PSCI 4200: Constitutional Law: Powers of Government

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor:	Dr. Chad M. King
Contact:	Chad.King@unt.edu
Class:	T/Th 9:35AM - 10:55AM in ART 226
Office Hours:	Tuesdays: 11 am to 12 PM, 1:15-215
	Thursdays: 11 am to 12 PM
Office:	Wooten Hall 142

Course Description

In this course, we will examine the "Decisions of the United States Supreme Court; scope of legislative, executive and judicial power; presidential power in war and foreign affairs; clash of national and state power; economic liberties and property rights." (UNT Course Catalogue: https://catalog.unt.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=37&coid=172446)

Required Course Materials

Textbook information

Required:
Title: Constitutional Law for a Changing America: Institutional Powers and Constraints
Authors: Lee Epstein, Kevin McGuire, and Thomas Walker
Edition: 12TH 26
Publisher: SAGE
ISBN 13: 9781071934470
Year: 2025

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will gain an understanding of the development of US Constitutional law
2. Students will gain an understanding of key constitutional concepts
3. Students will learn to understand and analyze Supreme Court cases

Technology Requirements

You will need a computing device and Internet connection that allows them to access Canvas. This page will be used to make announcements, record grades, and access some supplementary readings.

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 is a synchronous, in-classroom course that combines in-class lectures, participation and discussions, in-class "pop" quizzes (biweekly), and two exams. 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 discussion and class activities. You should regularly check the course page on Canvas for reminders and important announcements.

Course Assignments, Grades Weights, and Due Dates

Below you will find a list of categories of graded assessments, their respective quantities, and the percentages of the final course grade.

Exams (70% of final course average, 35% each)

You will take two exams this semester. All exams will include material from the textbook, lecture, and ancillary materials. These exams will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Exams will be completed on laptops furnished by the instructor on the days of the exams.

Exam Dates

Exam	Covers	Date
Exam 1	Chapters 1-5	9/24
Exam 2	Chapters 6-11	12/10 @ 8 AM

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, or legal obligations. I will consider requests based upon their individual merits.

Attendance (5% of final course average)

Formal attendance will be taken at each class meeting. You will receive 3 dropped attendance grades for the semester, no questions asked.

Participation (12.5% of final course average)

You will be regularly and randomly call upon to answer questions that help explain or summarize the assigned cases. You will receive a handout that explains both the format of these questions as well as the grading rubric in class/on Canvas. You will receive 1 dropped participation grade for the semester if they are not prepared or absent when they are called upon.

Biweekly Quizzes (12.5% of final course average)

You will take quizzes (about once every two weeks) over the previously covered material from class. These quizzes will contain multiple-choice, True/False and short answer questions. These quizzes will be unannounced and taken at the beginning of class. You must arrive at class on time or risk missing the quiz. Quizzes cannot be made up, however, the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Quizzes can begin the second week of the term. There will be no quiz the week of the first midterm.

Late Work

Class attendance, participation, and quizzes cannot be made up. Exams cannot be taken late unless one receives a makeup exam as discussed above.

Final Letter Grades

Final letter grades 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. For emails sent after 5 PM on Fridays through 9 AM Mondays, I will respond within 48-72 hours. When emailing me, you need to include your course number in the

subject line (I have nearly 550 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. If you wish to discuss grades, however, you will need to do so in person during office hours.

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 permission to take notes from them and use them for the purposes of studying for the class and becoming a more learned individual. I further grant you permission to share your typed or written lecture notes with your classmates. 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 with other students. Laptops should only be used to take typed notes. Failure to heed these requirements will constitute a violation of the academic integrity standards outlined in the next section and may lead to academic discipline. Contact me directly if you have questions about these requirements.

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 aids to complete assignments or exams, unauthorized use of

Generative AI (see next section) to complete assignments or exams, working 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 typed or hand-written, and work together in group class activities. The remainder of the course work must be done by you and alone.

For the purposes of exams and quizzes, use of any materials (notes, textbooks, the Internet, AI, phones/tablets/other devices, etc.) is prohibited. If such behavior is observed or documented, the instructor may void the results as well as report such actions as violations of academic integrity policy.

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 mastery of the material, critical thinking skills, and communication skills. For this reason, use of Generative AI (GenAI) 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.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit planned for this course, so please do not ask (this is why I drop the specified number of quizzes and attendance).

Additional Important Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

As discussed above, all graded assessments are dependent upon regular student attendance. Quiz, participation, and attendance grades will suffer if you do not attend class regularly.

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. 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 contact 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 assistance is 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. 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 contact me 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 experiences 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.

Required Reading Schedule

Below is the required reading schedule for the class. You are expected to arrive with the cases from the assigned readings briefs and ready to discuss them. The instructor may assign content from websites, short articles, news stories, or videos via class announcements.

Date	Topic	Readings	Date	Topic	Readings
8/18	Class welcome		10/13	The Commerce Power	7
8/20	USSC Introduction	1	10/15	The Commerce Power	7
8/25	The Judiciary	2	10/20	The Commerce Power	7
8/27	The Judiciary	2	10/22	The Commerce Power	7
9/1	The Legislature	3	10/27	The Power to Tax and Spend	8
9/3	The Legislature	3	10/29	The Power to Tax and Spend	8
9/8	The Executive	4	11/3	The Power to Tax and Spend	8
9/10	The Executive	4	11/5	Contract Clause	9
9/15	The Executive	4	11/10	Contract Clause	9
9/17	Interbranch Interactions	5	11/12	ESDP	10
9/22	Interbranch Interactions	5	11/17	ESDP	10
9/24	**Exam 1**		11/19	ESDP	10
9/29	Federalism	6	11/24	**Thanksgiving**	
10/1	Federalism	6	11/26	**Thanksgiving**	
10/6	Federalism	6	12/1	The Takings Clause	11
10/8	The Commerce Power	7	12/3	The Takings Clause	11
			12/10	**Exam 2 @ 8 AM**	