

**PSCI 1050.005, American Government: Process and Policies**  
**MWF 10.00-10.50p, BLB 180**  
**Syllabus, Fall 2016**

Dr. Elizabeth Oldmixon  
Office: Wooten Hall 156  
Office hours: Wednesdays 1.00-4.00p and by appointment

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### **Course Description**

This course explores the following topics: political culture, public opinion, participation, elections and voting, political parties, media, interest groups, and public policy. It partially fulfills legislative requirement “the university not award a baccalaureate degree or a lesser degree or academic certificate unless the student has completed 6 hours of credit in American Government.” Please note that the instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Describe the role of public opinion, interest groups, media, political parties, and elections in American politics.
- Identify and analyze issues and policies in US and Texas politics.
- Demonstrate active participation in class.
- Describe how course topics affect personal and social responsibility.
- Think critically and communicate effectively about the course topics.

### **Additional Staff**

*Teaching Assistant (TA)* The Department of Political Science provides TAs to help students navigate the course. TAs are your first resource for administrative, grading and/or policy issues. The TAs are also available to address substantive questions about course material. TA information is as follows:

- Mr. Evan Lowe, Wooten Hall 140, Office Hours: MW 11.00a-2.00p
- Mr. Elliot Montagano, Wooten Hall 173a, Office Hours: MWF 11.00a-12.00p

*Supplemental Instruction (SI)* The Learning Center provides Supplemental Instruction for this course. SI Leaders will hold group study sessions. All students are encouraged to attend.

- Your SI is Ms. Imaan Adil. SI sessions will be added to the course calendar in Blackboard once they are finalized.

### **Blackboard**

A Blackboard page is maintained for this course at <https://learn.unt.edu/>. Students are responsible for checking Blackboard regularly for assignments and notices. Assignments will be submitted and

grades posted in Blackboard.

Links to both texts and the following course materials are also available in Blackboard.

- *Class Communications in Piazza*  
We will be using Piazza for class communications. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates and the instructional staff. Rather than emailing questions that might be of relevance to the entire class, you should post your questions on Piazza. If you have a question that is private in nature, you should send a private message in Piazza, rather than email. Create an account using the link in Blackboard. A note on etiquette: please sign your private messages with your name and include an appropriate salutation.
- *Remind* (optional)  
If you wish to receive course-related reminders via email or text, you may sign up to receive notifications at this link [remind.com/join/psci1050](https://remind.com/join/psci1050) or text @psci1050 to 81010.

### **Required Materials**

PSCI 1050 American Government: Process and Policies Custom Electronic Edition. Slim Pack ISBN 978-1506357386 – hereinafter, CUSTOM. (\$57.15)

- Custom version of Barbour, Christine and Gerald C. Wright. 2015. Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.
- eBook available via the UNT Bookstore

PSCI 1050 Workbook: Process and Policies. Ashville, NC: Soomo Publishing. ISBN 978-0991135585 – hereinafter, WB. (\$38.35)

- eBook available via the UNT Bookstore

REEF Polling Account (*free for all UNT students*)

- Students should create (or log-in to an existing) REEF account in Blackboard.

### **Grading**

All assignments and exams in the course will be assessed as Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory, with the specifications required for Satisfactory articulated on each assignment. In general, Satisfactory should not be viewed as “minimally competent,” but rather as a mark of having achieved the assignment’s learning goals and specifications. An assignment meets the goals, or it does not—there is no gradation of assessment. The only letter grade that will be given in the course will be your final grade, and it will reflect the “bundles” of assignments and requirements you have satisfactorily accomplished in the class. That final letter grade is not an assessment of your intelligence, your abilities, or your value as a person. Rather, the grade reflects what you demonstrated that you learned in the course: no more, no less.

Built into this system is a good deal of choice as to how much you wish to learn and how hard you want to work to demonstrate and apply that learning. You might choose that passing the course with a C is sufficient for your goals—it is perfectly appropriate and worthy of respect for you to make

that choice, especially if it allows you to proactively allocate your time to other endeavors. If you strive to get an A in the course and maximize your learning, you should know that you are taking on that work and challenge yourself, and should make sure you are in a personal and academic situation to achieve that level of engagement.

### *Grading Bundles*

A Bundle – Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of A. The work required to complete this bundle provides strong mastery of course material, and indicates that students can apply it to your own life and effectively communicate it in their own words.

- Satisfactorily complete 2 midterm exams OR the cumulative final
- Satisfactorily complete 8 Workbook Assignments
- Earn 80% of available REEF points
- Satisfactorily complete the Syllabus Quiz
- Satisfactorily complete 6 Reflections

B Bundle – Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of B. The work required to complete this bundle provides good mastery of course material and indicates that students can apply it to your own life.

- Satisfactorily complete 2 midterm exams OR the cumulative final
- Satisfactorily complete 7 Workbook Assignments
- Earn 80% of available REEF points
- Satisfactorily complete the Syllabus Quiz

C Bundle – Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of C. The work required to complete this bundle provides fair mastery of course material.

- Satisfactorily complete 2 midterm exams OR the cumulative final
- Satisfactorily complete 6 Workbook Assignments
- Satisfactorily complete the Syllabus Quiz

D Bundle – Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of D. The work required to complete this bundle provides minimal mastery of course material.

- Satisfactorily complete 1 midterm exam OR the cumulative final
- Satisfactorily complete 5 Workbook Assignments

Students failing to Satisfactorily complete at least the D Bundle will receive a final course grade of F.

### *Tokens & Flexibility*

Every student starts the course with 3 virtual tokens that can be “exchanged” for some leniency or opportunities for revision. Using a token will allow a student to do the following:

- Be awarded 10 “free” REEF points;
- Resubmit a Workbook Assignment deemed Unsatisfactory;
- Submit the Syllabus Quiz, a Workbook Assignment, or Reflection up to 48 hours late.

## Assignments and Examinations

### *Workbook Assignments*

There are eight workbook chapters. Each chapter is organized around the four learning objectives adopted by Texas's Higher Education Coordinating Board. Workbook assignments are denoted WB on the schedule. Due dates are listed on the schedule. To be considered Satisfactory, Workbook Assignments must:

- Be completed by 11.59p on the due date;
- Earn 70% of the possible points.

### *REEF Points*

We will use REEF polling (a student response system) in class this term. Students should use a personal electronic device to respond to REEF polling questions. For some REEF questions, there are 2 points possible; students earn 1 point for responding and 1 point for choosing the correct response. For some questions, students receive full credit for responding. If you do not have a personal electronic device that you can use in class (smartphone, tablet, or computer) and wish to earn credit for REEF participation, please see me right away. Missed REEF questions cannot be made up, except with the use of a token.

### *Examinations*

Three exams will be given—two midterm exams and a cumulative final exam. Exams will cover material from lectures and required readings. Exams will be comprised of objective questions—multiple choice, true/false, and matching, for example. In order to Satisfactorily complete an exam, students must:

- Earn 70% of the available points.

No make-up exams will be given unless you have a university-excused absence or a family or medical emergency which is documented and verifiable. Students who will miss an exam due to travel with UNT teams or performance groups, or for observance of a religious holiday should make arrangements to take their exams prior to their absences.

### *Reflections*

Over the course of the semester, students must complete reflections in Blackboard on how the course material affects one's life and/or society. In order to earn an A in the course, students must Satisfactorily participate in 6 Reflections. Satisfactory Reflections requires:

- A single post consisting of at least 100 words;
- Posts be written in one's own words;
- Posts be responsive to the prompt;
- Clear writing with no more than two stylistic (spelling and grammatical) errors per post.
- Posts be submitted by 11.59p on the due dates listed on the Course Schedule.

### *Syllabus Quiz*

A quiz based on material in this syllabus is available via Blackboard. In order to Satisfactorily complete the quiz, students must:

- Answer 90% of the questions correctly;
- Submit the quiz by 11.59p on the due date.

## Course Schedule

Unless otherwise instructed, you should plan to have all the readings completed for a topic by the date we begin the topic.

Date	Topic	Reading Assignments	Other Assignments
August 29	Introductory Material		
August 31	What is politics?	CUSTOM chapter 1	
September 2	What is politics?		
September 5	No class – Labor Day		
September 7	Political Culture	CUSTOM chapter 2	
September 9	Political Culture		Syllabus Quiz
September 12	Political Culture		Reflection 1
September 14	Public Opinion	CUSTOM chapter 3	
September 16	Public Opinion		
September 19	Public Opinion		
September 21	Public Opinion		WB chapter 1
September 23	Political Parties	CUSTOM chapter 4	Reflection 2
September 26	Political Parties		
September 28	Political Parties		
September 30	Political Parties		WB chapter 5
October 3	Interest Groups	CUSTOM chapter 5	Reflection 3
October 5	Interest Groups		
October 7	Interest Groups		
October 10	Interest Groups		WB chapter 4
October 12	<b>Midterm Examination</b>		
October 14	Elections and Voting	CUSTOM chapter 6	
October 17	Elections and Voting		
October 19	Elections and Voting		WB chapter 6
October 21	Elections and Voting		
October 24	Elections and Voting		WB chapter 2
October 26	Media	CUSTOM chapter 7	
October 28	Media		Reflection 4
October 31	Media		
November 2	Media		WB chapter 3
November 4	Social Policy	CUSTOM chapter 8	
November 7	Social Policy		
November 9	Post-Election Day Discussion		
November 11	Social Policy		Reflection 5
November 14	Social Policy		WB chapter 7
November 16	Economic Policy	CUSTOM chapter 9	
November 18	Economic Policy		

November 21	Economic Policy	
November 23	Economic Policy	Reflection 6
November 25	Foreign Policy	CUSTOM chapter 10
November 28	No class – Thanksgiving break	
November 30	Foreign Policy	
December 2	Foreign Policy	WB chapter 8
December 5	Foreign Policy	
December 7	<b>Midterm Examination</b>	
December 9	No Class – Reading Day	
December 10	<b>Cumulative Final Examination 8.00-10.00a</b>	

## Class Policies

For course drop information, see schedule at <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html>.

### *Laptops*

Research suggests that using laptops in class is negatively associated with student success. I advise against using laptops, but it is up to you. The larger problem is that laptop use negatively affects student success for the people sitting around laptop users. Laptop users should take care not to distract their peers.

### *Academic Integrity*

Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of F in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at <http://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity>.

### *Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance*

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable 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 Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

### *Classroom Conduct*

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.

## Track Your Progress

Use this checklist to track your progress in PSCI 1050. To earn a grade, you must satisfactorily complete all items in that grade's column and all columns to the right.

- To earn a C, you must complete all items in the C and D columns.
- To earn a B, you must complete all items in the B, C, and D columns.
- To earn an A, you must complete all items in the A, B, C, and D columns.

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Workbook Assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Exams				
Midterm Exam OR			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Final Exam				<input type="checkbox"/>
Syllabus Quiz			<input type="checkbox"/>	
80% of REEF Points		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Reflections	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			

**Tokens Available:**