

University of North Texas at Dallas
Fall 2018
SYLLABUS

PSCI 1040.005: American Government – Law and Institutions	
3 Hrs.	
Department of Social Sciences	Division of Liberal Arts and Life Sciences
Instructor Name:	Razan Albanna
Email Address:	razan.albanna@untdallas.edu (do not use Blackboard for email communication)
Office Hours:	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.
Classroom Location:	Dallas 2.101
Class Days & Times:	TR 11:30 – 12:50 pm
Course Catalog Description:	U.S. and Texas constitutions, federalism, local government, institutions, civil rights and civil liberties. Satisfies legislative requirement of a course emphasizing U.S. and Texas constitutions. PSCI 1040 must be taken to satisfy the requirement of a course emphasizing U.S. and Texas constitutions.
Prerequisites:	None
Co-requisites:	None
Required Texts:	<p>Kollman, Ken. <i>The American Political System</i>, 2d ed. New York: W.W. Norton.</p> <p>Champagne, Anthony, and Edward J. Harpham. 2013. <i>Governing Texas: an Introduction to Texas Politics</i>, 1st or 2nd ed. New York: WW Norton.</p> <p>Students are required to keep current on public affairs, and quizzes will contain questions drawn from the major stories covered by print, broadcast and internet news organizations. I recommend a few major news sites, a list of which is attached at the end of this syllabus.</p>
Recommended Texts and References:	None, but additional online readings linked to homework assignments and quizzes may be assigned.
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;

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. The American presidential election of 2016 offered what some observers called a historically poor choice, with one billionaire candidate successfully claiming "I'm with you" to the American public and another candidate whose official slogan was "I'm with her." The election of Donald Trump as president is the subject of much speculation but remains largely unexplained. The appointment of businessmen, billionaires and generals to the Trump cabinet raises questions about Trump's pledges to be responsive to the interests of the American mainstream. American foreign policy is in disarray as Trump praises Russia and provokes China and US allies. Many 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, the student will –

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| 1 | Effectively communicate about US and Texas politics using appropriate terminology for political science, political philosophy and policy studies. (Communication skills.) |
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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)

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 identification, multiple choice, short answer and essay questions, and are designed to measure knowledge of presented course material.
- **Group Policy Paper** -- Identify a critical issue in the US foreign policy relationship with one other nation/country and identify strategies that could be used to improve the policy (a thesis statement).
- **Class Participation** – Regular attendance , speaking in class discussions or asking relevant questions count towards class discussion. For each two classes you miss, you lose one participation point. Be on time and sign in to get full credit for participation. Late arrivals or frequent early departures will cost you participation points.

Grading Matrix:

Assessment	Points	Weight (%)	Aggregate
Midterm exam 1	200	20 percent	20%
Final exam	200	20 percent	40%
Group policy paper and presentation	300	30 percent	70%
Public affairs quizzes	200	20 percent	90%
Class participation	100	10 percent	100%
Total:	1000	100 percent	100%

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 by the instructor in class and by posting on Blackboard.

DATE	TOPICS	Readings
T Aug. 28	General course info / writing for this class	
R Aug. 30	Introduction to Political Science and American Politics	
T Sep. 4	Political knowledge	
R Sep. 6	What does government do? Collective action dilemmas	Kollman Ch.1
T Sep. 11	The nature of democracy	Blackboard: Origins and evolution of democratic concepts
R Sep. 13	The US Constitution	Kollman Ch.2
T Sep. 18	Two US constitutions	Kollman Ch. 2
R Sep. 20	The Texas constitutions	C&H Ch 1-2
T Sep. 25	A House Divided: Federalism	Kollman Ch.3; C&H Ch.3
R Sep. 27	Federalism -- the sequel	
T Oct. 2	Catch-up and review	
R Oct. 4	Midterm exam No. 1	
T Oct. 9	Legislatures: Congress/ Do we really hate it?	Kollman Ch.5
R Oct. 11	Texas legislature	C&H Ch.7
T Oct. 16	Executive branches and leaders: The US presidency – popular and imperial	Kollman Ch.6.
R Oct. 18	The US Presidency sequel	
T Oct. 23	The Texas executive branch	C&H Ch.8
R Oct. 25	Bureaucracies and bureaucratic behavior	Kollman Ch 7; C&H Ch 6
T Oct. 30	Interest groups: pluralism and hyperpluralism	Kollman Ch 11
T Nov. 6	Public Opinion	Kollman Ch 9
R Nov. 8	Elections and Campaigns	Kollman Ch 13
T Nov. 13	Campaigns / Campaign ads	C&H Ch 5
R Nov. 15	The Judiciary	Kollman Ch 8
T Nov. 20	The Judiciary: Myths of the Robe	Kollman Ch.8.
R Nov 22	Thanksgiving Break	
T Nov. 27	The Texas Judicial System	
R Nov. 29	Civil Liberties	Kollman Ch 4
T Dec. 4	Civil Liberties	Kollman Ch.4
R Dec. 6	Privacy and the struggle for civil rights	
T Dec. 11	Policy Paper Presentations	
TBA	Final Exam	

Additional readings and assignments may be added

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)

Student Course Evaluation (CourseEval): 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:

Chapter quizzes and in-class assignments will be given without notice. You are required to keep up with your reading. At least one quiz grade will be dropped, so **there are no quiz make-ups**. Format and citation requirements will be included on written assignments and posted on Blackboard. 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: Exams should be taken as scheduled. No makeup examinations will be allowed except for documented emergencies (See Student Handbook).

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. 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 substantially in effect for this course. Please refer to Policy 7.005 Student Attendance at <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 (100 points= 10% of your grade). 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 Blackboard 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 Blackboard 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.
- **Students are expected to attend class**, since much of the material is not drawn from the text or readings. Most students discover this about the time of the first midterm. The university wants instructors to take attendance (see above), so you are required to sign an attendance sheet with your initials. After the first five weeks of the course, students who have missed two classes or more will be contacted by Student Services about those absences. Attendance does not enhance your grade, but failure to attend will lead to lower grades as much of the course material is not in the books. Missing class will also mean missing pop quizzes based on the current affairs readings.
- **For each two absences, you will lose 10 points off your participation grade, which is ten percent of your final grade.** 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.
- **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.
- **Cell phones 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. See below.

- **Students who are found to be using their computers for activities other than note-taking will be banned from using the computer in class for any purpose** Computers are a useful tool for taking notes in class, but these machines are often used for a number of other purposes such as emailing, web-surfing, game-playing etc. Note-taking on a computer is permitted in class, but secondary uses are not. See above.. If we should have a guest speaker, everyone will go computer-free for that session.
- **Read the assigned material before class..** The readings have two purposes. First, the text serves to refresh your memory of those distant government classes you once took in middle and high school. Second, the text will introduce you to the themes of collective action dilemmas and principal-agent problems that are endemic to representative democracies. Other readings and assignments will address specific political behavior characteristics, policy problems, and procedural anomalies that are not addressed in the text, so make sure you complete those on time.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Do not regard lecture outlines as substitutes for being in class.** I will post outlines of the lecture presentations (without images and charts) on the class Blackboard page. But you will find that much of what I explain and emphasize is not laid out in detail in the outline.

You will not have access to the actual presentations outside of class. There are several reasons for this:

1) One-time use of images and charts for teaching is fair use under current legal rulings, but were I to allow you permanent access to those images, I would have to secure formal permissions for every image.

2) Some students substitute post-lecture PowerPoint downloads for attending class or note-taking. Others substitute verbatim regurgitation of PwrPt material on tests and quizzes instead of conducting thoughtful analysis. Studies show that note-taking does enhance student performance, so please develop that skill.

APPENDIX – Following the news

As noted above, I am requiring students in this class to become conversant on the national and state level policy issues of the day. This requires students to listen to, to view and to read articles, video and sound bites from news organizations that cover public affairs. (E and TMZ are not news in that sense; neither is The Daily Show or Colbert Report.)

Following the news is a skill that is acquired through practice. To meet the requirements of this course:

1) students should follow the news daily through radio, TV, newspapers and internet news sources. At least one source should be checked daily, but it would be wise to read or listen to a number of sources that cover the news from different perspectives. That means you may want to check out Fox News or MSNBC occasionally, even though most of us would consider these to have evident biases in their presentation of the news.

2) students should understand the difference between reporting and punditry. Reporting is essentially the gathering and presentation of new information in cultural and political contexts. Punditry is analysis and interpretation based on preferences and political perspectives in order to achieve ideological or entertainment purposes. Many people choose their news sources because the source reinforces the person's preferences and prejudices. Students in this course will do better to look at sources that get the facts right rather than share the student's political perspective. Students should not substitute punditry for reporting as a source of information.

3) students should understand the difference between lucrative entertainment and costly coverage. Many talk show hosts and pundits would rather be controversial than thoughtful or perceptive. Drama and controversy attract a larger audience, and thus bring in more advertising dollars for the media business. Students may wonder why 'analysts' on shows and the internet often seem to find no agreement on the way forward. This is because they are chosen to contradict and yell at each other without listening in order to increase ratings and readership. Similarly, Lindsey Lohan's latest escapade or interview is of no value to this class.. Focus on the biggest political and policy stories.

With these ideas in mind, here are some premier news organizations you may want to follow. All have websites. Those with limited free access are starred (*).

RADIO

National Public Radio (NPR)

TV and VIDEO

CBS (national and local)

NBC (national and local)

ABC (national and local)

Fox (national and local)

PBS (national only)

CNN (national only)

MSNBC (national only)

CSPAN 1 and 2 (Congress)

N.B. National TV networks maintain websites but do not cover complex stories or those with weak video potential. For the purposes of this class, the major stories we are interested in should be reported on these sites.

NEWSPAPERS/INTERNET

New York Times* (5 articles a month/ front page headline view is free)

Washington Post* (20 articles a month/ front page headline view is free)

The Guardian – USA edition (this UK newspaper website often puts its American competitors to shame)

The Texas Tribune (online state news – this is the best single source for Texas news, with links to local coverage)

The Associated Press (the free Android cell phone app now provides many in-depth articles, a real change from the headline news offered in the past)

Reuters (economic news)

Remove this page, write your questions, sign and return by third day of class (September 4).

I have read and reviewed the syllabus and I understand that I am responsible for understanding the policies of the course.

_____ Student signature

_____ Student ID number

_____ Date signed

I have the following questions about the course syllabus and policies: