

US & Texas Constitutions and Institutions

PSCI 2306 Sec 008

Spring 2005

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Chad M. King

Contact: Chad.King@unt.edu

Office Hours: Mondays: 11 AM – 12 PM, 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Tuesdays: 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Wednesdays: 11 AM – 12 PM, 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Office: Wooten Hall 142

Class times: Mondays and Wednesdays 9:30-10:45 AM (Wooten 322)

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 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 large 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. Soomo, the webtext provider, allows students free trial access for a limited time to give students the time necessary to purchase the text. (I believe the free trial lasts for three weeks/three chapters).

In addition to the required webtext, the instructor may assign online articles or links to supplement course material.

Technology Requirements for Courses with Digital Materials

This course has digital components. Specifically, there are several activities that 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 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 be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at Learn Anywhere (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

Course Format

This course combines in-class lectures, discussions, graded in-class activities (about once per week), and exams, with a number of activities completed on Canvas while utilizing the webtext. The dates and times for the exams and webtext activities are listed below and students must comply with all deadlines. You are expected to attend class regularly, having completed the assigned readings for the day, to listen to lectures, take notes and ask questions, as well as be ready to participate in class activities. While attendance will not be formally taken or graded, if you do not attend class, you will be unable to complete the graded in-class activities which will adversely impact your course grade. Students should regularly check the course page on Canvas for reminders and important announcements.

Course Assignments and Grades

Below you will find a list of the types of graded assessments, their respective quantities, and the percentages of the final course grade. The course is divided into Units 1, 2, and 3 based

upon the chapters in the textbook. The abbreviation “SWC” refers to the Soomo Webtext and will be followed by a number to indicate which chapter in the webtext is being referenced. So, for instance, “SWC 3” refers to an assignment in Chapter 3 of the Soomo Webtext.

Exams (60% of final course average)

Students will take three, in class exams, each worth 20% of the grade and combined worth 60% of the final course average. All exams will include material from the assigned readings, lectures, and supplementary material. All exams will feature fifty multiple choice questions and be completed using scantron forms. (The department may or may not provide these forms, if not, I will announce to students that they must purchase the forms in advance of an exam day). The dates for all three exams are listed below. The instructor reserves the right to deny a student the opportunity to take the exam if they arrive after students have already completed the exam and left the classroom.

Exam	Date	Covers
Exam 1	9/15/2025	SWC 1-5
Exam 2	10/27/2025	SWC 6-13
Exam 3	12/10/2025 @ 8 AM	SWC 14-19

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. Missing an exam due to forgetting an exam was held, skipping class, being stuck in traffic, automotive or transportation issues, or similar type reasons 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 (15% of course average)

Students will complete 8 Workbook Chapter assignments from the SWC’s, collectively worth 15% of the final course average. 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. Workbook assignment due dates are contained in the table below. Assignments can be turned in one week after the due date with a 50% penalty. Missed assignments cannot be made up, however, the lowest two will be dropped from the course average by Canvas.

Workbook activity Due at 11:59 PM on Due Date	Point Value	Due date
Unit 1		
Chapter 2: Workbook: The U.S. Constitution	100 pts	08/29/25
Chapter 5: Workbook: Federalism	100 pts	09/12/25
Unit 2		
Chapter 7: Workbook: Legislatures	100 pts	09/26/25
Chapter 10: Workbook: The Presidency	100 pts	10/10/25
Chapter 12: Workbook: The Bureaucracy	100 pts	10/17/25
Unit 3		
Chapter 15: Workbook: The Courts	100 pts	11/07/25
Chapter 17: Workbook: Civil Liberties	100 pts	11/14/25
Chapter 19: Workbook: Civil Rights	100 pts	11/21/25
<i>*Remember that assignments can be passed in one week late at a 50% grade penalty</i>		

Webtext assignments (10% of course average)

Students will complete thirty webtext assignments from the SWC's, collectively worth 10% of the final course average. While thirty sounds like a large number, most of these are a small number of multiple choice questions contained within the readings in the webtext. Moreover, these questions will help assist you in your studies. Webtext assignment due dates are contained in the table below. Assignments can be turned in one week after the due date with a 50% penalty. Missed assignments cannot be made up, however, the lowest five will be dropped from the course average by Canvas.

Webtext Activities Due dates	Point Value	Due date
Unit 1		
Chapter 1: The Founding and the Constitution	100 pts	08/29/25
Chapter 1: Passing the 19th Amendment INVESTIGATION	50 pts	08/29/25
Chapter 1: Comparing Constitutions INVESTIGATION	50 pts	08/29/25
Chapter 3: Texas: The Constitution	100 pts	09/05/25
Chapter 3: Public Opinion and Constitutional Amendments in Texas INVESTIGATION	100 pts	09/05/25
Chapter 4: Federalism	100 pts	09/12/25
Chapter 4: McCulloch v. Maryland INVESTIGATION	50 pts	09/12/25
Chapter 4: The Business of Weed INVESTIGATION	50 pts	09/12/25
Unit 2	Point Value	Due date
Chapter 6: Congress	100 pts	09/26/25
Chapter 6: Drawing Political Lines INVESTIGATION	50 pts	09/26/25
Chapter 6: Setting the Legislative Agenda INVESTIGATION	50 pts	09/26/25

Chapter 8: Texas: The Legislature	100 pts	10/03/25
Chapter 8: Public Opinion and Legislative Officers in Texas INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/03/25
Chapter 9: The Presidency	100 pts	10/10/25
Chapter 9: Eavesdropping on the Oval Office INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/10/25
Chapter 9: The Broken Presidency INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/10/25
Chapter 11: Bureaucracy	100 pts	10/17/25
Chapter 11: The USDA: An Agency for Farmers INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/17/25
Chapter 11: Implementing the ACA INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/17/25
Chapter 13: Texas: The Executive Branch	100 pts	10/24/25
Chapter 13: Public Opinion and Elected Officials in Texas INVESTIGATION	50 pts	10/24/25
Unit 3	Point Value	Due date
Chapter 14: The Judiciary	100 pts	11/07/25
Chapter 14: Marbury v. Madison INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/07/25
Chapter 14: The Path to Marriage Equality INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/07/25
Chapter 16: Civil Liberties	100 pts	11/14/25
Chapter 16: The Meaning of the Right to Privacy INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/14/25
Chapter 16: Free Speech for Students INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/14/25
Chapter 18: Civil Rights	100 pts	11/21/25
Chapter 18: Brown v. Board INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/21/25
Chapter 18: Till We Have Suffrage: The Movement INVESTIGATION	50 pts	11/21/25

Class activities (15% of course average)

Collectively these assignments are worth 15% of the course average. About once per week (not the week of exams) students will break into small groups and be given a topic, simulation, or task to work on together. These activities are designed to encourage students to think critically about the content we are covering in class. At the end of class, students will submit their work directly to the instructor. Students will be graded on whether they complete the assigned tasks for the day's activity. While missed activities cannot be made up for any reason, the lowest three will be dropped from the course average by Canvas.

Final letter grades in 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

Course Policies and Procedures

Communications

The quickest way to reach me is via email. 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 me, you need to include your course number and section number in the subject line (I have over 700 students this semester!), along with a brief description of the situation. Please be courteous and kind in your email. You must email me from your official University email address, I will not respond to emails from third party providers. Meeting in person, however, is always preferable to discuss matters, particularly grades.

Technology in the classroom

Numerous academic studies show that for most students (though not all) taking notes on a laptop is detrimental to academic performance. In the past I have banned laptops completely or severely restricted their use in class. To begin the semester, I will not do this, but if they become cumbersome, I might have to. I would encourage you to take notes using pen and paper. Cell phones should be put away and not used in class.

I own the intellectual property rights to my lectures. I give you the right to take notes from them and use them for the purposes of studying for the class and becoming a more learned individual. But I do not grant you the right to share that content with anyone aside from a copy of your lecture notes with a fellow classmate. Students are not allowed to take pictures of overheads/slides. Students must receive permission directly from the instructor to audio record class lectures. Students may not share recordings of any kind (audio or video) with other students. Students without permission to record lectures can only use laptops to type out their notes. Students who violate this policy may be held to have violated the student conduct code. If you have questions about this, contact me.

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, recording and sharing notes, lectures, and audio or visual images from class when you are 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, and work together on in-class activities, 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, activities) 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 examples to talk about in class, to refine course simulations or hypotheticals, or evaluate potential exam questions. Lectures, however, are not generated by AI.

Late Work

As noted above, late SWC assignments (Webtext assignments and Workbook assignments) can be turned in one week late with a 50% penalty. There are automatic drops for missed assignments, regardless of reason, so it will be important to stay on top of the schedule and complete work in a timely manner. Note that because all these assignments are open from the beginning of the semester, things like illness or participation in official University activities on a Friday are not an excuse for missing the Friday deadline as students can complete the assignments earlier in the week.

Class activities are due at the end of the class period and cannot be made up, however, as mentioned above, all students receive a set number of lowest grade drops.

Extra Credit

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

Additional Important Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

Because this course involved class activities and lectures, regular attendance is essential to your success. Class activities require students to be in attendance to complete the work. While formal attendance will not be taken, poor attendance will adversely affect student performance on exams and activities. As noted above, class activities must be submitted

during the class period and failing to attend class when activities are assigned will result in a zero for that day's grade.

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 likely 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 approach me during office hours if you are struggling. Simply put, I 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 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 classroom 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.

Class Reading Schedule

Below is the 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, "SWC 4 & 5", for Week 4, means that you should read Chapters 4 and 5 for that week. Readings should be completed prior to class.

Week	Dates	Topic	Reading Assignment
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1	8/18-8/20	Introduction to the Class, US Constitution	Syllabus, SWC 1
2	8/25-8/27	The Constitution	SCW 1 & 2
3	9/3	Texas Constitution	SWC 3
4	9/8-9/10	Federalism	SCW 4 & 5
5	9/15	Exam 1	
	9/17	Congress	SWC 6
6	9/22-9/24	Congress	SWC 6 & 7
7	9/29-10/1	Texas Legislature	SWC 8
8	10/6-10/8	The Presidency	SWC 9 & 10
9	10/13-10/15	Bureaucracy	SWC 11 & 12
10	10/20-10/22	Texas Executive Branch	SWC 13
11	10/27	Exam 2	
	10/29	The Judiciary	SWC 14
12	11/3-11/5	The Judiciary	SWC 14 & 15
13	11/10-11/12	Civil Liberties	SWC 16 & 17
14	11/17-11/19	Civil Rights	SWC 18 & 19
15	11/24-11/26	No Classes (Happy Turkey Day!)	
16	12/1-12/3	Civil Rights, End of Class	
17	12/10	Exam 3 @ 8 AM	