

US & Texas Constitutions and Institutions

PSCI 2306 Section 482

Fall 2025

Instructor Information

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Teaching Assistants:

For students with last names A-K

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Course Description

“An introduction to the institutions of government, with particular emphasis on the U.S. and Texas Constitutions. Focus on the structure and powers of the three branches of government (both national and Texas); the division of power between those branches (separation of powers); the division of power between national and state governments (federalism); and issues related to civil rights and civil liberties.” (From the UNT Course Catalog)

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to

1. Describe the structure and powers of the three branches of government (both national and Texas)

2. Explain the division of power between those branches (separation of powers) as well as the division of powers between the national and state governments (federalism)
3. Explain the limits placed upon the powers of government
4. Describe the role of compromise in creating our system of laws and institutions, and identify both the strengths and weaknesses in the U.S. and Texas systems of government.
5. Students will develop skills in the areas of critical thinking, social responsibility, personal responsibility, and communications.

Required Course Materials

Textbook Information

This course requires the purchase of an electronic webtext, published by Soomo, titled U.S. and Texas Politics with 2306 Workbook 15e, by Jocelyn Evans & Kristy Michaud, The Texas Politics Press. ISBN: 978-1-954890-94-7. The text can be purchased directly from the publisher once you first log in to Canvas and access our course page. The bookstore version will have a slightly different title and ISBN number, but the texts are the same as long as you purchase the text specifically for this course number and section. Regardless of where you make your purchase, you will receive an access code that you will enter within the course's Canvas shell to gain access to the webtext. Directions of how to do this will be shared within Canvas. Without this code, you will be unable to complete a substantial number of course assessments so you must purchase it. Due to financial aid delays, some students may not be able to purchase the text the first week of class. The webtext publisher allows students free trial access for a limited time to give students the time necessary to purchase the text. (You will need to check with the publisher for details about the length of the free trial). I will regularly refer to chapters in the textbook as SWC (and then a number) in the remainder of the syllabus. For instance, SWC 4 is a reference to Chapter 4 in the Soomo Webtext. In addition to the required webtext, I may assign online articles or links to supplement course material.

Technology Requirements for Courses with Digital Materials

This course has digital components. Specifically, most assessments can only be completed using the webtext so you must purchase and connect it to our course in the Canvas Learning Management System. This also means that you must have regular access to a computing device and Internet connection, preferably high speed, to access course content and assignments. If circumstances change in any way, I will inform you, in a timely manner, of additional technical needs. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at Learn Anywhere (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

Course Format

This course is a largely asynchronous online course that utilizes a webtext along with supplementary readings coupled with online assignments and exams to be completed through Canvas. All assignments, however, have specific deadlines. The dates and deadlines for all course activities are listed below. Students should regularly check the course page on Canvas for reminders and important announcements.

Course assignments, Grade Weights, and Due Dates

Below you will find a list of the types of graded assessments, their respective quantities, and the percentages of the final course grade. The abbreviation “SWC” refers to the Soomo Webtext Chapters and will be followed by a number to indicate which chapter in the webtext is being referenced. So, for example, “SWC” refers to Chapter 3 of the Soomo Webtext.

Exams (60% of final course average)

Students will complete three exams and one comprehensive final exam, each worth 15% of the final course grade and combined worth 60% of the final course grade. All exams will include material from the assigned readings and any supplementary material. All exams will feature fifty multiple choice questions. The dates for all exams and the covered chapters are listed below. The first two exams will open on a Monday at 9 AM and close at 11:59 PM on the following Sunday. The third exam will open on a Monday at 9 AM but close at 11:59 PM on a Thursday due to University rules regarding the Reading Day. Per the final exam schedule, the final exam will open on a Monday at 9 AM and close at 11:59 PM on a Thursday as well.

Exam schedule and due dates

Exam	Covers	Opens at 9 AM	Closes at 11:59 PM
Exam 1	SWC 1-5	10/20/25	10/26/25
Exam 2	SWC 6-13	11/10/25	11/16/25
Exam 3	SWC 14-19	12/1/25	12/4/25*
Final Exam	All material from the course	12/8/25	12/11/25

*Note that the University Reading Day on 12/5 prevents me from keeping this open through Friday.

Make-up exams: Make-up exams are granted exclusively at my discretion. Any request for a make-up exam must be submitted in writing and include documentation explaining why the absence from the exam was legitimate. Requests without documentation will be rejected. Such requests must be received within two calendar days of the missed exam date unless the student

is physically unable to submit such a request. Legitimate reasons for requesting a make-up could include illness severe enough to require professional medical treatment, death of an immediate family member, participation in official University activities, and legal obligations. However, because these exams are open for multiple days, your excuse would need to cover the entirety of the examination period. Missing an exam due to forgetting an exam was held or due to technical issues will not be considered legitimate reasons. Please note that the grounds listed above as legitimate reasons do not guarantee granting of a make-up exam. I will consider requests based upon their individual merits.

Workbook assignments (25% of course average)

Students will complete 8 Workbook Chapter assignments from the SWC's, collectively worth 25% of the final course average. Due dates for Workbook assignments are contained in the schedule below including the point values for the assignment. These assignments contain multiple choice questions that are designed to assess student learning from the mandated student learning outcomes identified by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. As you will see from the following table, each workbook assignment has due dates on a Friday at 11:59 PM. Please note that you may have both workbook assignments and webtext assignments due on the same day some weeks. Students who miss this deadline can submit the assignment late, at a 50% penalty, by the following Friday, except for Chapter 19, which will not be accepted late. The lowest two assignments will be dropped from the course average.

Workbook schedule and due dates

Workbook Activities' Due Dates (Due at 11:59 PM)	Point Value	Due date	Late Submission Date
Unit 1			
Chapter 2: Workbook: The U.S. Constitution	100 pts	10/17	10/24
Chapter 5: Workbook: Federalism	100 pts	10/24	10/31
Unit 2			
Chapter 7: Workbook: Legislatures	100 pts	10/31	11/7
Chapter 10: Workbook: The Presidency	100 pts	11/7	11/14
Chapter 12: Workbook: The Bureaucracy	100 pts	11/14	11/21
Unit 3			
Chapter 15: Workbook: The Courts	100 pts	11/21	12/1
Chapter 17: Workbook: Civil Liberties	100 pts	11/21	12/1
Chapter 19: Workbook: Civil Rights	100 pts	12/4	None*

*Due to University rules, all work must be completed by the last day of classes, aside from exams during finals week, so I cannot accept late work from this Chapter.

Webtext assignments (15% of course average)

Students will complete thirty webtext assignments from the SWC's, collectively worth 15% of the final course average. Webtext assignment due dates are contained in the table below, including the point values for the assignment and they are due on Fridays at 11:59 PM. Please note that you may have both workbook assignments and webtext assignments due on the same day some weeks. Students who miss this deadline can submit the assignment late, at a 50% penalty, by the following Friday, except for Chapter 18, which will not be accepted late. The four lowest assignment grades will be dropped from the class average.

Webtext Activities' Due Dates (Due at 11:59 PM)	Point Value	Due date	Late Submission Date
Unit 1			
Chap 1: The Founding and the Constitution	100 pts	10/17	10/24
Chap 1: Passing the 19th Amendment INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/17	10/24
Chap 1: Comparing Constitutions INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/17	10/24
Chap 3: Texas: The Constitution	100 pts	10/17	10/24
Chap 3: Public Opinion and Constitutional Amendments in Texas INVESTIGATION	100 pts	10/17	10/24
Chap 4: Federalism	100 pts	10/24	10/31
Chap 4: McCulloch v. Maryland INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/24	10/31
Chap 4: The Business of Weed INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/24	10/31
Unit 2			
Chap 6: Congress	100 pts	10/31	11/7
Chap 6: Drawing Political Lines INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/31	11/7
Chap 6: Setting the Legislative Agenda INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/31	11/7
Chap 8: Texas: The Legislature	100 pts	10/31	11/7
Chap 8: Public Opinion and Legislative Officers in Texas INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/31	11/7
Chap 9: The Presidency	100 pts	11/7	11/14
Chap 9: Eavesdropping on the Oval Office INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/7	11/14
Chap 9: The Broken Presidency INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/7	11/14
Chap 11: Bureaucracy	100 pts	11/14	11/21
Chap 11: The USDA: An Agency for Farmers INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/14	11/21
Chap 11: Implementing the ACA INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/14	11/21
Chap 13: Texas: The Executive Branch	100 pts	11/14	11/21
Chap 13: Public Opinion and Elected Officials in Texas INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/14	11/21
Unit 3			
Chap 14: The Judiciary	100 pts	11/21	12/1

Chap 14: Marbury v. Madison INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/21	12/1
Chap 14: The Path to Marriage Equality INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/21	12/1
Chap 16: Civil Liberties	100 pts	11/21	12/1
Chap 16: The Meaning of the Right to Privacy INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/21	12/1
Chap 16: Free Speech for Students INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/21	12/1
Chap 18: Civil Rights	100 pts	12/4	None*
Chap 18: Brown v. Board INVESTIGATION	50 pts	12/4	None*
Chap 18: Till We Have Suffrage: The Movement INVESTIGATION	50 pts	12/4	None*

*Due to University rules, all work must be completed by the last day of classes, aside from exams during finals week, so I cannot accept late work from this Chapter.

Final letter grades for this course will be based on the following scale.

A = 89.5%-100%

B = 79.5%-89.4%

C = 69.5%-79.4%

D = 59.5%-69.4%

F = 59.4% or below

Late Work

As noted, late workbook assignments and webtext assignments can be submitted up until the late submission dates specified in the tables above with a 50% penalty (except for SWC 18 & 19) Late exams, however, will not be accepted.

Course Policies and Procedures

Communications

Your first point of contact should be the Teaching Assistant that you were assigned (see top of Syllabus). They will help you with substantive questions and with basic questions related to Canvas. I will respond within 24 hours to emails sent between M-F normal business hours. Responses to emails sent during the weekend could take 48-72 hours. When emailing, you need to include your course number and section number in the subject line, along with a brief description of the situation. Please be courteous and kind in your email, whether you send it to me or our TA's. You must email from your official University email address; we will not respond to emails from third party providers. Meeting in person, however, is always preferable to discuss matters, particularly grades.

Academic Integrity Standards and Sanctions for violations

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>), academic misconduct “means the intentional or unintentional action by a student to engage in behavior in the academic setting including, but not limited to: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic misconduct, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage.” The policy goes on to state that “cheating” is defined as “the use of unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise, including but not limited to: 1. Use of any unauthorized assistance to take exams, tests, quizzes, or other assessments; 2. Use of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; 3. Use, without permission, of tests, notes, or other academic materials belonging to instructors, staff members, or other students of the University; 4. Dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor; 5. Any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage on an academic assignment.” Students who engage in academic misconduct can face various consequences including warnings, grade penalties, or expulsion from UNT. It is important for you to review the policy to make sure you understand it and ask questions if you do not. For this class, acts of academic misconduct could include: using unauthorized aides to complete assignments or exams, unauthorized use of Generative AI (see next section) to complete assignments or exams, working together with other students when not authorized to do so, though this list is not exhaustive. You are allowed to study with your classmates, share written notes that you have taken, but the remainder of the course work must be done by you and only you.

Gen AI Use

Prohibited Use: In this course, students need to work on their own to engage the material, readings, and overall course content to hone your mastery of the material, critical thinking skills, and communication skills. For this reason, Generative AI use (GenAI) of tools such as ChatGPT and similar tools is not permitted when it comes to completing coursework. Using GenAI to complete any coursework (exams, assignments) will be considered a violation of academic integrity rules and will be addressed according to the Academic Integrity policy discussed above. If you are unsure whether you can use something, ask the instructor. In the interest of full disclosure, the instructor does use GenAI at times to brainstorm ideas or evaluate potential exam questions.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit, so please do not ask.

Additional Important Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

Because this course is online, there is no attendance requirement. Assignments and exams do have due dates that students must meet, as discussed above.

How to Succeed in this Course and at the University

Grades are based upon a mastery of the presented material, and you are responsible for your own success. Course activities will not be curved. I encourage you to find opportunities to learn with and through others. Explore Navigate360's Study Buddy (<https://navigate.unt.edu>) tool to join study groups. You can also use the coaching staff at the Learning Center.

You are also encouraged to first contact the Teaching Assistants, and then me, during office hours if you are struggling. Simply put, we cannot help you if you do not seek out that help. One on one, in-person conversations are usually the best way to overcome course-related challenges.

UNT offers a range of mental health and wellness services to help maintain balance and well-being. If you need these types of support to help your academic and personal success, then do so.

Mental health services: (<https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies>)

Success services: (<https://www.unt.edu/success>)

Wellness services: (<https://www.unt.edu/wellness>)

Syllabus change policy

This syllabus is a guide. Sometimes circumstances or events, or even class progress, require tweaks or modifications to a course syllabus during the semester. Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in advance. No additional work will ever be assigned, nor will deadlines ever be moved to earlier than what is stated in the syllabus (unless an egregious error is found in the syllabus or Canvas).

ADA Statement

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, students must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify a student's eligibility each semester. Once eligibility is confirmed, a student may request a letter of accommodation. ODA will then email faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about students' specific needs in the course.

Students can request accommodations at any time, but it is important to provide ODA notice to faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding their accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask students to discuss the letter during their designated office hours to protect student privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support learning needs, refer to the Office of Disability Access website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>) or contact them by phone at 940-565-4323.

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

The University of North Texas prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admissions process; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Every student in this class has the right to learn and engage within an environment of respect and courtesy from others. All discussions should be civil and respectful. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are not acceptable. By working together, the class can ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all. If a student ever feels like this is not the case, please stop by my office to discuss this. Students are encouraged to review UNT's student code of conduct so that they start with the same baseline civility understanding (Code of Student Conduct) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>.)

Campus Closure

UNT is committed to the safety and security of the campus community and recognizes the value of maintaining university operations. However, in the event university operations are disrupted due to an emergency or other hazardous conditions threatening the safety, health, or welfare of the campus community, UNT may be required to cancel classes, suspend operations, or close the campus in its entirety. Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class.

Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses

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.

Recommended Reading Schedule

Below is the recommended schedule for the assigned readings for the Soomo Webtext Chapters. The abbreviation "SWC" followed by a number indicates a specific chapter(s) out of the Soomo Webtext that you need to read. For instance, for Week 1, you should read chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Week	Dates	Topic	Reading Assignment
		Unit 1	
1	10/13-10/17	The Constitution	SCW 1 & 2
		Texas Constitution	SWC 3
2	10/20-10/24	Federalism	SCW 4 & 5
		Exam 1	
		Unit 2	
3	10/27-10/31	Congress	SWC 6 & 7
		Texas Legislature	SWC 8
4	11/3-11/7	The Presidency	SWC 9 & 10
5	11/10-11/14	Bureaucracy	SWC 11 & 12
		Texas Executive Branch	SWC 13
		Exam 2	
		Unit 3	
6	11/17-11/21	The Judiciary	SWC 14 & 15
7		Thanksgiving	

8	12/1-12/2	Civil Liberties	SWC 16 & 17
		Civil Rights	SWC 18 & 19
	12/8-12/11	Final Exam Due by 11:59 PM on 12/11	