                         |


| Recommended Texts and References:         | Additional online readings linked to class discussion, homework assignments and quizzes will be located by students. This is a research course. |

Students should follow general political news at the international, national, state and local level. Ignorance of public affairs deprives students of context for their work.
Access to Learning Resources:

UNT Dallas Library:
phone: (972) 780-3625;
web: http://www.unt.edu/unt-dallas/library.htm

UNT Dallas Bookstore:
phone: (972) 780-3652;
e-mail: 1012mgr@fheg.follett.com

Course Goals or Overview:

This course is required for all political science majors as part of the political science major core. The course seeks to lay a foundation to provide major students with experience in conceiving, implementing and writing up sophisticated research. For the spring 2019 semester, students will engage in group and individual research on the Electoral College, institutional distortions of the popular vote and winner-take-all electoral systems.

Learning Objectives/Outcomes:

At the end of this course, the student will:

1. Identify and articulate political science research problems.
2. Design appropriate research to address the problem.
3. Identify, summarize, compare and contrast relevant theories and discuss previous research related to the problem.
4. Identify the relevant qualitative and quantitative analysis methods to evaluate political theories and public administration practices.
5. Construct a research paper using appropriate structure, writing techniques, source citation and reference listing appropriate for political science research.
6. Communicate effectively about the research both orally and in writing.
7. Be able to identify the critical ethical issues in research.

Course Evaluation Methods

This course will utilize the following instruments to determine student grades and proficiency of the learning outcomes for the course.

Sample Grading Matrix:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Measures SLO</th>
<th>Weight (%)</th>
<th>Aggregate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference exchanges assignment (2)</td>
<td>5,6</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference exercises (2)</td>
<td>5,6</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue Brief</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual research paper</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>40 percent</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First draft</td>
<td></td>
<td>[30 percent]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisions and final draft</td>
<td></td>
<td>[10 percent]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (discussions and group contributions)</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td></td>
<td>100 percent</td>
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## Course Outline

N.B. The professor reserves the right to change the syllabus. Notice will be provided via the Canvas course pages and via official university emails.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Graded Assignments</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1  | Jan 14 | Introduction to the Course  
**Brainstorm: The Electoral College and related issues**  
Using the current UNT Dallas library | By Wednesday, start reading  
Baglione ch 1, 2, 4 & 6  
Pennock ch 1 |                                            |
| 2  | Jan 21 | MLKs birthday – no classes                                            |                           | Reference exchange I  
(3 articles, reference list copies for everyone in class) |
| 3  | Jan 28 | The Purpose and the Audience  
The Method  
- Designing Research: Puzzles and Problems  
- Research Questions & Hypotheses  
The selection of a research design  
**Second brainstorm: Refining the issues of interest** | Baglione ch 1, 2, 4 & 6  
Pennock ch 1 |                                            |
| 4  | Feb 4  | Building the Lit Review  
- Review of literature  
- Use of Theory  
- Writing Strategy and Organizing the Literature Review  
- Organizing the Literature by Relatedness  
- Creating a Paper Outline  
Ethics  
**Third brainstorm: Where are the holes in our narrative?** | Baglione ch 3, 5 & 7 |                                            |
| 5  | Feb 11 | Style and formats Bibliographies and in-text citations | Pennock ch 2-4 | Reference exchange II  
(5 articles, reference list copies for all) |
| 6  | Feb 18 | Discussions of the issues / quiz                                     |                           | Bibliography quiz |
| 7  | Feb 25 | Discussions of the solutions / quiz                                   | Pennock ch 5-6 | In-text citation exercise |
| 8  | March 4| Distilled solutions: briefs and memos  
**Asserting your preferred solution** | Baglione 8  
Pennock ch 8 - 10 | Portfolio due (your 8 best, with bibliography list copies for all students) |
| 9  | March 11| Spring Break – no classes                                           |                           |                                                |
| 10 | March 18| Capstone Consultations/Feedback/Review                                 |                           |                                                |
| 11 | March 25| Discussion of preferred solutions                                      |                           | Decision memo due |
| 12 | April 1 | Fine tuning: Is that your final analysis?                              |                           |                                                |
| 13 | April 8 | Results: Discussion of Individual approaches                          |                           | 1<sup>st</sup> draft due |
| 14 | April 15| Editing, editing, editing                                             | Baglione ch 9  
Pennock ch 7 |                                                |
| 15 | April 22| **Significance and conclusions**                                     |                           |                                                |
| 16 | April 29| Class wrap-up  
Class critique and CourseEvals                                      |                           | Final paper due |
University Policies and Procedures

Students with Disabilities (ADA Compliance): The University of North Texas at Dallas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations must first register with the Disability Services Office (DSO) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the DSO will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, DSO 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/communicate with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of 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 Disability Services Office website at http://www.untdallas.edu/disability. You may also contact them by phone at 972-338-1777; by email at UNTdisability@untdallas.edu or at Founders Hall, room 204. (UNTD Policy 7.004)

Student Course Evaluation (CoursEval): Student evaluation of teaching effectiveness is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT Dallas, providing information for the university, accreditation agencies, the state higher education agency and the instructor. A 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. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students. Your comments help me improve my teaching and to figure out what works for students and what doesn't. Please complete the survey when you are notified that it is available.

Assignment Policy:
1. Late assignments may be penalized up to 20 percent per day.
2. I do not accept emailed assignments. If you are unable to hand in the assignment, you may send in an email file to show you had completed the work, but if you do not present a hard copy by the next class, your grade for that assignment is zero.
3. Check out the Writing folder on Canvas. Format and citation requirements will be included on written assignments and posted on Canvas. An American Political Science Association citation sheet provides details of bibliography and citation form, and it is posted on the class pages on Blackboard under the Writing folder.

Exam Policy: There are no exams in this class.

Academic Integrity: You are expected to abide by the University’s code of Academic Integrity policy. Any person suspected of academic dishonesty (i.e., cheating or plagiarism) will be handled in accordance with the University’s policies and procedures.


Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. In addition, all academic work turned in for this class, including exams, papers and written assignments must include the following statement: “On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance that violates the UNTD Academic Integrity Policy.”

Bad Weather Policy: Campus facilities will close and operations will be suspended when adverse weather and/or safety hazards exist on the UNTD campus or if travel to the campus is deemed dangerous as the result of ice, sleet or snow. In the event of a campus closure, the Marketing and Communication Department will report closure information to all appropriate major media by 7 a.m. That department will also update the UNTD website, Facebook and Twitter with closing information as soon as it is possible. For more information please refer to http://www.untdallas.edu/police/resources/notifications
**Attendance and Participation Policy:**
The University attendance policy is substantially in effect for this course. Please refer to Policy 7.005 Student Attendance at [http://www.untdallas.edu/hr/upol](http://www.untdallas.edu/hr/upol).

I will monitor attendance for the first five weeks in order to identify those who may be in peril of failing the class. However, you will be treated as responsible adults for most of the semester: You miss class at your own peril, and frequent class absences will cost you participation points. Details of attendance policy will be discussed in class during the first session.

Class attendance and participation is expected because the class is designed as a shared learning experience and because essential information not in the textbook will be discussed in class. The dynamic nature of this course makes it difficult for students to make-up or to receive credit for missed classes. Attendance and participation is essential to your ability to demonstrate proficiency in the subject.

If you must miss a single, isolated class, you need not notify the instructor, but it becomes your responsibility to obtain notes of the missed class from your colleagues. I do not post the notes of my lectures. Before you ask the professor what was missed, you should have reviewed notes for the missed class.

In the case of extended absences due to illness or crises, you are expected to inform the instructor as soon as possible about the extent of your absence, preferably before the absence occurs. You may be required to produce written evidence of the reasons for your absence.

In all cases, missing exams and other assignments requires a good-faith effort on your part to inform the instructor of your absence beforehand. Unless you have a rock-solid reason for missing the test, you will not be permitted to make it up.

**Diversity/Tolerance Policy:** Students are encouraged to contribute their perspectives and insights to class discussions. However, offensive and inappropriate language (swearing) and remarks offensive to others of particular nationalities, ethnic groups, sexual preferences, religious groups, genders, or other ascribed statuses will not be tolerated. Disruptions which violate the Code of Student Conduct will be referred to the Dean of Students as the instructor deems appropriate. (UNTD Policy 7.001)

**CLASS-SPECIFIC POLICIES:**
- **Do not attempt to communicate with the professor through the Canvas mail function.** I do not check it and I will not respond. Communicate through my official university e-mail listed at the top of this syllabus. I communicate with you by responding to whatever e-mail address you use to send your message. General notices are posted as announcements on Canvas and/or as email to your official university address. Failure to check your email is no excuse for missing changes in test dates or assignments.

- **If you enter late, you are expected to do so as unobtrusively and quietly as possible** Entering class late is sometimes unavoidable. Please take a seat on the fringes of the class and do not disrupt the lecture by taking a front row seat. Do not attempt to hand in homework while the lecture is going on. If you must leave class, do so quietly. If you show up to class late, do not expect to have the opportunity to sign the attendance sheet. Your attendance is required at the start of class, so plan accordingly.

- **Cell phones and laptops must be turned off unless they are being used to record the class or presentations.** Texting, tweeting and other uses are not permitted. If I determine you are using your phone for purposes other than class, you will be required to keep the phone turned off for all future classes. Same goes for computers. If we should have a guest speaker, everyone will go computer- and phone-free for that session.

- **There are no ‘right’ answers to many of the issues we will discuss.** and you will not be graded on your opinions. However, please take into account that opinions supported by facts are more persuasive than opinions supported by more opinions. Make your arguments accordingly.

- **Flaming or intimidating fellow students will not be tolerated.** Students are expected to be considerate of others. This means silencing cell phones, arriving on time, not leaving early and being respectful of others during discussion and debate. Opinions and arguments are fair game; the speaker is not. Listening courteously is a real world skill, and I have a commitment to civil discourse that I will enforce.
APPENDIX

Expectations

This course is designed to be the culmination of a student’s experience in political science as a UNT Dallas undergraduate. It is designed to teach research and writing skills at a high undergraduate level. Hopefully, it will also produce a piece of research and writing that you will be able to use as a sample for admission to graduate school or as an example of substantial research in seeking employment.

In earlier days, universities often called these classes senior seminars and used them to put a fine polish on their best students. Today, we require these courses more universally, but I will guarantee you that I will not ask more of you than you have the right to expect from a university education or a degree of value.

This course has several unique features that alter the usual expectations for courses:

1. Make this course your priority course for the semester. This is not your average course – it is the capstone of your major. This course should be the focus of your attention and you should neither miss class, fail to do the readings, or complete the research assignments on time.

2. This is the first time I have offered the course, and thus it will be generously graded. We will find our way through the problems that any first-time course experiences, but be clear that this does not mean the course will be graded casually and without requiring that students meet high standards. This is a capstone course where you are supposed to bring together what you have learned to date and synthesize skills and knowledge in a final project.

3. The current state of the UNT Dallas online library is improving, but its recovery from severance with the Denton library is slow. That has made life more difficult for researchers, and research is the substance of this course. It is imperative that students understand that online resources are not usually sufficient for a research project, even if they are the most convenient sources. If you need books, and in political science, much theory is in books, please identify those books early on and work with UNT Dallas librarian Brenda Robertson to obtain those books quickly. It is no excuse in this class to say that you failed to obtain a key source because it was not available online.

With these three things in mind, here are some of the minor expectations:

- **Participate frequently in discussions in class or ask relevant questions.** Participation will make the instructor’s calls on borderline grades easier to make. If you don’t want to share your opinion, that’s okay, but be prepared to ask a few questions. Don’t worry about appearing uninformed or unaware: I was a reporter for 25 years and I know it is better to ask the obvious or dumb question than to assume you know the answer. The failure to ask the obvious question is often why journalists get things wrong.

- **Students are expected to attend class.** As this course involves group research work, there is little or no content to begin with. The students will compile the substance through research and that means this course is a team effort. I expect all students, all of whom should be political science majors, to make this course their priority this semester. And that means, first and foremost, you should plan on attending all class sessions. The course participation score is 10 percent, and unlike in other classes, that is not a given. If you attend class and take part in discussions and brainstorms, and above all, ask thoughtful questions, you will receive the maximum marks. Failure to attend will cost you points and arriving unprepared and sitting silent while others contribute will also cost you points. You need not dominate the conversation, just contribute.

- **Read the assigned material before class.** There is not a lot of textual material here so reading is quite modest for what is essentially your senior seminar. The readings are about technique, but as you start to build your papers, you will find the basics clear the decks for you to thinks about content.
Reference Exchanges – Due Jan. 28 and Feb. 11

This course involves research into the Electoral College and related theoretical topics. The course involves a group research effort to locate and summarize the relevant theoretical, historical and policy literature on the topic.

At our first meeting, the UNT Dallas librarian will show students how to use the current online systems effectively. The first Reference Exchange of three sources is due two weeks later, on January 28 and the second comprising five more sources is due Feb. 11.

For each exchange:
1. Hand in to the professor a list of references for sources on the Electoral College and related topics. These sources should be typed, indented and alphabetized in proper bibliographic form.
2. Make additional copies of the reference page for all members of the class or email to all of them via their official university emails.

Grading: The quality and scope of the articles should be sufficient that they are substantial sources for use in the research paper. Sources that are merely descriptive or that mention the Electoral College simply in the context of the 2016 elections are going to be of little value to you. Look for books or articles in academic journals and perhaps magazine articles that discuss problems, theories and trends revolving around the EC and its related issues. Op-eds, editorials and situational or descriptive articles from newspapers or other media should be avoided.

Remember that these submissions become shared resources, so work individually on these lists. There will be overlap, certainly. But your job is to travel far afield in search of sources for the benefit of yourself and the group.

Portfolio – due March 4

I. Students will diversify their readings and develop research skills by collecting their eight best research sources to create a portfolio. The items must be about the Electoral College or its related issues.

II. For each of these items, the student will write a brief, single-spaced summary of
   1) what the article says, and
   2) what it tells us about the news media’s impacts on politics. This can be as short as a couple of paragraphs, one explaining the gist of the item, the other explaining its impact. These brief summaries should not exceed more than a page, although you are free to write more if you need to make a number of different points.

III. Make a copy of your bibliographic list for each student and bring to class.

Items:
The items may be book chapters or in-depth articles from newspapers, online news sites, academic journals, and magazines. There may be other types of items that are similar but not listed here. Check with the professor if you have something unusual.

Part of this assignment is to explore new ground on your own. The items do not need to be recent. For example, you could read a chapter from a book about the Electoral College and its distortions regardless of the year of publication. An old journal article is equally as valuable. The impact of the article -- i.e. the explanation of how the article supplements your knowledge of the research topic -- is the important part.
**Presentation:**
Portfolio entries and comments should be kept in a loose leaf binder or a presentation folder and indexed. I would prefer you use tabbed dividers to separate the entries. Each article and comment should have your name on it and be numbered according to an index for your portfolio. Portfolios should have:
- a title page with your name
- an index page
- a bibliography properly formatted (see the Canvas Writing folder) and ordered alphabetically. You will lose points for sloppy or inappropriate formatting or for simply listing URLs instead of the proper reverence information. Your references should be directions to the print version of the articles if they are available.
- eight sections, one for each article you are reviewing. The summary/review with your name and the correct citation should come first, then the article.

Please do not simply put the items in a pocket folder where they will fall out and mix with papers from other classes that are in my possession.

**Label the articles and include proper bibliographic entries:**
The items in the portfolio will be appropriately labeled and referenced. The relevant information to include is bibliographic: Author/news organization; Year (and date when appropriate); Publication/Site; and other publication information. You should print copies of the written or internet materials.

**Grading**
Scope of reading (Was it different from the other articles in your portfolio?) 20 percent
Quality (descriptive articles and simple news articles lose points here) 30 percent
Summary 50 percent

You should try to read diverse and substantial articles from journals and books rather than brief descriptive newspaper articles. I would suggest that no more than two of the articles should be from the newspapers.

**Formats for the decision memo and research paper**
- Use Times New Roman 12-point or 11-point type.
- Use 1-inch margins
- Name and assignment information should go a title page. Other pages should be numbered.
- Papers should be written in complete sentences and paragraphs. Bullet points allowed only for short lists.
- Use proper reference form (author, year of publication, title, publication information). In-text citation to the references should be used,[i.e. (author year).
- All papers should be stapled together. Paper clips are insufficient. Unstapled papers incur a 30 percent penalty.

**Decision Memo – Due March 25**

Write a two-page (minimum), single-space memo addressed to the governor of Texas specifying your recommendations for the continuation of the use of the Electoral College in presidential elections, or for its modification. Use the format proposed by Pennock in his chapter (#10) on decision memos.
Each student will write a research paper on the Electoral College, institutional distortion of the popular vote and distortions of the public preferences by winner-take-all electoral systems.

A. The paper will be a minimum of 20 pages of text, with appropriate title, reference pages and endnotes pages. The approximate length should be 25 pages with these additional materials.

B. At least one properly formatted table and one chart will be included in an appendix. These need not be original – they may be images of works by another person, but they must meet two requirements:
   1. The table and the chart should be properly cited and attributed and the source documents should included in the bibliography.
   2. The table and chart should contain a cutline paragraph that explains what we are looking at. (Too often readers come across journal articles with a table or chart that is impossible to understand. Academics are often poor visual communicators.)

C. A bibliography should include at least 25 quality sources on the topic, plus references to the source of the tables and charts. The bibliography will be single-spaced, with a space between entries and appropriate indentation.

D. The body of the paper should be organized in classic research format:
   - An introduction in which a problem, puzzle or conundrum is stated relevant to the topic at hand.
   - A direct statement of one or more hypotheses (positive statements) about the causal relationships between factors affecting the context, situation or institutions that create the problem.
   - A literature of how others have addressed this problem before you arrived on the scene.
   - Your argument or analytical framework, supported by evidence, no punditry or alternative facts.
   - A summary conclusion, including a suggestion of what subsequent research needs to address, i.e. what are the implications of your findings for future research.

Grading
   - Content will count for 85 percent, writing for 15 percent.
   - Persistent formatting errors, low page count, a shortage of cited sources, the failure to include a table or chart, consistently poor spelling, random capitalization, gargantuan paragraphs and poor editing all could result in deductions up to 5 percent for each deficient category. These penalties are independent of and not limited by the writing grade.

N.B. Please note the deadlines. The first draft is due April 8 in order to give students three weeks to meet with tutors from the Writing Center in order review their papers and sharpen their writing before turning in the final paper. Edit, edit, edit….