# Syllabus - August 19, 2016

**Course**  
PSCI 6333, Political and Civic Organizations

**Professor**  
Robert Lowry

**Term**  
Fall 2016

**Meetings**  
Thursday 7-9:45 pm, GR 4.208

## Professor’s Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office Phone</th>
<th>972-883-6720</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office Location</td>
<td>Green Hall 3.533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address</td>
<td><a href="mailto:robert.lowry@utdallas.edu">robert.lowry@utdallas.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Hours</td>
<td>Tuesday 2-4, Thursday 5:30-6:30, 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 internal operations of organizations, 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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### Assignments & Academic Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Assignment*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 1</td>
<td>No class – APSA Annual Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 8</td>
<td>Evolution of U.S. parties</td>
<td>Aldrich ch. 6-9, [1]</td>
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<td>Sept. 15</td>
<td>Informal party organizations</td>
<td>Masket</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 22</td>
<td>More on parties</td>
<td>[2]-[5], La Raja ch. 1-2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 29</td>
<td>Modern parties and campaign finance</td>
<td>La Raja ch. 3-7, [6]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Paper topics due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 6</td>
<td><strong>Midterm Exam</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 20</td>
<td>Mobilizing interests II</td>
<td>Grossman Ch. 4-6 &amp; conclusion [9]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 27</td>
<td>Interest groups, campaign money &amp; influence</td>
<td>[10]-[15]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 3</td>
<td>Lobbying &amp; influence I</td>
<td>Baumgartner et al., ch. 1-6 &amp; Appendix</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 10</td>
<td>Lobbying &amp; influence II</td>
<td>Baumgartner et al., ch. 7-12</td>
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<td>Nov. 17</td>
<td><strong>Student Presentations</strong></td>
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<td>Nov. 24</td>
<td><strong>No Class – Thanksgiving</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 1</td>
<td>Nonprofit organizations and labor unions</td>
<td>[16]-[20]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 9</td>
<td><strong>Take-home Final Due, 5 pm</strong></td>
<td>Papers due</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 6 a take-home exam handed out on the last day of class and due December 9 (Friday) and a paper due December 1. Paper topics are due September 29. Students will make in-class presentations on their paper projects November 17. See page 4 of this syllabus for additional notes on papers.

Course grades will be based on the following weights:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home final</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class presentation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>25%</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/](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 topic is due in class September 29. Presentations of work-in-progress will occur in class November 17. Final papers are due December 1. 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 generate some research questions that merit further study. This could be done, for example, by arguing that the existing research in an area is incomplete with respect to one or more important questions; or by pointing out that different theories are inconsistent; or by arguing that existing findings are context-specific and would not necessarily apply to other settings (e.g., existing research on interest groups and mobilization may not apply to use of the internet). In any event, you should cite the relevant literature, critique it, and explain why the research questions you have identified would lead to important contributions to our understanding.

**Case Study**

The case study option would focus on one specific political or civic organization and analyze it in the context of the issues raised by the academic literature. The key is to show how this organization illustrates, extends, or contradicts existing findings. The paper should include a discussion of the extent to which you can generalize your findings to other organizations or contexts.

**Empirical Research Designs**

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. A summary of preliminary results (if any) that suggest further investigation is warranted.
8. Discussion of problems that you might encounter.

The project should be one that a graduate student might actually complete. You may assume some financial support, but it should be similar to what might be available through dissertation grants.
Additional Readings

Readings labeled eJournal or 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.


