

Course Goals or Overview:	
1.	American politics is in flux, moving from traditional party politics to media politics. At the same time, an emerging tidal wave of third party campaign spending by corporations, unions, alleged charitable and educational foundations, and wealthy individuals are distorting American electoral campaigns and legislative agendas into contests that clearly do not center on the common interests of a majority of Americans. To make matters worse, the American presidential election of 2016 offers what some observers are calling a historically poor choice. Other observers note that the political world, both in the United States and abroad, seems to be entering an era of “post-truth” politics. This course seeks to give students tools and associated knowledge to allow them to function effectively in the new political environment.
2.	A key measure of any political society is its constitution, the set of laws, beliefs and institutions that structures a polity. Americans live in a federal system where both the federal and state constitutions structure their lives, and there is often conflict between the principles, approaches and motivations of the state and national governments. Constitutions are a response to the times in which they were written, and nowhere in the United States is this clearer than in the differences in the U.S. and Texas constitutions. This course will explore how and why the U.S. and Texas constitutions were created with the purpose of understanding the multiple approaches to constructing workable governments.
Learning Objectives/Outcomes: At the end of this course, students will be able to:	
1	Effectively communicate about US and Texas politics using appropriate terminology for political science, political philosophy and policy studies. (Communication skills.)
2	Demonstrate critical thinking by comparing, contrasting and critiquing foundational concepts of democracy and mixed government, such as confederation, unitary government and federalism, and the parliamentary and presidential forms of democratic government. Demonstrate critical thinking by comparing and contrasting the Texas and US constitutions in both in terms of historical context and the impacts the two constitutions had on state and federal approaches to institutional design and policy; (Critical Thinking and Communications Skills)
3	Analyze, compare and evaluate competing theories and research relating to elections and institutions such as legislatures, judiciaries and the selection of officeholders in all three branches. (Critical Thinking)
4	Coherently analyze and discuss concepts of federalism and the tensions and solutions it creates for government problem-solving. (Critical Thinking)
5	Analyze and write about the importance ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, religion and class in American political society and how demographic differences, constitutional and civil rights have both shaped the American political system and been shaped by it. (Social Responsibility, Cultural Diversity, and Communications Skills)
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Course Evaluation Methods

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

Exams: - Written tests include multiple choice, short answer and essay questions, and are designed to measure knowledge of presented course material

Assignments: - Written assignments designed to supplement and reinforce course material. Regular attendance, speaking in class discussions or asking relevant questions count towards class participation.

Grading Matrix:

Instrument	Measures SLO	Weight (%)	Aggregate
Class Participation	1,2,3,4,5	5 percent	5%
Discussions	1,2,3,4,5	15 percent	20%
Quizzes	1,2,3,4,5	15 percent	35%
Midterm Exam 1	2,3,4,5	20 percent	55%
Midterm Exam 2	2,3,4,5	20 percent	75%
Final	2,3,4,5	25 percent	100%
TOTAL:			

Grade Determination:

A = 90% or better

B = 80 – 89%

C = 70 – 79%

D = 60 – 69%

F = less than 60%

Course Outline (Next Page)

Reading assignments should be completed by the date listed, but if the course schedule falls off pace, as I think it will, you should adjust your reading. While there is no penalty for not doing so: the failure to read the book will catch up with you at the end of the course.

This schedule is subject to change by the instructor. Any changes to this schedule will be communicated in class or via class email or Blackboard announcement. Additional readings and activities may be added, these will be noted in the Readings and Activities/Assignments sections.

Week	Date	Topics	SLOs	Readings	Assignments Due
1	August 21	Introduction to the Course	1,2,3,4,5		Weekly discussions due every Friday by midnight. Weekly quizzes due every Sunday by midnight. Assignment specifications found in Course Requirements on next page.
	August 23	Political Participation	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 10	
2	August 28	Intro to American Govt	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 1	
	August 30	Intro to Texas Politics	1,2,3,4,5	C&H – Chapter 1	
3	September 4			Labor Day No Class	
	September 6	Local Government in Texas	1,2,3,4,5	C&H – Chapter 13	
4	September 11	Federalism	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 3	
	September 13	Texas & Federalism	1,2,3,4,5	C&H – Chapter 2	
5	September 18	US Constitution	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 2	
	September 20	Texas Constitution	1,2,3,4,5	C&H – Chapter 3	
6	September 25	Civil Rights and Liberties	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 4	
	September 27	The 1 st 10 US Amendments	1,2,3,4,5	Bill of Rights	
7	October 2	Lecture/ Exam Q&A	1,2,3,4,5		
	October 4	Exam 1 Due	2,3,4,5		
8	October 9	Congress	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 5	
	October 11	The Texas Legislature	1,2,3,4,5	C&H – Chapter 7	
9	October 16	The Presidency	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 6	
	October 18	The Texas Executive Branch	1,2,3,4,5	C&H – Chapter 8	
10	October 23	The Judiciary	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 8	
	October 25	The Texas Judiciary	1,2,3,4,5	C&H – Chapter 9	
11	October 30	Lecture/ Exam Q&A	1,2,3,4,5		
	November 1	Exam 2 Due	2,3,4,5		
12	November 6	The Bureaucracy	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 7	
	November 8	Public Opinion	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 9	
13	November 13	Interest Groups & Social Movements	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 11:	
	November 15	Elections and Campaigns	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman - Chapter 13:	
14	November 20	Mass Media and the Press	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 14:	
No Class - Thanksgiving Break November 22-26					
15	November 27	Political Parties	1,2,3,4,5	Kollman – Chapter 12	
	November 29	Political Parties in Texas	1,2,3,4,5	C&H – Chapter 4	
16	December 4	Lecture/ Exam Q&A	1,2,3,4,5		
	December 6	Exam 3 Due	2,3,4,5		

Additional readings and assignments may be added

Kollman - Chapter Outlines:

<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/polisci/american-political-system/welcome.aspx>

Champagne & Harpham - Chapter Outlines:

<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/polisci/governingtexas/welcome.aspx>

Course Requirements:

- 1. Readings:** Each student should read the week's assigned chapters from required textbook. **Due: Weekly**
- 2. Class Quizzes:** Students will be required to take a 5 question true-false quiz (2 attempts allowed), with 12 quizzes total for the fall session. Student quizzes will cover background, central themes and major takeaways of the week's readings. **Due: Midnight on varying Sundays. See due dates below:**

1. Aug - 27	5. Sept - 24	9. Oct - 29
2. Sept - 3	6. Oct - 1	10. Nov - 12
3. Sept - 10	7. Oct - 15	11. Nov - 19
4. Sept - 17	8. Oct - 22	12. Nov - 26
- 3. Weekly Discussions:** A two-paragraph (10 sentences total) double-spaced statement with 2 or more takeaways obtained from the required readings is due every Friday on BlackBoard. This discussion should contain takeaways and opinions written in the student's own words. Quotations should be used sparingly and when used, the text should be included in quotes followed by the author, publication date and page (example: "Text quoted" (Schmid 2002, p. 17)). **Due: Weekly discussions should be posted no later than midnight on Friday.**
 - In addition, a 5 sentence response must be posted to 2 other weekly discussions. Therefore respond to 2 classmate discussions, not your own. If you would like to respond to comments made on your own thread, feel free to do so in a respectable manner.
- 4. Exam 1:** An exam consisting of 25 multiple-choice will be administered (worth 4points each) **Due: Week 7 of class, October 4.**
- 5. Exam 2:** An exam consisting of 25 multiple-choice will be administered (worth 4points each) **Due: Week 11 of class, November 1.**
- 6. Exam 3:** An exam consisting of 25 multiple-choice will be administered (worth 4points each) **Due: Week 16 of class, December 6.**

No Retakes Allowed; Contact Professor if any technical issues arise

****Technology:** Assignments are DUE as outlined in the course calendar. Waiting until the last minute can be problematic as issues *may* arise with computers. **Experiencing technological difficulties or not having access to a computer is not acceptable reasons for missing assignment deadlines.** Students should plan in advance to complete assignments utilizing resources available to them; for example, a local library or the University library and computer lab.**

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 UNTDdisability@untdallas.edu or at Founders Hall, room 204. (UNTD Policy 7.004)

CourseEval Policy: Student's evaluations of teaching effectiveness is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT Dallas. 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. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider students' evaluations to be an important part of your participation in this class.

Assignment Policy: According to the instructor's discretion while working in concert with the division/program's guidelines.

Exam Policy: Exams should be taken as scheduled. No makeup examinations will be allowed except for documented emergencies (See Student Handbook).

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is a hallmark of higher education. 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. Refer to the Student Code of Academic Integrity (Policy 7.002) at http://www.untdallas.edu/sites/default/files/page_level2/pdf/policy/7.002%20Code%20of%20Academic_Integrity.pdf Refer to the Student Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct at http://www.untdallas.edu/sites/default/files/page_level2/hds0041/pdf/7_001_student_code_of_conduct_may_2014.pdf 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 in effect for this course. Please refer to Policy 7.005 Student Attendance at <http://www.untdallas.edu/hr/upol>

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)