

University of North Texas at Dallas
SPRING 2025 SYLLABUS

PSCI 1050.0004: American Government – Process and Policies 3 Hrs.	
Instructor Name:	Dr. Orlando J. Pérez
Office Location:	Founders Hall 238
Office Phone:	Please communicate by official university email if you want a prompt reply usually within 48 (2 business days) hours; weekend communication might take longer.
Email Address:	Orlando.perez@untDallas.edu
Office Hours:	Tuesday/Thursday 10:45am-12:45pm or by appointment.
Classroom Location:	DAL 1 270
Course Modality:	Face-to-Face
Class Days & Times:	Tuesday / Thursday 1:00-2:20pm
Course Catalog Description:	Political parties, elections, interest groups, mass media, public opinion, and public policy.
Prerequisites:	None
Co-requisites:	None
Required Texts:	McClain, Paula D., and Steven C. Tauber. 2022. <i>American Politics in Black and White</i>, 6th New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-197-53418-2 paper/ 978-0-197-53422-9 e-book.
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; e-mail: 1012mgr@fhcg.follett.com

Course Goals or Overview:	<p>1. American political outcomes are shaped not just by constitutions, systems of laws, and government institutions, but also by human behaviors. In democracies, the preferences of a majority are supposed to determine the agenda and course of policy. But do they? To what extent are these preferences manifested accurately, and to what extent are they influenced by public and private institutions? This course explores the opinions, agenda setting and electoral behaviors of American Citizens, three major models of American Democracy (elitism, pluralism and hyper-pluralism), and the private interests and institutions that seek to structure both the American political agenda and the direct use of power to achieve policy goals.</p> <p>2. The final section of the course introduces students to the formal policy processes that involve interest groups, political parties, elected officials and unelected bureaucrats in the effort to promote national and state policy.</p>
Learning Objectives/Outcomes: At the end of this course, the student will –	
1	Effectively communicate about US politics using appropriate terminology from political science, political philosophy, and policy studies. (Communication skills.)
2	Demonstrate critical thinking by comparing, contrasting, and critiquing foundational concepts of democratic elections, including the nature of campaign communications and the influence of large campaign contributions and third-party spending on election outcomes. (Critical Thinking and Communications Skills)
3	Analyze competing theories and research relating to voter turnout and voter choice, the behavior of candidates and parties in electoral campaigns and the roles of interest groups and government bureaucracies in constructing and implementing policy. (Critical Thinking)
4	Discuss concepts about federal budgets and economic policy in the general context of competing theories on how and when to stimulate the American economy and to achieve balanced budgets. (Critical Thinking)
5	Describe the importance ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, religion and class in American political society and how demographic differences have shaped the diversity of representative government in the United States (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.

- **Two (2) semester exams.**
- **One (1) final exam.**
- **Class attendance:** Attendance will be recorded at the beginning of each class period. I will allow up to 2 absences without affecting the attendance grade. Any additional absences will count (please do not ask for exceptions). Students who attend **all** class sessions (100% attendance) will receive 5 extra points added to their final grade.
- **Exams:** Will consist of multiple-choice and true/false questions; they will be administered via Canvas and will be timed; they will cover the readings, and any materials discussed in class, including videos; and you can consult your notes and text.

Weighting Scale:

Assignments	Percentage
Exam 1	30%
Exam 2	30%
Final Exam	30%
Class Attendance	10%
Total:	100%

Grading Scale:

PERCENTAGE	GRADE
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
0-59%	F

Course Outline:

Reading assignments should be completed by the date listed. 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 Canvas.

Week	Assignment/Lectures	Readings	Activities/Assignments
WEEK 1 1/14, 1/16	Introduction The Foundations of American Government	Chapter 1	
WEEK 2 1/21, 1/23	The Constitution	Chapter 2	
WEEK 3 1/28, 1/30	Federalism	Chapter 3	
WEEK 4 2/4, 2/6	Civil Rights and Liberties	Chapter 4 and 5	

WEEK 5 2/11, 2/13, 2/18	Congress	Chapter 6	
WEEK 6			FIRST EXAM DUE: 2/20
WEEK 7 2/25, 2/27	The Presidency	Chapter 7	
WEEK 8 3/4, 3/6	Public Opinion	Chapter 10	
WEEK 9 (March 10-14)	NO CLASSES: SPRING BREAK		
WEEK 10 3/18, 3/20	Political Parties	Chapter 14	
WEEK 11 3/25, 3/27, 4/1	Voting and Elections	Chapter 15	
WEEK 12			SECOND EXAM: DUE 4/3
WEEK 13 4/8, 4/10	The Media	Chapter 11	
WEEK 14 4/15, 4/17	Social Movements	Chapter 12	
WEEK 15 4/22, 4/24	Interest groups	Chapter 13	
WEEK 16 4/29, 5/1	Public Policy	Chapter 16	
FINAL EXAM: DUE, MAY 6			

***Additional readings and assignments may be added at the discretion of the instructor.**

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 accommodation 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 accommodation 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 first floor of the Student Center. (UNT D 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.

Extra credit: Individual extra credit will NOT be given.

Pop Quizzes: I reserve the right to administer pop quizzes.

Exam Policy: Exams should be taken as scheduled. No makeup examinations will be allowed except for specific and **documented medical** emergencies notified prior to the exam (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](http://www.untDallas.edu/sites/default/files/page_level2/pdf/policy/7.002%20Code%20of%20Academic%20Integrity.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."*

Statement on Use of Artificial Intelligence in Political Science Courses: Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for a fair evaluation of your work. The Political Science program deems the unacknowledged use of generative artificial intelligence writing tools often constitutes plagiarism or contains falsehoods and made-up quotes. Generative AI often embodies predictable writing or contract cheating which are already implicitly addressed in our Academic Integrity policy. (Generative AI products include ChatGPT, Grammarly GO, GPT-3, GPT-4, BERT, and others.)

Therefore, UNT Dallas political science degree program will enforce the following: artificial intelligence apps and programs to assist in writing course assignments such as term papers, midterm exams, essays, homework, final exams or other graded work are **prohibited** in **all** political science classes, **unless** the instructor of a particular class has:

1. authorized the use of AI technology in writing posted in a syllabus or on the course Canvas web site,
2. authorized the use of AI technology only for specific assignments, tests, or exams, or
3. authorized the use of AI technology for **all** class members for each assignment designated.

**** There is no need, nor benefit, in using AI functions in this course. Therefore, its use will result in lower grades, including the possibility of failing an assignment!**

Please note:

Alleged ignorance of the program's AI policy is not a valid defense for violating academic integrity through the

use of another person's work.

If an instructor allows the use of AI technology for one assignment, this does not imply that the instructor has authorized the use of AI in other course assignments or exams, or that the limited authorization of AI use for one assignment validates its use in other political science courses.

Students should cite the AI program used in the bibliography or research sources. If such a list is not required for the assignment, students should specify the use of an AI product in a note to the instructor. Not citing the use of AI is a violation of PSCI departmental policy on academic integrity.

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>

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 are essential to your ability to demonstrate proficiency in the subject.

You miss class at your own peril, and frequent class absences will affect your grade. Details of attendance policy will be discussed in class during the first session.

I do not post the notes or slides of my lectures. Before you ask the professor what was missed you should consult with a peer and review notes for the missed class.

Diversity/Tolerance Policy: Students are encouraged to contribute their perspectives and insights to class discussions. However, offensive, 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. (UNT Policy 7.001)

CLASS-SPECIFIC POLICIES:

- **A lot of questions can be answered by reading the syllabus. Please check the syllabus regularly.**
- **Communicate using your official university e-mail.** 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.
- **Students are expected to attend class**, since a lot of the material will not necessarily come from the textbook. Most students discover this about the time of the first midterm. The university wants instructors to take attendance, so I will keep track of attendance. **Class attendance counts for 10% of the total class grade.** However, failure to attend will also lead to lower grades as you will miss material important to the other assignments. Students are responsible for acquiring any missed information.
- **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 (with prior authorization of the instructor). Texting, tweeting, and other uses are not permitted. I will enforce this policy strictly.**
- **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.
- **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 important concepts, ideas, theories, and themes that shape political and policy debates in contemporary America.
- **Participate frequently in discussions in class or ask relevant questions.** 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.

APPENDIX – Following the news.

Following the news is a skill that is acquired through practice.

- 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, Kim Kardashian’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)