

American Government: Processes and Policies
PSCI 1050.07
Spring 2009

Professor: Dr. Christopher J. Williams
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The course provides an introduction to the processes of American and Texas politics. It focuses on political actors rather than political institutions, and touches upon three distinct topics. First, we will examine the role of mass publics and linkage institutions (i.e. political parties, interest groups, etc.) in shaping American and Texas politics. Second, we will discuss the process of campaigns and elections. Finally, we will touch upon public policy processes.

One of the primary goals of this course is to enable students to develop critical and analytical thinking skills that can be applied not only to politics but also to other areas of study. This involves not only knowing some basic facts about the American and Texan politics, but also the ability to apply academic learning to real world problems.

This class will consist mainly of lecture, but I place an emphasis on student interaction and learning from one another. Thus, there will also include a great deal of student led, instructor guided discussion.

Required Books

Fiorina, M., P. Peterson, B. Johnson, and W. Mayer. 2007. *The New American Democracy*. Pearson Longman. 6th Edition.

Cox, G., ed. 2007. *Processes & Policies American & Texas Politics: A Workbook for Political Science 1050*, 7th edition. University of North Texas.

We will also use an online textbook to cover Texas Politics. The textbook can be found at <http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/index.html>.

Grades

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Final exam: 30%

Workbook Assignments: 30%

Grading will follow a standard scale:

A=89.5-100%

B=79.5-89.4%

C=69.5-79.4%

D=59.5-69.4%

F=0-59.4%

Communications

There are multiple ways of contacting me if you have any questions about the class. I will always be in my office during my office hours, however, I am regularly in my office, and I have an open door policy. Moreover, you may also contact me via e-mail. I am diligent in returning e-mails quickly.

Exams

There will be three exams. The first two exams will consist of 30 multiple choice questions worth 2 points each and 1 long essay worth 40 points, and will not be cumulative. The second exam (final) will consist of 2 out of 4 short essays worth 30 points each and 1 out of 2 long essays worth 40 points. The final exam is comprehensive and thus, will cover all material discussed in class. The first two exams will be worth 20% of your final grade each for a total of 40%. The final exam is worth 30% of your final grade.

Makeup exams will only be given in light of a university excused absence or at the discretion of the instructor. Inform me of your absence before the examination date, either in person or by e-mail. You will have one class period to complete the makeup exam, which consists of answering *three long essay questions*. ***All makeup exams will take place during pre-finals week. YOU MUST CONTACT ME 72 HOURS BEFORE THE MAKEUP DAY IN ORDER TO SCHEDULE AN EXAM.***

Workbook Assignments: Students must complete five workbook assignments each worth 6% of your grade each for a total of 30% of your final grade. Your answers must be written on the original workbook sheet, torn out, stapled, and turned in to your TA at the beginning of class (within the first ten minutes of class). Assignments may be turned in early, but they will not be accepted late.

Legislative Simulation

There will be a semester long legislative simulation occurring in this class. Each student will act as the elected representative of a particular district (you will be provided details about the demographic and ideological makeup of this district at a later date). During the semester students will be expected to act as legislators, proposing, voting on, and enacting various piece of policy. At the same time, certain crises may arise that have to be

dealt with. As an elected official you will be required to represent your constituents to the best of your ability, while balancing cross-cutting demands from interest groups, your political party, and other legislators. CAN YOU WIN REELECTION?!?!?!?!?

You will be asked to choose your preferred party on the second class. You will also receive more details about this exercise at that time.

Attendance and Blackboard

Attendance is expected, but not required for this class. As this class is quite intensive, you will undoubtedly learn more and be more successful if you attend class.

All announcements, including, but not limited to, changes to the syllabus, assignment due dates, and exam dates (however, exam dates are fixed, barring a major event, i.e. closing of school, etc.) will be announced either in class or through Blackboard. Therefore, even though attendance is not required, an announcement may be made which you may be unaware of if you do not attend class. Further, you are responsible for checking Blackboard regularly. Not all announcements will necessarily be made through Blackboard, however, some may be made through Blackboard. Thus, it is in your best interest to attend class, and check Blackboard everyday.

Class Discussion

Although your grade is not dependent upon class discussion, this is a small group, and discussion will be a large part of the class. We will be having class discussions quite often, if not everyday. Needless to say, greater class discussion will make this course far more fun and interesting. Students should come prepared to discuss the readings for that day. A good way to do this is to take notes while you're reading, and jot down a few questions you have.

University of North Texas Statement of ODA/ADA Compliance

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 on or before the sixth class day (beginning of the second week of classes).

The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 - The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, please notify me by the second week of class. You are also encouraged to contact the Office of

Disability Accommodation at (940) 565-4323. The ODA makes formal recommendations regarding necessary and appropriate accommodations based on specifically diagnosed disabilities. 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 on or before the add/drop deadline.

Policies on Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. Incidents of plagiarism and/or cheating will result in a failing grade for the class and further penalties per the University's judicial process.

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 online (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 may appeal any decision under the policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Policy Manual Section 18.1.16 "Student Standards of Academic Integrity."

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, see the professor. Finally, students agree that, by taking this course, all required assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to www.turnitin.com or a similar plagiarism prevention system.

The UNT Department of Political Science Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism: The UNT Policy on Academic Integrity defines cheating as the use of unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise, including but not limited to: use of any unauthorized assistance to take exams, tests, quizzes, or other assessments; dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems or carrying out other assignments; acquisition, without permission, of tests, notes or other academic materials belong to a faculty or staff member of the University; dual submission of a paper or project, or re-submission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor; any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage on an academic assignment. Plagiarism is defined as use of another's thoughts or words without proper attribution in any academic exercise, regardless of the student's intent, including but not limited to: the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement or citation; the knowing or negligent

unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in selling term papers or other academic materials. Forgery is defined as altering a score, grade or official academic University record or forging the signature of an instructor or other student. Fabrication is defined as falsifying or inventing any information, data or research as part of an academic exercise. Facilitating academic dishonesty is defined as helping or assisting another in the commission of academic dishonesty. Finally, sabotage is defined as acting to prevent others from completing their work or willfully disrupting the academic work of others.

The following academic penalties may be assessed at the instructor's discretion upon determination that academic dishonesty has occurred. Admonitions and educational assignments are not appealable:

- A. Admonition. The student may be issued a verbal or written warning.
- B. Assignment of Educational Coursework. The student may be required to perform additional coursework not required of other students in the specific course.
- C. Partial or no credit for an assignment or assessment. The instructor may award partial or no credit for the assignment or assessment on which the student engaged in academic dishonesty, to be calculated into the final course grade.
- D. Course Failure. The instructor may assign a failing grade for the course. Should the procedure for appeal of a case of academic dishonesty extend beyond the date when the instructor submits course grades for the semester, the student will be assigned a grade that reflects the penalty, which shall be adjusted, as appropriate, at the conclusion of any appeal process. Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Policy on Academic Integrity.

Initial meeting: Introduction

Week 1 (January 22nd): Course Introduction

Required Reading:

Fiorina et al., Ch. 1

Week 2 (January 27th - 29th): Public Opinion

Required reading:

Fiorina et al., Ch. 5, and Cox, pg. 1-8

LEGISLATIVE SIMULATION: COME TO CLASS ON THE 27TH CHOOSING YOUR PREFERRED PARTY (DEMOCRAT, REPUBLICAN, INDEPENDENT)

Week 3 (February 3rd – 5th): Political ParticipationRequired reading:

Read Fiorina et al., Ch. 6, and Cox, page 15-21

February 5th: **Cox, Exercises 1-1, 1-5, 2-2, 2-3 and 2-6 due**

LEGISLATIVE SIMULATION: COME TO CLASS ON THE 5TH WITH A LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL THAT YOU WANT TO PASS

Week 4 (February 10th – 12th): Review and Exam 1

February 10th: Exam Review

February 12th: Exam 1 in Class

LEGISLATIVE SIMULATION: THIS WEEK YOU MAY WANT TO START TRYING TO DRUM UP THE VOTES TO PASS YOUR LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

Week 5 (February 17th – 19th): The MediaRequired reading:

Read Fiorina et al., Ch. 9 and Cox, pages 31-40

LEGISLATIVE SIMULATION: BE PREPARED, IT LOOKS LIKE THE MEDIA HAS CAUGHT WIND OF YOUR LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL, YOU MAY NEED TO MAKE A STATEMENT

Week 6 (February 24th – 26th): Interest GroupsRequired reading:

Read Fiorina et al., Ch. 7 and Cox, pages 63-71

Also read the chapter on Interest Groups in the online Texas Politics textbook

February 26th: **Cox, Exercises 3-1, 3-4**

LEGISLATIVE SIMULATION: IT LOOKS LIKE THERE ARE SOME INTEREST GROUPS CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL, AND THEY'RE THREATENING YOUR CAMPAIGN DONATIONS.

Week 7 (March 3rd - 5th): Political PartiesRequired reading:

Read Fiorina et al., Ch. 8 and Cox, pages 47-54

Also read the chapter on Political Parties in the online Texas Politics textbook

March 5th: **Cox, Exercises 5-2, 5-5, 4-3 and 4-6 due**

LEGISLATIVE SIMULATION: THE PARTY HAS PUBLISHED THEIR LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES, IF YOURS ISN'T ON THAT LIST, GOOD LUCK GETTING IT PASSED.

Week 8 (March 10th - 12th): Review and Exam 2

March 10th: Exam Review

March 12th: Exam 2 in Class

Week 9 (March 16th - 20th): Spring Break**Week 10 (March 24th – March 26th): Presidential Elections**Required reading:

Read Fiorina et al., Ch. 10 and Cox, pages 85-95

Week 11 (March 31st – April 2nd): Legislative Simulation Week

March 31st: **Cox, Exercises 6-1, 6-2 and 6-3 due**

LEGISLATIVE SIMULATION: YOU'VE BEEN PUTTING OUT FIRES ALL SEMESTER, BUT NOW IS YOUR CHANCE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE YOU GET YOUR PRIORITY PASSED.

Week 12 (April 7th – 9th): Congressional ElectionsRequired reading:

Read Fiorina et al., Ch. 11

Week 13 (April 14th – 16th): Texas ElectionsRequired reading:

Read the chapter on Voting, Elections and Campaigns in the online Texas Politics textbook

Week 14 (April 21st – 23rd): Domestic PolicyRequired reading:

Read Fiorina et al., Ch. 18 and Cox, pages 123-131 and pages 139-146

LEGISLATIVE SIMULATION: THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION IS DRAWING TO A CLOSE, TIME TO VOTE ON ALL THE PROPOSALS.

Week 15 (April 28th – 30th): Economic, Foreign and Defense Policy

Required reading:

Read Fiorina et al., Ch. 19

Read Fiorina et al., Ch. 20 and Cox pages 153-161

April 28th: **Cox, Exercises 8-3, 8-5, 9-3, 9-4, 10-2 and 10-6 due**

April 30th: Exam Review

LEGISLATIVE SIMULATION: THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION IS OVER, FIND OUT IF YOU'LL BE RETURNING TO OFFICE NEXT SESSION.

May 5th: Make-up Exam Day

Final Exam: May 12th at 10:30am