

PSCI 4396: Predicting Political Conflict

Course Information

PSCI 4396

Section 4396-001 Fall 2009

TR 2:30-3:45pm, SOM 1.107

Contact Information

Prof. Patrick T. Brandt

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Office: Green 2.802

Hours: TR 9:00-10:00am and by appointment

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Course Description

This course is designed to teach you about how social scientists understand and predict political conflict. We will examine how decision theory and statistical models are used to predict and explain events like riots, civil wars, intra- and inter-state conflict, terrorism, etc. We will do this by focusing on regional conflicts such as the Levant (Israel-Palestine-Lebanon), the Indian subcontinent (India-Pakistan), and China (China-Taiwan).

Why do we want to do this? There is a growing need in the policy, human rights, and foreign policy communities for these types of forecasts. They are used for early warning systems, humanitarian aid allocation, human rights monitoring, foreign policy decision-making, and conflict mediation.

Student Learning Objectives

On completing this course, students will be able to:

- understand and apply commonly used prediction methods to political events;
- discuss and analyze the merits and drawback of commonly used prediction and forecasting methods;
- conduct forecasting and analysis exercises using accepted techniques and validate the forecasts.

Required texts and materials

The following book has been ordered for this course:

Tetlock, Philip E. 2005 *Expert Political Judgement*. Princeton University Press.

This text is available at the UTD bookstore, Off-Campus Books, etc.

You will also be asked to read a wide variety of scholarly research articles, websites and other material related to the topic. These are listed by date in the course calendar below.

Required readings will be approximately 100 pages per week. You should read carefully the material at least once before class.

Students should also stay abreast of current political events. Current events will figure prominently in class discussions, assignments, as well as examples. I recommend making a habit of reading a daily paper such as the New York Times, LA Times, Washington Post, or the Chicago Tribune. Alternatively you may also wish to read a weekly news magazine such as The Economist, Newsweek, Time, or U.S. News and World Report.

Grading and Course Policies

Grading

There are **FOUR** major graded components to this course:

- **Course memos** (20% of final grade).
- **Individual paper** (50% of final grade).
- **Group project** (20% of final grade).
- **Class participation** (10% of final grade).

There is no extra credit available in this course. Note the grading criteria and plan accordingly for your success.

Grades are based on the standard grading scale: A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, etc., with pluses / minuses at my discretion.

If you have any questions about your grade on an assignment, please wait until 24 hours after receiving your assignment before discussing the grade with the professor. There are no exceptions to this policy.

If you wish to have an assignment re-graded, it must be returned to me within two days of the day it was returned (if I am not available that day, ask the staff of the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences to leave it in my box). Assignments to be re-graded must include a memo stating the reason why you believe they assignment should be re-graded. Finally, re-graded assignments can be graded higher, lower, or the same as the initial grade.

Course Memos

Each student will write 2 course memos during the course. Memos should be 5 pages double spaced, in 12pt font. Memos should have three main themes or sections: 1) a summary of the material, 2) a criticism or critical commentary on what is correct or incorrect about the readings and 3) a set of questions for class discussion about the readings. You will be able to select the reading / class when you will write these.

The purpose of the class memos is that they serve as 1) the basis for class discussion and 2) that they ensure someone other than the instructor has read the material closely (everyone should read the material!)

Course memos are due by 5pm the day before the class session they will cover. Please submit them to me via e-mail at pbrandt@utdallas.edu. I may circulate relevant parts of the memo to the class as appropriate.

Individual Papers

Each student will write one term paper. The papers should be 15-20 pages long, double-spaced, 12 pt font, and must be original research (the chance you will be able to “reuse” something should be probability zero.)

Paper topics must be discussed with the instructor in advance of writing the paper. Topics can include, but are not limited to

- Forecasting methods or comparisons for political and social data.
- Conflict forecasts for some of the regions we will cover in this class.
- Analysis of counterfactual, “what if”, or *ex post* forecasts of past events.
- Analysis of omnibus forecasts such as those that are done of civil wars, failed states, regional conflict, etc.
- Any other related topic you can convince me would make a good term paper.

The first step in writing the term paper is to schedule an appointment with the instructor to review your paper topic. Before beginning your paper, you are **REQUIRED** to come and talk with me about your paper. At or prior to this meeting, please provide a ONE PAGE research proposal or outline that lays out the following for your paper:

- Main research question you are addressing.
- Hypothesis (or Hypotheses) you wish to evaluate in your paper.
- Data and variables to be used in the analysis.

- Tests and methods that will be used to evaluate the hypotheses.
- Tentative listing of the techniques and models you may use.

You should schedule your meeting with me prior to the 6th week of class, so before about October 1st. Don't worry about finding data or how it will be analyzed. I can help with that.

Group Project

Each student will be assigned to a group in this course. Groups will be somewhat randomized in their assignment (more on this to come later in the course). Each group will develop and present a survey of conflict forecasting efforts in a particular region of the world, as assigned by the instructor. Further details of the group projects will be given out at a later date.

Class Participation

This is a small course, by design. The goal is for this course to be organized as a research seminar that is focused on exploring and understanding how political conflict can be forecast. So everyone's active participation is a must. As such, I will count course participation — discussion, comments, questions, etc. toward your final grade. Note that this is not a "optional" or "extra" — if you fail to participate in the class sessions your grade will suffer.

Late assignments

Late assignments will be penalized. Late memos will lose 5 points per day. Late papers and projects will lose 10 points per day.

ELearning

eLearning is used in this class for the distribution of data, website links, readings, presentations, etc. If you do not have a computer at home or prefer to work on campus, you may do this at the library or in the many computer labs on campus. You can access the course eLearning page at <http://elearning.utdallas.edu>. Additional information about how to use eLearning is available at this site as well. You will need a UTD net-id to access this site.

eLearning is also how I will communicate with you and administer the class groups. eLearning also includes various discussion tools and interactive elements that I will use as part of the course. You are responsible for announcements made through eLearning. You may forward messages from eLearning to your regular e-mail account. Please select a forwarding address in your mail preferences if you do not regularly check your eLearning mail or UTD email.

Attendance

Class attendance is required. I will randomly take attendance throughout the term. You are responsible for any announcements made or information given during class. I may provide copies of lecture notes or slides at my discretion. However these are only an outline of the material, so your attendance is very important if you are to master the material.

Course conduct and expectations

The following rules apply in class:

1. Turn off your cell phone. It is VERY distracting to others. "Off" means that it does not ring OR vibrate. (Exceptions to this policy can be made, come to talk to me.)
2. Do not fall asleep. It is rude and distracting. Bring coffee if you need it (I do.)
3. Be polite and courteous to your fellow students.
4. Raise your hand when you want to be recognized to answer or ask a question. If you do not raise your hand I will not recognize you or your answer.

5. You are responsible for things: therefore if you miss something I announced or fail to complete an assignment, my response will be “How is this my problem?”
6. Note that this syllabus is not a contract. It is subject to change at my discretion. While we may be studying the political science, this class is not a democracy.
7. Class starts at 2:30pm, not 2:45pm. Be here on time.
8. Respect my time and I will respect yours. We are both busy.
9. Grade disputes must follow university policies about how to contest a grade. If you contact me to contest a grade I will immediately refer you to the University policy and will follow it to the letter.
10. Problems with *eLearning* are not my problem. You need to note 1) the outages schedule and 2) when assignments are due. If you start an assignment and do not complete it before it is due, then it is your problem, not mine. If you leave a quiz until the last minute it is at your peril, not mine.
11. *You are expected to be pro-active in anticipating and planning for any absences or problems you will have in completing course work.* Make arrangements for possibly missed work prior to the due date is preferable and more likely to be successful than doing it after the due date. In the end: “A failure to plan on your part does not constitute a crisis for me.” Plan for absences and missed work accordingly.

Course Calendar

The dates listed for each topic are approximate and will depend on how quickly we move through material. You should read the material for each date *before* class. Also note that you will need to check eLearning periodically for updates, announcements, etc. Readings are listed under the lecture topics below.

20 August: Introduction

- Go over the syllabus
- Get started by looking at some work and websites on conflict forecasting.
- Talk about what we will do in here.

25 August: Real time forecasting motivations

- Brandt, Freeman, Schrodt 2009. “Real Time, Time Series Forecasting of Inter- and Intra-State Political Conflict”
Read the paper, grant proposal, and the related list of references.
- Check out the following sites:
 - KEDS / TABARI: <http://web.ku.edu/~keds>
 - International Crisis Group: <http://www.crisisgroup.org>
 - Swisspeace / FAST: <http://www.swisspeace.org>
 - Forecasting Principles: <http://www.forecastingprinciples.com>
 - Stratfor: <http://www.stratfor.com>
 - Political Instability Task Force: <http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu>
 - Political Risk Services Group: <http://www.prsgroup.com>

27 August: Comparison of forecasting methods

- Armstrong, J. Scott. 2001. “Introduction” in *Principles of Forecasting: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*. J. Scott Armstrong, ed., New York: Springer
- Skim Chapter 4 on “Expert Opinions”, pp. 57-144 in *Principles of Forecasting: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*. J. Scott Armstrong, ed., New York: Springer

1 September: Comparison of forecasting methods

- Armstrong, J. Scott. 2001. "Selecting Forecasting Methods", Chapter 12 in *Principles of Forecasting: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*. J. Scott Armstrong, ed., New York: Springer. pp. 301–362.
- Collopy, Fred, Monica Adya and J. Scott Armstrong. 2001. "Expert Systems for Forecasting", Chapter 10 in *Principles of Forecasting: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*. J. Scott Armstrong, ed., New York: Springer. pp. 283–300.

3 September: Getting and working with quantitative conflict data

- Bring a laptop, if you have one. We will install some software that we can use to visualize and forecast conflict data.
- I will also provide a handout before class about the software and some details about how to use it.

8 September: Decision and game theory conflict models

- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 2009. "A New Model for Predicting Policy Choices: Preliminary Tests" presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, February 2009, New York, New York. I will put this paper onto the eLearning page for the class.
- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 1997. "A Decision Making Model: Its Structure and Form" *International Interactions* 23: 235–66.
- Feder, Stanley. 2002. "Forecasting for Policy Making in the Post-Cold War Period," *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 111–25.

10 September: Quantitative forecasting models overview

- Look at the forecasting papers on the KEDS site: <http://web.ku.edu/~keds/papers.dir/forecasting.html>
- Brandt, Patrick T., Michael P. Colaresi and John R. Freeman. 2008. "The Dynamics of Reciprocity, Accountability and Credibility." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 52(3): 343–374.
- Brandt, Patrick T. and John R. Freeman. 2006. "Advances in Bayesian Time Series Modeling and the Study of Politics: Theory Testing, Forecasting, and Policy Analysis." *Political Analysis*. 14(1):1–36.

15 September: Forecast uncertainty measures

- Chatfield, Chris. 2001. "Prediction Intervals for Time-Series Forecasting," in *Principles of Forecasting: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*. J. Scott Armstrong, ed., New York: Springer. pp. 473–494.
- Brandt, Patrick T. and John R. Freeman. 2006. "Advances in Bayesian Time Series Modeling and the Study of Politics: Theory Testing, Forecasting, and Policy Analysis." *Political Analysis*. 14(1):1–36.

17 September: Definitions of conflict measures and data

- Sambanis, Nicholas 2004. "What is Civil War?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(6): 814–858.
- Schrodtt, Philip A. 1994. "The Statistical Characteristics of Event Data". *International Interactions* 20(1-2): 35–53
<http://web.ku.edu/~keds/papers.dir/ISA.88.pdf>
- KEDS/CAMEO codebooks: <http://web.ku.edu/~keds/data.dir/cameo.html> and <http://web.ku.edu/~keds/data.dir/weis.html>
- Shellman, Steven. 2004. "Measuring the Intensity of Intrnational Political Events Data: Two Interval-Like Scales". *International Interactions* 30(2): 109–141.
- Shellman, Steven. 2004. "Time series intervals and statistical inference: The effects of temporal aggregation on event data analysis". *Political Analysis* 12(1): 97–104.

- Political Instability Task Force codebook and data: <http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/pitf/pitfcode.htm>
- EUGene and MARGene: <http://www.personal.psu.edu/dsb10/software.htm>
- Penn World Tables <http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/>
- U.N. Millenium Development data and goals: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

22 September: Forecast evaluation and opinion evaluation I

- Tetlock, Chapters 1-3

24 September: Forecast evaluation and opinion evaluation II

- Tetlock, Chapters 4-5

29 September: Forecast evaluation and opinion evaluation III

- Tetlock, Chapters 6-8

1 October: Where to get data on conflict or other political phenomena we want to predict?

- Bring a laptop if you have one. We'll review some of the major sources of data you will want to look at for your presentations and papers.

6 October: More on working with conflict data and software

- Bring a laptop, if you have one. We will install some software that we can use to visualize and forecast conflict data.

8 October: Forecasting failed states / instability

- Look again at the PITF website: <http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu>
- King, Gary and Langche Zeng. 2001. "Improving Forecasts of State Failure" *World Politics* 53(4): 623-658. <http://gking.harvard.edu/files/civil.pdf>
- Beck, Nathaniel, Gary King and Langche Zeng. 2000. "Improving Quantitative Studies of International Conflict: A Conjecture." *American Political Science Review* 94(1): 21-36 <http://gking.harvard.edu/files/improv.pdf>
- De Marchi, S. and Gelpi, C. and Grynaviski, J.D. 2004. "Untangling neural nets." *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 371-378.
- Beck, Nathaniel; Gary King; and Langche Zeng. 2004. "Theory and Evidence in International Conflict: A Response to de Marchi, Gelpi, and Grynaviski." *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 379-389. <http://gking.harvard.edu/files/toe-resp.pdf>

13 October: Forecasting failed states / instability / peacekeeping

- King, Gary and Langche Zeng. 2007. "When Can History be Our Guide? The Pitfalls of Counterfactual Inference" *International Studies Quarterly* 51: 183-210. <http://gking.harvard.edu/files/counterf.pdf>
- Schrodtt, Philip A. 2007. "Of Dinosaurs and Barbecue Sauce: A Comment on King and Zeng." *International Studies Quarterly* 51(1):211-215.
- Sambanis, Nicholas; Doyle, Michael W. 2007. "No Easy Choices: Estimating the Effects of United Nations Peacekeeping (Response to King and Zeng)." *International Studies Quarterly* 51(1): 217-226.
- Morrow, James D. 2007. "Officers King and Zeng and the Case of the Unsupported Counterfactual." *International Studies Quarterly* 51(1): 227-229.
- King, Gary; Zeng, Langche. 2007. "Detecting Model Dependence in Statistical Inference: A Response" *International Studies Quarterly* 51(1): 231-241.

15 October: Using forecasts ethically, or what not to do

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20 October: Forecasting civil wars

- Elbadawi, I. and Sambanis, N. 2002. "How much war will we see?: Explaining the prevalence of civil war" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 46(3): 307–334.
- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin, 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War" *American Political Science Review* 97(1):75–90.
- Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler, 2004. "Greed and grievance in civil war" *Oxford Economic Papers* 56(4): 563–595

22 October: Forecasting civil wars

- Ward, Michael, Brian Greenhill and Kristin Bakke. 2009. "The Perils of Policy by P-Value: Predicting Civil Conflicts".
- Brandt, Patrick T., T. David Mason, Mehmet Gurses, Nicolai Petrovsky and Dasha Radin. 2008. "When and How the Fighting Stops: Explaining the Duration and Outcome of Civil Wars." *Defence and Peace Economics*. 19(6):415–434.

27 October: Forecasting terrorism

- Enders, W. and Sandler, T. 2005. "After 9/11: Is it all different now?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 49(2): 259–277.
- Enders, W. and Sandler, T. 2005. "Transnational Terrorism 1968-2000: Thresholds, Persistence, and Forecasts." *Southern Economic Journal*. 71(3):467–483.

29 October: Forecasting terrorism

- Brandt, Patrick T. and Todd Sandler. 2009. "Hostage Taking: Understanding Terrorism Event Dynamics" *Journal of Policy Modeling*. 31(5): 758–778.
- Brandt, Patrick T. and Todd Sandler. "What Do Transnational Terrorists Target? Has it Changed? And Are We Safer?"

3 November: Forecasting man-made disasters: bioterrorism

- Chevrier, Marie I. 2007. "Why do Conclusions from the Experts Vary?" in *Bioterrorism: Confronting a Complex Threat* eds. Andreas Wenger and Reto Wollenmann. Boulder: Lynne Rienner

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5 November: Forecasting man-made disasters

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10 November: Open class

- We'll leave this class date open and use it to cover any last minute issues related to presentations or papers.

12 November: Group Presentations

17 November: Group Presentations

19 November: Group Presentations

24 November: Paper discussion / meeting

- Meet to discuss papers. No readings.

1 December: Papers due

- No class. Bring your term papers to my office by the due time.

3 December: Final class

- No readings. We will meet to discuss what we have learned this term.

15 December, 2pm: Final exam period

Student Conduct & Discipline

The University of Texas System and The University of Texas at Dallas have rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student and each student organization to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the UTD publication, A to Z Guide, which is provided to all registered students each academic year.

The University of Texas at Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the Rules and Regulations, Board of Regents, The University of Texas System, Part 1, Chapter VI, Section 3, and in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities of the university's Handbook of Operating Procedures. Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SU 1.602, 972/883-6391).

A student at the university neither loses the rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. He or she is expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the Regent's Rules, university regulations, and administrative rules. Students are subject to discipline for violating the standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work.

Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, statements, acts or omissions related to applications for enrollment or the award of a degree, and/or the submission as one's own work or material that is not one's own. As a general rule, scholastic dishonesty involves one of the following acts: cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic records. Students suspected of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Plagiarism, especially from the web, from portions of papers for other classes, and from any other source is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the university's policy on plagiarism (see general catalog for details). This course will use the resources of turnitin.com, which searches the web for possible plagiarism and is over 90% effective.

Each student in this course is expected to exercise independent scholarly thought, expression and aptitude.

During examinations be prepared

- To leave all personal belongings at the front of the room or other designated location (this includes cell phones, turned off of course, and beverage containers)
- To present your UTD Comet Card
- To remove your cap or hat
- To remove the batteries from any electronic device (e.g. calculator)
- To exchange blue books or bring them early as required
- To change seating
- To sign out when exiting the testing room
- To be escorted for lavatory use

All episodes of suspected scholastic dishonesty will be reported according to University policy. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. Penalties that may be assessed for scholastic dishonesty may be reviewed in Subchapter D. Penalties at <http://www.utdallas.edu/student/slfe/chapter49.html>.

Email Use

University policy requires that you have a UTD netid and e-mail account. E-mail sent to me from non-UTD accounts may not arrive or may be trapped by spam filters. Please use your UTD e-mail account and clearly identify yourself by name in e-mail messages. E-mail sent from non-UTD accounts may not be answered if I suspect that it will cause problems for my computer.

The University of Texas at Dallas recognizes the value and efficiency of communication between faculty/staff and students through electronic mail. At the same time, email raises some issues concerning security and the identity of each individual in an email exchange. The university encourages all official student email correspondence be sent only to a student's U.T. Dallas email address and that faculty and staff consider email from students official only if it originates from a UTD student account. This allows the university to maintain a high degree of confidence in the identity of all individual corresponding and the security of the transmitted information. UTD furnishes each student with a free email account that is to be used in all communication with university personnel. The Department of Information Resources at U.T. Dallas provides a method for students to have their U.T. Dallas mail forwarded to other accounts.

Withdrawal from Class

The administration of this institution has set deadlines for withdrawal of any college-level courses. These dates and times are published in that semester's course catalog. Administration procedures must be followed. It is the student's responsibility to handle withdrawal requirements from any class. In other words, I cannot drop or withdraw any student. You must do the proper paperwork to ensure that you will not receive a final grade of "F" in a course if you choose not to attend the class once you are enrolled.

Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities, of the university's Handbook of Operating Procedures.

In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding grades, evaluations, or other fulfillments of academic responsibility, it is the obligation of the student first to make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the instructor, supervisor, administrator, or committee with whom the grievance originates (hereafter called "the respondent"). Individual faculty members retain primary responsibility for assigning grades and evaluations. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the grievance must be submitted in writing to the respondent with a copy of the respondent's School Dean. If the matter is not resolved by the written response provided by the respondent, the student may submit a written appeal to the School Dean. If the grievance is not resolved by the School Dean's decision, the student may make a written appeal to the Dean of Graduate or Undergraduate Education, and the dean will appoint and convene an Academic Appeals Panel. The decision of the Academic Appeals Panel is final. The results of the academic appeals process will be distributed to all involved parties.

Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations.

Incomplete Grade Policy

As per university policy, incomplete grades will be granted only for work unavoidably missed at the semester's end and only if 70% of the course work has been completed. An incomplete grade must be resolved within eight (8) weeks from the first day of the subsequent long semester. If the required work to complete the course and to remove the incomplete grade is not submitted by the specified deadline, the incomplete grade is changed automatically to a grade of F.

Disability Services

The goal of Disability Services is to provide students with disabilities educational opportunities equal to those of their non-disabled peers. Disability Services is located in room 1.610 in the Student Union. Office hours are Monday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The contact information for the Office of Disability Services is:

The University of Texas at Dallas, SU 22
PO Box 830688
Richardson, Texas 75083-0688
(972) 883-2098 (voice or TTY)

Essentially, the law requires that colleges and universities make those reasonable adjustments necessary to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability. For example, it may be necessary to remove classroom prohibitions against tape recorders or animals (in the case of dog guides) for students who are blind. Occasionally an assignment requirement may be substituted (for example, a research paper versus an oral presentation for a student who is hearing impaired). Classes enrolled students with mobility impairments may have to be rescheduled in accessible facilities. The college or university may need to provide special services such as registration, note-taking, or mobility assistance.

It is the student's responsibility to notify his or her professors of the need for such an accommodation. Disability Services provides students with letters to present to faculty members to verify that the student has a disability and needs accommodations. Individuals requiring special accommodation should contact the professor after class or during office hours.

Religious Holy Days

The University of Texas at Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities for the travel to and observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, Tax Code, Texas Code Annotated.

The student is encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment. The student, so excused, will be allowed to take the exam or complete the assignment within a reasonable time after the absence: a period equal to the length of the absence, up to a maximum of one week. A student who notifies the instructor and completes any missed exam or assignment may not be penalized for the absence. A student who fails to complete the exam or assignment within the prescribed period may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.

If a student or an instructor disagrees about the nature of the absence [i.e., for the purpose of observing a religious holy day] or if there is similar disagreement about whether the student has been given a reasonable time to complete any missed assignments or examinations, either the student or the instructor may request a ruling from the chief executive officer of the institution, or his or her designee. The chief executive officer or designee must take into account the legislative intent of TEC 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the chief executive officer or designee.

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.