

**Remote / Online Course Syllabus**

**Course Information**

*Course Number/Section* PSCI 4326.001  
*Course Title* **Political Parties and Interest Groups**  
*Term* Spring 2021  
*Class meetings* Tues. & Thur., 11:30 am – 12:45 pm

**Professor Contact Information**

*Professor* Robert Lowry  
*Office Phone* 972-883-6320  
*Email Address* robert.lowry@utdallas.edu  
*Office Location* GR 3.503  
*Online Office Hours* By appointment using MS Teams. In general, mornings are not good, but afternoons are open.

**Teaching Assistant**

*TA* Kate Madufo  
*Email address* kate.chukwu@utdallas.edu  
*Online Office hours* By appointment

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**Course Modality and Expectations**

<b>Instructional Mode</b>	This course will be taught using the remote instructional mode. For a description, see here: <a href="https://covid.utdallas.edu/students-families-info/spring-2021-registration/">https://covid.utdallas.edu/students-families-info/spring-2021-registration/</a>
<b>Course Platform</b>	Lectures will be delivered using MS Teams. We will also be using eLearning for distribution of course materials and class assignments.
<b>Expectations</b>	Students are expected to view the course lectures either in real time or asynchronously, and to complete all assignments on time.
<b>Asynchronous Learning Guidelines</b>	Please see the instructions at <a href="https://covid.utdallas.edu/response/faq/#asynchronous">https://covid.utdallas.edu/response/faq/#asynchronous</a>

**COVID-19 Guidelines and Resources**

The information contained in the following link lists the University's COVID-19 resources for students and instructors of record.

Please see <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.

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### **Class Participation**

Regular class participation is expected regardless of course modality. Students who fail to participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

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### **Class Recordings**

The instructor may record meetings of this course. Any recordings will be available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. If the instructor or a UTD school/department/office plans any other uses for the recordings, consent of the students identifiable in the recordings is required prior to such use unless an exception is allowed by law. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

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### **Class Materials**

The Instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course, however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

### **Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions**

GOVT 2305 and 2306, or the equivalent.

### **Course Description**

Political parties and interest groups occupy important, albeit somewhat awkward, places in the American political system. Neither parties nor interest groups are mentioned anywhere in the Constitution, and many of the founders distrusted "factions" of all kinds. Nonetheless, political parties and interest groups have emerged as the most important intermediaries between individuals and decision makers in the federal and state governments.

We will start with the study of interest groups, or organized interests as I sometimes prefer to call them. What are the different kinds of interest organizations, and what is the mix of interests they represent? Why do people join or support interest groups? What do interest groups do to maintain support, and how do they operate internally? How do organized interests seek to influence the outcomes of elections, and what constitutional issues does this raise? How do they lobby legislators directly, or indirectly by appealing to the public? How do they seek to influence

the executive branch and court decisions? What are the overall pros and cons of organized interests in American politics?

We will then ask a similar set of questions about political parties in the United States. Why did they develop, and how have they changed over the years? Why does the U.S. have just two major parties? How are parties organized at the local, state and national levels? What constituencies do the major parties represent, and how has this changed over time? How are candidates and platforms chosen? What strategies do parties adopt to influence election outcomes? What is the role of parties in organizing the legislative, executive and judicial branches? What is the state of political parties following the 2020 elections and subsequent events?

### **Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

On completing this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the organization and operations of organized interests and political parties in the United States:
- Explain why certain kinds of interests have inherent advantages when it comes to getting organized, and why the United States has a strong two-party system.
- Describe the activities of organized interests and political parties in elections, policy adoption, policy implementation, and judicial disputes.
- Understand and evaluate different normative views of the roles of these organizations in a pluralist democracy, and current controversies regarding issues such as candidate nominations, campaign finance, lobbying, and polarization.

### **Required Textbooks and Materials**

The following books can be purchased from the UTD bookstore or an alternative provider such as Amazon or the publisher:

Anthony Downes, *Interest Groups in American Politics: Pressure and Power*. Routledge, 2d ed. 2012 ISBN 978-0-415-89426-5 [This book is also available as an eBook on the UTD library website.]

Marjorie Randon Hershey, *Party Politics in America*. Routledge, 18th ed. 2021. [**Note:** This book is scheduled to be shipped by the publisher after January 27.]

Additional readings may be added to the syllabus. These will be announced in class and on eLearning.

Students are not required to print material available electronically.

### **Technical Requirements**

In addition to a confident level of computer and Internet literacy, certain minimum technical requirements must be met to enable a successful learning experience. Please review the important technical requirements on the [Getting Started with eLearning](#) webpage.

### **Course Access and Navigation**

This course can be accessed using your UT Dallas NetID account on the [eLearning](#) website.

Please see the course access and navigation section of the [Getting Started with eLearning](#) webpage for more information.

To become familiar with the eLearning tool, please see the [Student eLearning Tutorials](#) webpage.

UT Dallas provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The [eLearning Support Center](#) includes a toll-free telephone number for immediate assistance (1-866-588-3192), email request service, and an online chat service.

### **Communication**

This course utilizes online tools for interaction and communication. Some external communication tools such as regular email and a web conferencing tool may also be used during the semester. For more details, please visit the [Student eLearning Tutorials](#) webpage for video demonstrations on eLearning tools.

Student emails and discussion board messages will be answered within 3 working days under normal circumstances.

### **Distance Learning Student Resources**

Online students have access to resources including the McDermott Library, Academic Advising, The Office of Student AccessAbility, and many others. Please see the [eLearning Current Students](#) webpage for more information.

### **Server Unavailability or Other Technical Difficulties**

The University is committed to providing a reliable learning management system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty which prevents students from completing a time sensitive assessment activity, the instructor will provide an appropriate accommodation based on the situation. Students should immediately report any problems to the instructor and also contact the online [eLearning Help Desk](#). The instructor and the eLearning Help Desk will work with the student to resolve any issues at the earliest possible time.

### **Academic Calendar**

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READING	ASSESSMENT / ACTIVITY	DUE DATE
1 01/19-01/21	Introduction Interest Groups in the U.S.	Nownes ch. 1		
2 01/26-01/28	Evolution of Interest Groups Formation & Maintenance	Nownes ch. 2 Nownes ch. 3		

**PSCI 4326, January 15, 2021**

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READING	ASSESSMENT / ACTIVITY	DUE DATE
3 02/02-02/04	Non-Lobbying Activities Interest Groups & Elections	Nownes ch. 4 Nownes ch. 6		
4 02/09-02/11	Direct Lobbying Indirect Lobbying	Nownes ch. 5 Nownes ch. 7		
5 02/16-02/18	Interest Groups & Parties Role & Influence of Interest Groups	Nownes ch. 8 Nownes ch. 9, 10		
6 02/23-02/25	Catch-up and review		<b>Exam 1</b>	2/25**
7 03/02-03/04	What are Parties? Formation of Parties	Hershey ch. 1 Hershey ch. 2		
8 03/09-03/11	Party Organizations “ “	Hershey ch. 3, 4, 5		
9 03/16-03/18	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>			
10 03/23-03/25	Parties in the Electorate “ “	Hershey ch. 6, 7, 8	<b>Case study</b>	3/23, 5 pm
11 03/30-04/01	Catch-up and review		<b>Exam 2</b>	4/1**
12 04/06-04/08	Choosing candidates Presidential nominees	Hershey ch. 9 Hershey ch. 10		
13 04/13-04/15	Parties in Elections Financing Elections	Hershey ch. 11 Hershey ch. 12		
14 04/20-04/22	Parties in Legislatures Parties in the Executive & Courts	Hershey ch. 13 Hershey ch. 14		
15 04/27-04/29	The Semi-Responsible Parties The Place of Parties in American Politics	Hershey ch. 15 Hershey ch. 16		
16 05/04-05/06	Catch-up and review		<b>Exam 3</b>	5/6**

\*\* Exams will be available beginning at 11:30 am on the dates shown. You will have a 24-hour window to start the exam. The exam will automatically close 75 minutes after you begin.

## **Grading Policy**

Grades will be based on three exams and a case study of an interest group that is active in Texas politics. Exam 1 will be worth 27.5 % of the semester grade; the case study will be worth 12.5 %; Exams 2 & 3 will be worth 30 % each. See further comments on the case study assignment below.

The scale for semester letter grades will be no stricter than the traditional 90-80-70-60 scale, with plusses and minuses.

## **Course Policies**

### *Exam Format and Make-up Exams*

All exams will be open book, open note. You will have a 24-hour window to start the exam. If you are not able to take the exam within that 24-hour period for a reason beyond your control, contact me as soon as possible to schedule an alternative time.

### *Extra Credit*

There will be no extra credit

### *Late Work*

Written assignments will be penalized 20 % for each day they are late, including weekends.

### *Special Assignments*

There are no special assignments

### *Class Participation*

Class participation or attendance is not counted as part of the grade. Nonetheless, you are responsible for everything said in class. My slogan is “attendance doesn’t count, but it matters.”

### *Classroom Citizenship*

There are no live class meetings, so I’m not sure what to post here. In general, please be generous with your classmates and the instructor, as this is a very difficult time for all of us. Also, note that any comments you make with the mic open while class is being recorded will appear in the written transcript.

## **Comet Creed**

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

*“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”*

**Academic Support Resources**

The information contained in the following link lists the University's academic support resources for all students.

Please go to [Academic Support Resources](#) webpage for these policies.

**UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures**

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to [UT Dallas Syllabus Policies](#) webpage for these policies.

*The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.*

## **CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT**

One assignment for the class is to write a brief case study of an interest group that is politically active in Texas. You may do this on your own, or work in groups of no more than three students. If you do form a group, only one student needs to submit the paper but be sure you put the names of all group members on the paper.

### Content

You should write about an interest group, i.e., an organization that needs to overcome free rider problems. This generally rules out individual business firms and public agencies. A case study of a trade association whose members are business firms or public agencies would be fine. The group needs to be active in Texas politics; it may also be active in other states or at the national level.

If you have any doubts about whether the organization you are considering would qualify, just email me in advance.

Your paper should:

- Identify the group and describe its goals and activities in Texas politics.
- Describe its internal organization, its means of attracting and retaining members and/or funding, and how it arrives at group decisions.
- Analyze its strategy for influencing elections and/or public policy decisions in Texas. Evaluate whether you think it is effective.

### Length, etc.

Papers by individual students should be 5-7 pages; those by groups should be 7-9 pages (double spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins), not including any tables or figures and a list of references.

You should include references to the sources of your information about the organization, as well as references to relevant sections of our textbook. You should also cite other relevant sources as necessary.

### Due Date

Papers should be submitted on eLearning by 5 pm on Tuesday, March 23 (immediately after spring break).

### Grading

The case study will count 12.5% of the course grade. All members of a group will receive the same grade. This means that *if anybody commits plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, all students in the group will be penalized.*