

American & Texas Government: Institutions
INET PSCI 2306.901
Fall 2023 (16wk)

Instructor: Prof. Andrew J. Enterline
Dept. of Political Science
Email: Canvas Email System Only

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to American and Texas politics. The course focuses on the institutions central to federal and state decision making, including the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branches of government, the bureaucracy, as well as civil rights and liberties.

Syllabus Revisions

I reserve the right to revise this syllabus during the semester.

Communication

During the semester we use Canvas Email exclusively to communicate. Briefly, if you are logged into Canvas, the "Inbox" for the Canvas Email is located on the left-hand, vertical toolbar. Click on "Inbox", click on the button "compose new message", and then select me (Enterline) or your assigned TA in the drop down menu in the "To" field. You should make sure that your alerts in Canvas are enabled, so that you are aware of any emails, announcements, changes to the canvas shell for our course, etc.

Teaching Assistants (Assigned by Student Last Name)

The following Dept. of Political Science graduate students are assigned as Teaching Assistants (TAs) for the course:

Brian Lookabaugh (Last Names A-G)
Carolina Douthit (Last Names H-N); and
Fedi Mejri (Last Names O-Z).

The TAs are assigned to students by student last name. Communication with your TA regarding the course is through the Canvas Email system only.

General Course Format

The online format of the course affords a significant degree of flexibility for the student and the course structure is designed with this goal in mind. There are four components:

Soomo Webtext & PSCI Workbook (and exercises embedded therein);
Two Exams (1 Midterm & 1 Final, the latter non-cumulative); and
Constitutional Amendment Exercise.

There will be no formal lectures (synchronous or asynchronous) in the course. The student's work in the course each week is anchored to the Webtext and PSCI Workbook and exercises therein. Upon completion, the webtext and exam grades are automatically logged into Canvas Grades. The two exams are completed by the student online via Canvas Quizzes. Last, the student engages in a Constitutional Amendment Exercise in which the student proposes an amendment to the American Constitution. These course components are discussed in greater detail, in turn.

Soomo/PSCI Webtexts (35% of Final Course Grade)

The required materials for the course are as follows:

2306 Big Bundle with Texas V10: U.S. and Texas Politics with 2306 Workbook (CIAG 14e, TexPol 11e, 2306 Workbook 7e)

Jocelyn Evans & Kristy Michaud / The Texas Politics Project

Net Price: \$93.75

978-1-954890-58-9

Soomo provides a free 3-week trial period that enables students to access the first three chapters of the webtext. This free trial allows you to complete assigned webtexts as the semester begins. However, once the free trial expires, you must purchase the webtext license to complete the exercises and log your grades in Canvas Grades. You can purchase access at the UNT bookstore or via Soomo directly through the Webtext link in Canvas.

The Webtext exercises are useful because they require the student to move through the material gradually. Additionally, the material covered in the exercises comprises the bulk of the questions on the two exams. So, gradual absorption of the course material serves to prepare the student for each exam.

Each topic includes exercises from each webtext. Each set of exercises is worth 100 points and is due at 11:59 pm on the assigned date (see the course calendar, below; or the date posted in Canvas Assignments).

Please Note: It is important that you complete the webtext exercises once you begin a chapter. Do not log out of the system mid-exercise, drift away from your computer for lengthy periods of time, etc., or your grade may not be logged correctly in Canvas.

Please Note: It is the student's responsibility to alert their TA of missing or erroneous

webtext grades within 48 hrs. of their due date in Canvas Assignments. Put differently, the student cannot return after the 48 hr window and argue that a given webtext was completed and Canvas failed to log the grade accordingly.

Exams (25% Each [50% Total] of Final Course Grade)

There will be two, non-cumulative, exams in this course:

Midterm exam on Friday, October 20; and
Final exam on Thursday, December 14.

Each exam requires that the student answer multiple-choice questions drawn primarily from the required webtext readings. Each exam will be taken by the student online via Canvas on the appointed date and completed at the student's discretion between 6am--11:59pm on said date. A lockdown browser will not be employed. Each exam is an individual exercise, so you are to do your own work with your own brain. Put differently, do not collaborate with anyone.

Please Note: In order to maintain the integrity of the exams, no early exams will be administered.

Constitutional Amendment Exercise (15% of Final Course Grade)

This exercise is due by 11:59 on Wednesday, September 27.

General Setup:

The president of the United States (identity and party unspecified) is interested in proposing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that will improve American democracy. The president has tasked you with formulating a proposal for such an amendment. The president stipulates that your proposal reflect the following attributes:

The proposed amendment should improve (broadly defined) American democracy; and
The proposed amendment should not duplicate the existing articles or amendments.

Assignment Instructions:

In an MS-Word document (i.e., .docx), execute the following:

Write your full name, UNT student number, PSCI 2306.901, and date in the upper left corner;

Place a sub-heading, "Proposed Amendment," and below this write the text of your amendment;

Place a sub-heading, "Explanation," and below this by answering/discussing in 250-300 (no more, no less) words the following:

How is your proposed amendment novel to the current constitution?

How/why will your proposed amendment improve American democracy?
How likely is your proposed amendment to be ratified? If so, why? If not, why not?
Upload your finished document to the appropriate Canvas Assignment link.

Grading Criteria:

There is no preference regarding the substance of your amendment;
Your work is serious and contemplative;
Your work is original to your mind (i.e., you do not plagiarize, you do not use AI [ChatGPT], you do not use your own material from another course);
Your work fulfills the aforementioned Assignment instructions; and
Your work reflects clear reasoning, composition, spelling, diction, etc.

Your assigned TA will be grading your assignment. You are free to communicate with your assigned TA about this assignment. Given the labor and care required for grading the submissions, no late submissions will be allowed.

Missed Exams, Webtext Exercises, Etc.

Permission to complete missed exams, webtext exercises, and constitutional amendment exercise will be provided only in the case of a documented excuse acceptable to the UNT Dean of Students and evaluated as such. In such cases, please email your assigned TA via Canvas Email.

Posting Grades in Canvas

Grades will be reported via Canvas Grades. We do our best to keep the grade book up to date. Please let your assigned TA know if you detect any issues or problems in the grade book. It is your responsibility to police the grades in Canvas Grades. A missing or erroneous grade must be reported to your assigned TA within 48 hrs. of the due date for the given assignment.

Final Course Grade (Numeric)

Canvas will weight your Assignments in Grades. The final column in Canvas Grades, labeled "Total", should reflect this weighting and your progress as the semester unfolds.

Final Course Grade (Letter)

The "Final Course Letter Grade" is the grade that will be uploaded to the UNT Registrar's grade system. This letter grade will never be lower than the standard corresponding numeric value that I compute for the course (e.g., you earned a numeric value of 95, but I awarded you a letter grade of "C"). However, this letter grade may be greater than the standard corresponding numeric value (e.g., you earned a numeric value of 88---in the high "B" range---but I awarded you a letter grade of "A").

UNT Policies

Please familiarize yourself with the University's policies here: [UNT Policies](#)