American & Texas Government: Institutions
INET PSCI 2306.007
Fall 2021

Description

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

Instructor: **Prof. Andrew J. Enterline**
Dept. of Political Science
Email: within Canvas email system
Office: Wooten Hall 145
Office Hours: Virtual via Canvas (T, 2-5 pm)[1]

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[1]I reserve the right to revise the syllabus during the semester. I will alert you to any such revisions and post the revised edition on Canvas.

Teaching Assistants (Assigned by Student Last Name)

You are assigned to a teaching assistant (TA) from the Dept. of Political Science according to the alpha order of your last name. Your assigned TA is your first point of contact with the course if you have any questions or issues. The four TAs assigned to the course are as follows:

Teaching Assistant (student last names A–C):
Ms. Gabriela Okundaye
Email: Within Canvas email system
Virtual Office Hours: TBA

Teaching Assistant (student last names D–J):
Mr. Brian Lookabaugh
Email: Within Canvas email system
Virtual Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:00-10:30 AM

Teaching Assistant (student last names K–P):
Mr. Shelby Jackson
Email: Within Canvas email system
Virtual Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 12-1:30pm

Teaching Assistant (student last names Q–Z):
Ms. Lanie Richards
Email: Within Canvas email system
Virtual Office Hours: Monday, 4 -5 pm Thursday, 10 am- 12 pm

Communication

Please use the email facility within UNT's Canvas system to communicate with your assigned TA or me.

Course Format

The online format of the course affords a significant degree of flexibility for the enrolled student and is designed with this quality in mind. There are three components to the course discussed in the remainder of the syllabus:

1. Webtexts (related exercises) and periodic audio podcasts;

2. 2 Exams; and

3. 1 Policy-maker Letter.

The student's work in the course each week is anchored to the Webtexts and related exercises. Webtext readings and related exercise are due each week, but the student can complete a given assignment at a convenient time and place prior to the assigned due date. There will be *no formal lectures* in the course. Rather, periodically I will post audio podcasts on various topics germane to, and supplementing, the course readings. I will alert you to the posting of said podcasts on Canvas, recordings that the student can listen to at a convenient time and place. There are two exams, a midterm and final, that are non-cumulative and taken by the student online via Canvas. Last, the student writes and submits a letter to a policy-maker.

Course Readings: Soomo/PSCI Webtexts

The required reading materials for the course are as follows:

- *Central Ideas in American Government 12e with Texas Politics 9e* and *2306 Workbook.* ISBN: 978-1-954890-00-8.

Each of the aforementioned course materials are built directly into Canvas as "webtexts." You can purchase access at the UNT bookstore or via Soomo directly through the course link.

Webtext Exercises (45% of Course Grade)

Each topic (e.g., The Constitution) includes exercises (or quizzes) from each webtext (you complete a set of exercises after reading the assigned material). East set of exercises are worth 100 points and are due at 11:59 pm on the assigned day (see the course calendar, below). Given the structure of the chapters in the webtexts (there are 22 of them), there are 2200 total points for these exercises. Said exercises will contribute 45% to your final grade for the course.

The Webtext exercises are useful because they require the student to move through the material gradually. Additionally, the material covered in the exercises will comprise the bulk of the questions on the two exams. So, gradual absorption of the course material serves to help the student pre-study for the exam.

You are allowed to repeat a given webtext exercise *once*, thereby allowing you to refine your knowledge and improve your total credit for an exercise. However, once the due date passes for a given exercise, you cannot return and complete it.

If you wish to compute your current grade for this component of the course, simply identify the total exercise points reported in Canvas gradebook that you've earned and then divide this value by the total points available by a given date (e.g., by Sept. 3 say you earned 280 points and 300 are available to be earned, so your current grade is 93% (280/300), or a letter grade of an "A", which is pretty darn good.) The exercises are an individual exercise, so you are to do your own work with your own brain. Do not collaborate with anyone else.

Exams (50% of Course Grade)

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

- a <u>Midterm exam</u> on **Thursday, October 14**, &

- a <u>Final exam</u> on **Thursday, December 9**.

Each exam requires that the student answer multiple-choice questions drawn from the required webtext readings and *ANY* material covered during in the periodic audio podcasts by Prof. Enterline that will be posted on Canvas and students notified. Each exam will be taken by the student online via Canvas on the appointed date and completed anytime between 6am–11:59pm on said date. 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. Each exam will contribute 25% (combined 50%) toward your final course grade.

Policy-maker Letter (5% of Course Grade & Due by Nov. 5)

This course is part of the UNT academic core. As such, UNT requires that we assess Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for students enrolled in the course. To assess the SLOs for the course students fulfill the assignment of a Policy-maker Letter. Said assignment is detailed as follows:

Letter Assignment

One of the overarching themes of PSCI 2306 is the division of policy-making power among the various branches and levels of government. Another is the importance of representation and having a government that reflects the will of the people. This assignment requires you effectively demonstrate core competencies of critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, and personal responsibility within the context of civic engagement in the U.S. political process.

In this assignment, you will

1. Identify a current political issue that affects you and your community;

2. Educate yourself about the issue by reading at least three articles from reputable news sources about the issue;

3. Determine which policy-maker is in the best position to represent your interests with respect to that issue. That could be your representative in the U.S. House of Representatives, your representative in a state legislature, or some member of the executive branch. The key is that you identify a person who has some policy-making authority with respect to the issue you have chosen and a person who might listen to your position (for example, choosing your own representative to the U.S. House rather than some other representative);

4. Draft a letter to your legislative or executive-branch policymaker in which you do the following:

   (a) identify yourself as one of the politician?s constituents;

   (b) identify the political issue about which you are concerned;

   (c) clearly state a position on that issue (what should the policymaker do or not do); and

   (d) Provide an explanation for your position that will persuade the policymaker to agree with you; and

5. After you draft your letter and feel comfortable with both the content and format of your letter, submit the letter as the body of an e-mail addressed to your policymaker.

Via Canvas you will submit the following documents for grading by November 5 at 11:59:

- a .doc, .docx, or .pdf version of your letter; and

- a .doc, .docx, or .pdf document listing the three articles you read.

For tips on writing a letter to Congress, visit:

https://www.thoughtco.com/write-effective-letters-to-congress-3322301.

The aforementioned documents related to your Policy-maker Letter will be graded by your assigned TA and will contribute 5% to your final course grade. These documents can be submitted at any time during semester *prior to* November 5 at 11:59 pm via the Canvas assignment labeled "Policy-maker Letter". If you have any questions regarding the Policy-maker Letter, please contact your assigned TA (see above). Before seeking to fulfill the Policy-maker Letter assignment, please read the following subsection.

Grading of Your Letter

Your assigned TA (see above) will grade your Policy-maker Letter materials by the following 21 evaluation criteria assigned to the course by the UNT Core Team. Therefore, it is advisable to peruse these criteria *prior* to fulfilling the assignment so that you know what it is you are writing to in terms of fulfillment.

Please Note: For reasons beyond my control the total number of points assigned by the Core Team for this assignment in Canvas is 176. However, I have been instructed that any point total of 101–176 receives 100% of the 5% of this component of your final course grade. Point totals of 0-100 will be evaluated in the standard fashion, with 100 points receiving 100% of the 5% of this component of your final course grade, 90 points receiving 90% of the 5% of this component of your final course grade, 85 points receiving 85% of the 5% of this component of your final course grade, and so on.

The evaluation criteria for the Letter are as follows:

1. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Content Development (threshold: 6.0 pts)

    - 8 pts—Advanced: Thorough development of content
    - 6 pts—Proficient: Adequate development of content
    - 4 pts—Developing: Partial development of content
    - 2 pts—Beginning: Minimal development of content
    - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

2. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Correctness (threshold: 6.0 pts)

    - 8 pts—Advanced: Mastery application of the rules of standard English
    - 6 pts—Proficient: Above average application of the rules of standard English
    - 4 pts—Developing: Acceptable application of the rules of standard English
    - 2 pts—Beginning: Minimal application of the rules of standard English
    - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

3. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Organization/Structure (threshold: 6.0 pts)

    - 8 pts—Advanced: Skillful implementation of an organizational pattern enhances the content's cohesion

- 6 pts—Proficient: Organizational pattern makes the content mostly cohesive
- 4 pts—Developing: Organizational pattern, in spite of interruptions, contributes to cohesion
- 2 pts—Beginning: Organizational pattern is intermittently observable and results in minimal cohesion
- 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

4. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Statement of Purpose (threshold: 6.0 pts)

   - 8 pts—Advanced: Presents a sophisticated central idea
   - 6 pts—Proficient: Presents a central idea
   - 4 pts—Developing: Attempt to present a central idea
   - 2 pts—Beginning: Minimal attempt to present a central idea
   - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

5. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Consideration of context, assumptions, other perspectives and the credibility and authority of sources (threshold: 6.0 pts)

   - 8 pts—Advanced: Analysis acknowledges complexity and bias; identifies influence of context and questions assumptions; clearly integrates multiple perspectives and justifies on view while respecting others
   - 6 pts—Proficient: Engages challenging ideas tentatively or in ways that overstate the conflict; identifies but mostly dismisses alternative views
   - 4 pts—Developing: Provides some recognition of context and consideration of assumptions and their implications
   - 2 pts—Beginning: Approaches the issue in egocentric or socio-centric terms; analysis is grounded in absolutes, with little acknowledgement of own biases
   - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

6. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Development and presentation of argument, position or hypothesis with logical progression (threshold: 6.0 pts)

   - 8 pts—Advanced: Presents and justifies clearly and in detail own argument, position or hypothesis while qualifying or integrating contrary views or interpretations
   - 6 pts—Proficient: Argument, position, or hypothesis includes original thinking that acknowledges, refutes, synthesizes or extends other assertions, although some aspects have not been fully developed
   - 4 pts—Developing: Argument, position or hypothesis is clearly stated but with little original consideration
   - 2 pts—Beginning: Argument, position or hypothesis is unclear, simplistic or re-stated with little original consideration; fails to accurately present, justify or develop argument, position or hypothesis
   - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

7. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Introduction of problem, question or issue (threshold: 6.0 pts)

- 8 pts—Advanced: Clearly identifies the challenge and subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects of the problem, question or issue
- 6 pts—Proficient: Summarizes the problem, question or issue but some nuances and details are missing or glossed over
- 4 pts—Developing: Summarizes the problem, question or issue, though some aspects are incorrect or confused
- 2 pts—Beginning: Fails to accurately identify and summarize problem, question or issue
- 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

8. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Presentation of conclusions and their implications (threshold: 6.0 pts)

- 8 pts—Advanced: Identifies and discusses well-reasoned conclusions and their implications; integrates conclusions and implications
- 6 pts—Proficient: Accurately presents well-reasoned conclusions; presents implications that are only loosely connected to the conclusions
- 4 pts—Developing: Accurately presents conclusions; implications are absent
- 2 pts—Beginning: Fails to accurately identify conclusions or implications; conclusions are simplistic, absolute or attributed to an external authority
- 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

9. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Presentation, interpretation and analysis of information, data or evidence (threshold: 6.0 pts)

- 8 pts—Advanced: Examines and addresses evidence and its source; questions the accuracy, relevance and completeness of evidence
- 6 pts—Proficient: Provides evidence of search, selection and source evaluation skills; discerns fact from opinion and may recognize bias in evidence
- 4 pts—Developing: Demonstrates adequate skill in searching, selecting and evaluating sources to meet the information need; use of evidence is qualified and selective
- 2 pts—Beginning: Repeats information provided without question or dismisses evidence without adequate justification; data/evidence or sources are simplistic or inappropriate
- 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

10. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Analyzes an Ethical Issue (threshold: 6.0 pts)

- 8 pts—Advanced: Skillfully analyzes the ethical issue
- 6 pts—Proficient: Adequately analyzes the ethical issue

- 4 pts—Developing: Partially analyzes the ethical issue
- 2 pts—Beginning: Minimally analyzed the ethical issue
- 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

11. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Describes the Ethical Issue (threshold: 6.0 pts)

   - 8 pts—Advanced: Skillfully describes the ethical issue
   - 6 pts—Proficient: Adequately describes the ethical issue
   - 4 pts—Developing: Partially describes the ethical issue
   - 2 pts—Beginning: Minimally describes the ethical issue
   - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

12. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Discusses Possible Consequences of Solution (threshold: 6.0 pts)

   - 8 pts—Advanced: Skillfully discusses possible consequences of solution
   - 6 pts—Proficient: Adequately discusses possible consequences of solution
   - 4 pts—Developing: Partially discusses possible consequences of solution
   - 2 pts—Beginning: Minimally discusses possible consequences of solution
   - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

13. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Justifies the Suggested Solution to the Ethical Issue (threshold: 6.0 pts)

   - 8 pts—Advanced: Skillfully justifies the suggested solution to the ethical issue
   - 6 pts—Proficient: Adequately justifies the suggested solution to the ethical issue
   - 4 pts—Developing: Partially justifies the suggested solution to the ethical issue
   - 2 pts—Beginning: Minimally justifies the suggested solution to the ethical issue
   - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

14. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Suggests Steps to Solve Ethical threshold: 6.0 pts

   - 8 pts—Advanced: Skillfully suggests steps to solve the ethical issue
   - 6 pts—Proficient: Adequately suggests steps to solve the ethical issue
   - 4 pts—Developing: Partially suggests steps to solve the ethical issue
   - 2 pts—Beginning: Minimally suggests steps to solve the ethical issue
   - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

15. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Acknowledge Civic Responsibility (threshold: 6.0 pts)

- 8 pts—Advanced: A complex and fully developed combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation as they relate to civic life and affairs of regional, national, and/or global communities

- 6 pts—Proficient: An advanced and well developed combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation as they relate to civic life and affairs of regional, national and/or global communities

- 4 pts—Developing: An adequate and acceptably developed combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation as they relate to civic life and affairs of regional, national and/or global communities

- 2 pts—Beginning: A surface understanding of knowledge, skills, values and motivation involved in civic responsibility and difficulty relating to civic life and affairs of regional, national and/or global communities

- 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

16. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Acknowledge Perspectives (threshold: 6.0 pts)

- 8 pts—Advanced: Exceptional ability to articulate insights into diverse cultural/intercultural perspectives including one's own cultural rules and biases

- 6 pts—Proficient: Advanced recognition and articulation of diverse cultural/intercultural perspectives including one's own cultural rules and biases

- 4 pts—Developing: Adequate understanding of diverse cultural/intercultural perspectives including one's own cultural rules and biases

- 2 pts—Beginning: Surface understanding of diverse cultural perspectives including one's own cultural rules and biases

- 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

17. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Apply Civic Responsibility (threshold: 6.0 pts)

- 8 pts—Advanced: Demonstrates civic engagement through reflection on community based action and/or research and exceptional reflective analysis of the purpose and benefits of the engagement

- 6 pts—Proficient: Demonstrates civic engagement through reflection on community based action and/or research and advanced reflective analysis of the purpose and benefits of the engagement

- 4 pts—Developing: Demonstrates civic engagement through reflection on community based action and/or research and adequate reflective analysis of the purpose and benefits of the engagement

- 2 pts—Beginning: Demonstrates civic engagement through reflection on community based action and/or research that shows limited ability to reflect or analyze the purpose and benefits of the engagement

- 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

18. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Apply Perspectives (threshold: 6.0 pts)

   - 8 pts—Advanced: Demonstrates exceptional ability to assume a perspective other than one's own and express empathy for diverse perspectives
   - 6 pts—Proficient: Demonstrates advanced ability to assume a perspective other than one's own and express empathy for diverse perspectives
   - 4 pts—Developing: Demonstrates adequate ability to assume a perspective other than one's own and express empathy for diverse perspectives
   - 2 pts—Beginning: Demonstrates minimal ability to assume a perspective other than one's own and expresses limited empathy for diverse perspectives
   - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

19. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Personal Development (threshold: 6.0 pts)

   - 8 pts—Advanced: Articulates insights about personal attitudes, behaviors or beliefs seeking complexity and understanding and recognizing cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description
   - 6 pts—Proficient: Recognizes new perspectives about own personal attitudes, behaviors or beliefs (e.g. not looking for sameness; comfortable with the complexities that new perspectives offer)
   - 4 pts—Developing: Identifies own personal attitudes, behaviors or beliefs (e.g. with a strong preference for those rules shared with own cultural group and seeks the same in others)
   - 2 pts—Beginning: Shows minimal awareness of own personal attitudes, behaviors or beliefs, even those shared with own cultural group(s) (e.g. uncomfortable with identifying possible cultural differences with others)
   - 0 pts—Not Applicable: Did not complete or no attempt

20. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Citations (threshold: none)

   - 6 pts—Advanced: Three references provided - All three are legitimate news sources - Proper citation format used
   - 4 pts—Proficient: Three references provided - One or more are from suspect sources - Proper citation format used
   - 2 pts—Developing: Two to three references provided - All sources are suspect - Difficulty distinguishing source of citation
   - 0 pts—Beginning: No references provided

21. This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Content (threshold: none)

   - 18 pts—Advanced: Addressee is clear - Clearly identifies a political issue - Clearly identifies the author?s point of view
   - 14 pts—Proficient: Addressee is clear - Clearly identifies a political issue - Author?s point of view unclear

- 10 pts—Developing: Addressee is clear - Nature of political issue is vague - Author?s point of view unclear
- 4 pts—Beginning: No clear addressee - Nature of political issue is vague - Author?s point of view unclear or absent

Make-up Exams, Exercise, Etc.

Makeup exams as well as accessing past due webtext exercises and policy-letter will be provided only in the case of a documented excuse acceptable to the UNT Dean of Students and evaluated as such.

Posting of Grades

Grades will be reported via Canvas. We will do our best to keep the gradebook up to date. Please let your assigned TA know if you detect any issues or problems in the gradebook.

Course Calendar

Weeks 1-2	<u>The Constitution</u> Webtext Ch. 1. The Founding and the Constitution (due Friday, 8/27, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 2. Texas Constitution (due Friday, 9/3, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 3. Workbook Constitution (due Friday, 9/3, 11:59pm)
Weeks 3-4	<u>Federalism</u> Webtext Ch. 4. Federalism (due Friday, 9/10, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 5. Texas Federalism (due Friday, 9/17, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 6. Workbook Federalism (due Friday, 9/17, 11:59pm)
Weeks 5-7	<u>Congress</u> Webtext Ch. 7. Congress (due Friday, 9/24, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 8. Texas: the Legislature (due Friday, 10/1, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 9. Workbook: the Legislative Branch (due Friday, 10/8, 11:59pm)
Week 8	Midterm Exam: Thursday, 10/14, completed between 6am–11:59pm No Coursework Due
Weeks 9-11	<u>Presidency</u> Webtext Ch. 10. The Presidency (due Friday, 10/22, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 11. Texas: the Governor (due Friday, 10/29, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 12. Workbook: the Presidency (due Friday, 11/5, 11:59pm)
	Policy-maker Letter Submittable via Canvas by Friday, 11/5 (11:59pm)
Week 12	<u>Bureaucracy</u> Webtext Ch. 13. Bureaucracy (due Friday, 11/12, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 14. Workbook: the Bureaucracy (due Friday, 11/12, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 15. Texas: the Executive Branch (due Friday, 11/12, 11:59pm)
Weeks 13	<u>Judiciary</u> Webtext Ch. 16. The Judiciary (due Friday, 11/19, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 17. Texas: the Justice System (due Friday, 11/19, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 18. Workbook: the Courts (due Friday, 11/19, 11:59pm)
Weeks 14	<u>Civil Liberties</u> Webtext Ch. 19. Civil Liberties (due Friday, 11/26, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 20. Workbook: Civil Liberties (due Friday, 11/26, 11:59pm)
Week 15	<u>Civil Rights</u> Webtext Ch. 21. Civil Rights (due Thursday, 12/2, 11:59pm) Webtext Ch. 22. Workbook: Civil Rights (due Thursday, 12/2, 11:59pm)
	Week 16 Final Exam: Thursday, 12/9, completed between 6am–11:59pm

ADA Compliance

Mission Statement from UNT Office of Disability Access (`https://disability.unt.edu/about`):

> The Office of Disability Access (ODA) exists to prevent discrimination on the basis of disability as mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended. This is accomplished by determining eligibility for qualified students by reviewing disability-related medical and psychological documentation along with the student's individual experiences, to determine appropriate, reasonable accommodations which are recommended to the campus. As part of this process, our office strives to facilitate the development of students through independence and autonomy. UNT is a student centered research institution; our office compliments this mission by providing leadership in the areas of equal access and advocacy for students with disabilities. In turn, our campus diversity will be richer and UNT will be more accessible to all.

Forms for applying for accommodation are available here:

`https://disability.unt.edu/forms`

Academic Integrity

UNT's policy of academic integrity (06.003 Student Academic Integrity; `https://vpaa.unt.edu/dcgcover/resources/integrity`) is contained in the appended document.