

PSCI 2306: U.S. and Texas Government

Overview

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the roles of the United States and Texas governments in the American political system. We will consider the institutions, processes, and decisions of political actors that define American and Texas government. We focus particular attention on the United States and Texas constitutions, civil rights and liberties, federalism, and the institutions that comprise the three branches of government.

As you begin the course, you should keep two things in mind.

1. Government matters to you. Although the things that we individually value will certainly vary, government affects them. If you want to protect the things you value, you need to understand what the government does, why the government does what it does, and what you—as a member of this community—can do to affect government policy. You may be taking this class because it is required, but the material covered has real-world implications for your life; mastering this material can give you the tools to protect and promote the things you value.
2. Rules matter. Institutional structure and the rules by which they operate shape the outcomes of governmental processes. This class will introduce you to the institutions of government, the logic behind their structure and operation, and the rules that constrain their behavior.

Objectives

Students who master the content of this course will be able to:

1. Explain philosophical traditions that inform the U.S. and Texas constitutions (including classical liberalism, republicanism, federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances);
2. Evaluate the balance of power between the branches of government, state and national governments, and the people and the state;
3. Evaluate constitutional and extra-constitutional powers of the three branches of government at both the Texas and national levels;
4. Interpret the role of minority groups in U.S. politics; and
5. Evaluate the democratic nature and effectiveness of the U.S. and Texas institutions of government (including their constitutions).

Instructor

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Teaching Assistants

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Please contact Instructional Staff via Canvas.

Access the course at:

<http://unt.instructure.com>

Online Office Hours by Appointment

You may contact Dr. Blackstone via Canvas to set up an appointment. Online office hour appointments will be conducted on Zoom (a teleconferencing program) that you can access in Canvas.

Required Materials:

Web-Based Textbook

Central Ideas in American Government with PSCI 2306 Workbook. 2016. Soomo Publishing. (ISBN: 978-0-9984578-8-8)

Access to the web-text can be purchased in Canvas or you may purchase an access code at the UNT bookstore.

Technical Requirements and Support

Requirements

While this is an online course, the necessary technical requirements are minimal. You will need to navigate our Canvas webpage, follow the link to our online textbook, complete multiple choice and short answer questions in the online textbook, follow links to videos and some external websites, upload/download Word and PDF documents, post to/comment on discussion boards in Canvas, and complete online exams in Canvas.

Support

Neither the instructor nor the teaching assistants are technical support resources. If you experience any kind of technical problem with UNT resources (e.g. Canvas), please contact the UNT Student Helpdesk at 940.565.2324 or helpdesk@unt.edu.

If you are having difficulty with the Soomo Webtext, please contact the publisher directly at <http://soomolearning.com/support>.

Please note: If you experience a loss of internet connection, WiFi signal, or your browser freezes during an assignment or exam, you must contact the UNT resources first, then contact us via Canvas explaining the problem you experienced *and the steps you have taken to address it*. If you fail to complete an assignment or exam because of technical issues, there is nothing we can do if you do not attempt to resolve the issue prior to the assignment/exam due date.

How You'll Be Evaluated

All assignments and exams in the course will be assessed as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory, with the specifications for Satisfactory articulated on each assignment. In general, Satisfactory should not be viewed as “minimally competent,” but rather as a mark of having achieved the assignment’s learning goals and specifications. An assignment meets the goals, or it does not—there is no partial credit. The only letter grade that you will receive in the course will be your final letter grade and it will reflect the “bundles” of assignments and requirements that you have satisfactorily accomplished in the class.

Built into this system is a good deal of choice as to how much you wish to learn and how hard you want to work to demonstrate and apply that learning. You might choose that passing the course with a C is sufficient for your goals—it is perfectly appropriate and worthy of respect for you to make that choice, especially if it allows you to proactively allocate your time to other endeavors. If you strive to get an A in the course, you should recognize that you are taking on that work and challenge and you should make sure you are in a personal and academic situation to achieve that level of engagement.

To earn this grade:	Accomplish the following
A	Satisfactorily complete 3 Unit Exams (or the cumulative final exam) Satisfactorily complete 16 Webtext Chapter Assignments Satisfactorily complete 2 Reflections Satisfactorily complete 6 Discussion Board Posts Satisfactorily complete the Syllabus & Class Policies Quiz.
B	Satisfactorily complete 3 Unit Exams (or the cumulative final exam) Satisfactorily complete 14 Webtext Chapter Assignments Satisfactorily complete 1 Reflection. Satisfactorily complete 4 Discussion Board Posts. Satisfactorily complete the Syllabus & Class Policies Quiz.
C	Satisfactorily complete 2 Unit Exams (or the cumulative final exam) Satisfactorily complete 12 Webtext Chapter Assignments.
D	Satisfactorily complete 1 Unit Exam (or the cumulative final exam) Satisfactorily complete 8 Webtext Chapter Assignments

Tokens & Flexibility

Every student begins the course with 2 virtual tokens that can be “exchanged” for some leniency or opportunities for revision. You may use a token to:

- Submit the Syllabus and Class Policies quiz any time before January 11.
- Submit a reflection up to 72 hours late.
- Revise and resubmit an Unsatisfactory Reflection that you submitted but did not earn Satisfactory credit for.
- Be awarded credit for 1 skipped or Unsatisfactory Webtext Chapter Assignment or Discussion Posts.

What You'll Do in PSCI 2306

1

EXAMS

There will be 3 unit exams and a cumulative final. Exams will be comprised of objective questions—multiple choice, true/false, and matching, for example.

No make-up exams will be given unless you have a university-excused absence or a family or medical emergency which is documented and verifiable. Students who will miss an exam due to travel with UNT teams or performance groups, or for observance of a religious holiday should make arrangements to take their exams *prior to their absences*.

To earn a score of *Satisfactory*, exams must be completed by 11:59 pm on their due date and earn 70% of the possible points.

2

WEBTEXT CHAPTER ASSIGNMENTS

There are 17 chapters in your web-text. Nine chapters in your web-text include “Get the Gist” questions at the end of each page and “Investigations” throughout the chapter. Get the Gist questions are designed to help you check your comprehension of the reading. Investigation questions provide an opportunity to engage in analysis and explanation of course concepts. If you miss GTG questions, you can clear your answers and attempt them again, but Investigation questions may only be attempted 1 time.

Eight chapters in your web-text are workbook chapters. Each WB chapter is organized around four learning objectives: (1) critical thinking skills, (2) social responsibility, (3) communication skills, and (4) personal responsibility. WB chapters provide an opportunity to apply the material covered in the textbook chapters.

To earn a score of *Satisfactory*, Webtext Assignments must be completed by 11:59 pm on their due date and earn 70% of the possible points.

3

REFLECTIONS

Reflective writing assignments will ask you to think about course concepts and the ways in which they apply to your life and/or to contemporary political debates. To earn *Satisfactory* credit, reflections must (1) be submitted on time, (2) respond clearly to the prompt and rely on appropriate arguments and evidence, (4) be a minimum 375 words with no more than 3 grammatical or spelling errors per page (250 words). Prompts and rubrics are posted in Canvas.

4

DISCUSSION POSTS

Students will participate in online discussion groups. To earn credit for a discussion topic, students must make 2 contributions that are (1) responsive to the prompt or another student’s response, (2) written in at least 4 complete sentences, (3) respectful, and (4) submitted on time. Responses to students must include 2 of the following: compliment, comment, connection, or question. Prompts and rubrics are posted in Canvas.

Other Policies

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodation at any time, however ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the ODA website at [http:// www.unt.edu/oda](http://www.unt.edu/oda). You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of F in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at [http:// faculty.success.unt.edu/academic-integrity](http://faculty.success.unt.edu/academic-integrity).

Class Conduct

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [https:// deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct).

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, and Assault

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0. Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate and she can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

Important Notice for F-1 Students Taking Distance Education Courses

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website at <http://www.ecfr.gov/>. The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

University of North Texas Compliance

To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course.

If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

1. Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.
2. Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

Unit 1: Constitutions & Federalism

Assignments		Due Date
Discussion Posts	Topic 1–Introductions: Post 1	Tuesday, December 18
	Topic 1–Introductions: Post 2	Wednesday, December 19
	Topic 2–The State of TX Made You Do It: Post 1	Wednesday, December 19
	Topic 2–The State of TX Made You Do It: Post 2	Thursday, December 20
Readings & Webtext Chapters	Webtext Chapter 1: The Founding and the Constitution	Friday, December 21
	Webtext Chapter 2: The Texas Constitution	Friday, December 21
	Webtext Chapter 3: Workbook–The Constitution	Friday, December 21
	Webtext Chapter 4: Federalism	Friday, December 21
	Webtext Chapter 5: Workbook–Federalism	Friday, December 21
Exam	Unit 1 Exam (available Wednesday, December 19)	Friday, December 21
Reflection	Reflection #1 Due	Sunday, December 23
Quiz	Syllabus & Class Policies Quiz	Sunday, December 23

Unit 2: The Legislative & Executive Branches

Assignments		Due Date
Discussion Posts	Topic 3-Legislators That Look Like Me: Post 1	Wednesday, January 2
	Topic 3--Legislators That Look Like Me: Post 2	Thursday, January 3
	Topic 4-Welcome to Congress: Post 1	Thursday, January 3
	Topic 4-Welcome to Congress: Post 2	Sunday, January 6
Readings & Webtext Chapters	Webtext Chapter 6: Congress	Friday, January 4
	Webtext Chapter 7: Workbook–The Legislative Branch	Friday, January 4
	Webtext Chapter 8: The Presidency	Friday, January 4
	Webtext Chapter 9: Workbook–The Presidency	Friday, January 4
	Webtext Chapter 10: Bureaucracy	Friday, January 4
	Webtext Chapter 11: Workbook–The Bureaucracy	Friday, January 4
Exam	Unit 2 Exam (available Wednesday, January 2)	Friday, January 4
Reflection	Reflection #2 Due	Sunday, January 6

Unit 3: The Judiciary, Civil Liberties, & Civil Rights

Assignments		Due Date
Discussion Posts	Topic 5-Regulating Voting: Post 1	Monday, January 7
	Topic 5-Regulating Voting: Post 2	Tuesday, January 8
	Topic 6-Fix American Politics: Post 1	Tuesday, January 8
	Topic 6-Fix American Politics: Post 2	Wednesday, January 9
Readings & Webtext Chapters	Webtext Chapter 12: The Judiciary	Thursday, January 10
	Webtext Chapter 13: Workbook–The Courts	Thursday, January 10
	Webtext Chapter 14: Civil Liberties	Thursday, January 10
	Webtext Chapter 15: Workbook–Civil Liberties	Thursday, January 10
	Webtext Chapter 16: Civil Rights	Thursday, January 10
	Webtext Chapter 17: Workbook–Civil Rights	Thursday, January 10
Exam	Unit 3 Exam (available Tuesday, January 8)	Thursday, January 10

Cumulative Final Exam: Friday, January 11 (available Thursday, January 10)

Grade Tracker

Use the table below to keep track of your standing in the course. Note that completing “extra” items in higher grade bundles does not compensate for required items in the lower letter bundles. To earn a letter grade, you must complete all requirements for that letter grade and the requirements for all lower grades. For example, to earn an A, you must complete all items in the D, C, B, and A categories.

	Unit Exams (* Earning credit for the cumulative final is equivalent to earning credit for all Unit Exams)	Webtext Assignments	Discussion Post Assignments	Reflection Assignments	Syllabus and Policies Quiz
D requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
C requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
B requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A requirements		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Tokens available: