# PSCI 6333, Political and Civic Organizations

**Course**

PSCI 6333, Political and Civic Organizations

**Professor**

Robert Lowry

**Term**

Fall 2018

**Meetings**

Monday 1-3:45 pm, CB 1.214

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## Professor’s Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office Phone</th>
<th>972-883-6720</th>
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<tr>
<td>Office Location</td>
<td>Green Hall 3.533</td>
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<td>Email Address</td>
<td><a href="mailto:robert.lowry@utdallas.edu">robert.lowry@utdallas.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Office Hours</td>
<td>Monday 4-5, Tuesday 2-4, or by appointment.</td>
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## General Course Information

### Course Description

Political and civic organizations are the chief vehicles enabling individual citizens to come together and pursue common interests in politics and public life in democracies. The academic political science literature has traditionally focused on political parties and “interest groups,” but in recent years political scientists have focused more of their attention on organizations that are not overtly political, but that nonetheless provide opportunities for civic engagement and the creation of social capital.

This course presents an institutional perspective on political parties, interest groups, and other organizations such as labor unions and non-profit organizations that are important actors in political and civic affairs. The emphasis is on their strategic behavior and interactions with government, including both regulation by the state and attempts to influence public decision makers.

### Learning Objectives/Outcomes

On completing this course, students should:

1. Understand important theories and controversies regarding the formation, operation and impact of political and civic organizations in the United States.
2. Be able to synthesize and critique the academic literature on political and civic organizations.

### Required Texts & Materials

The following books are in the bookstore and should be purchased:

The following books are available at the bookstore, but are also available as e-books through the UTD Library website:


The remainder of the readings are listed and numbered at the end of the syllabus and are available through the UTD Library website or the course eLearning page.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Texts, Readings, &amp; Materials</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students who have not had an undergraduate course on political parties in the U.S. may want to get a copy of a text such as Marjorie Randon Hershey, <em>Party Politics in America</em>. Routledge, 17th ed. 2017.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Assignments &amp; Academic Calendar</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>Aug. 20</td>
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* Numbers in brackets refer to readings listed at the end of the syllabus.
## Course Policies

### Grading Criteria

In addition to weekly readings and discussion, there will be an in-class midterm exam on October 8 and a take-home exam handed out on the last day of class and due December 10 (Monday) and a paper due December 3. Paper topics are due October 1. Students will make in-class presentations on their paper projects November 5 or 12. See page 4 of this syllabus for additional notes on papers.

Course grades will be based on the following weights:

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<th>Component</th>
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<td>Class participation</td>
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<td>Midterm exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home final</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>In-class presentation</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
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### Late Work

Make-up midterm exams will be allowed only if you provide documentation of a family or medical excuse. Late term papers will be penalized 20% for each day they are late, including weekends.

### Class Attendance and Participation

Attendance is expected, and unexcused absences will affect your class participation score. Students are expected to do the assigned readings before class and come prepared to discuss them.

### University Policies

Additional UTD policies regarding student conduct and discipline, campus carry, academic integrity, email use, withdrawing from class, grievance procedures, incomplete grades, disability services, religious holy days, and resources to help you succeed can be found at http://coursebook.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies/.

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.
Notes on the Term Paper

For the term paper, you have the choice of writing a critical analysis of the literature, a case study, or a design for an empirical research project. A one-page statement of your proposed research question and type of paper is due in class October 1. Presentations of work-in-progress will occur in class November 5 or 12. Final papers are due December 3. Papers should not exceed 15 double-spaced pages of text and footnotes (minimum 11-point font), plus a list of references and any appendices, tables or figures.

Below are a few thoughts on each of the options:

**Critical Analysis**

A critical analysis of the literature is not just a summary. The goal is to draw on existing research to analyze and answer an important question about political or civic organizations.

The paper should start by identifying a research question and explaining why it is important. Examples of the kinds of questions that might be addressed include:

- What are the effects of “dark money” on political campaigns and policy?
- Should public sector unions be allowed to charge agency fees and engage in collective bargaining?
- What are the barriers to third parties in the United States? Should any of them be changed?
- Is the ‘top two’ primary system adopted by California and Washington a good idea?

It should then summarize existing research that is relevant to the question, identify the strengths and weaknesses of different arguments, and seek to come to a conclusion. If further research is required on a specific topic in order to answer the larger question, identify the topic and state how the answer could influence your final conclusion.

**Case Study**

A case study seeks to answer a research question through a detailed examination of one (or perhaps more) real political systems or events. Interesting case studies often are those that test a theory by applying it to a situation where it may seem counterintuitive, or explain why some cases may be exceptions to the general rule.

A well-written case study must do at least two things in addition to analyzing the case itself: (1) explain why the case to be studied is an interesting and important one for the development of research and political and civic organizations; (2) address the issue of generalizability. Is this a “representative” case that gives us insights into other situations and if so, how do you define the population that this case represents? Is it an exceptional case and if so, how does it limit the extent to which the theory can be generalized?

It is often useful to contrast two or more cases that represent different variations, but the tradeoff is that the more cases you address, the less detail you can present on each one.

A few possible topics:

- How does interest group XXX determine its agenda and public policy positions?
Does the success of Donald Trump disprove theories of political parties developed by John Aldrich and the UCLA crowd?

**Empirical Research Design**

The goal for this option is to develop a plan that could be used to conduct an original, empirical investigation. It should include the following elements:

1. A statement of the research question. Why is it an interesting/important question? What contribution will be made to the academic literature or contemporary policy debates?
2. A brief summary of previous research on this question.
3. One or more testable hypotheses to be explored. Explain the reasoning behind each hypothesis.
4. Identification of the relevant dependent, independent, and control variables to be studied.
5. A plan for operationalizing key variables and collecting data.
6. Identification of techniques for analyzing the data and testing the hypotheses, to the extent you can.
7. Discussion of problems that you might encounter.

The project should be one that a graduate student might actually complete. Possible research questions might include:

- Do differences in state regulations regarding lobbying impact public policy?
- Does interest group participation in administrative rulemaking influence outcomes?
- Does the extent to which political candidates represent different people with different incomes (see Rigby and Wright) depend on state campaign finance laws?

**Style**

The paper should begin with a short (no more than 150 words) abstract.

Papers should be well organized and use subheadings to denote major sections.

Pages should be numbered.

You don’t have to use either footnotes or endnotes, but if you do I prefer footnotes.

For citation style, consult “The Chicago Manual of Style Online” (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) and use the author-date system.
Additional Readings

Readings labeled eBook can be found through the library website by searching for the journal or book title in the catalog. eLearning indicates that a link is posted there. All others can be found by searching for the journal on the library website.


