US & Texas Constitutions and Institutions

PSCI 2306 Sec 705

Spring 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Chad M. King

Contact: Chad.King@unt.edu (But please send emails through Canvas)

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays: 12:20 PM to 1:50 PM

Office: Wooten Hall 142

Teaching assistants & Office Hours:

TBD

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 a single electronic webtext and workbook by Jocelyn Evans, Kristy Michaud and James Henson that is titled "UNT 2306 Department Bundle" on the bookstore's website. The access code for the webtext is available for purchase from both the University bookstore and directly from the publisher. This code will be entered within the course's Canvas shell to gain access to the webtext. Directions on how to do this will be shared within Canvas.

Without this code, you will be unable to complete 40% of the course work, in addition to being unable to access the readings. Soomo provides students with free trial access for a limited time. (You will need to check with the publisher for details about the length of the free trial, but I believe it is the first three chapters). It is your responsibility to purchase this textbook, and assignments will not be reopened or extended due to not purchasing the text. I do not have free codes or coupons to hand out.

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 Soomo Webtext Chapter 4. In addition to the required webtext, the instructor may assign online articles or links to supplement course material.

Technology Requirements

This class will use both Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor during exams. Students will need:

- A laptop or desktop computer with Lockdown Browser installed (no phones, tablets or iPads) along with a working web camera.
- Note that Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor only work with Windows Computers, Mac Computers, and Chromebook Computers. iPads and other devices will not work. More information about this is provided in the course under "Important Information for Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor"

Without meeting these technology requirements, students will be unable to access course exams. An explanation of how to install and test these applications will be provided in Canvas. Students will also be able to access an empty practice exam so they can see how Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor work. Please review the technical information for Lockdown Browser in advance of the exam to avoid missing deadlines, using the following link: https://aits.unt.edu/support/lockdown-browser.html. Respondus Monitor will ensure that

students are not using unauthorized resources on the exams. Students will need to visibly remain on their web cameras for the entirety of the exam.

Technology Requirements for Courses with Digital Materials

This course has digital components. Specifically, a large number of assessments can only be completed using the webtext so you must purchase and connect it to our course in Canvas. This also means you must have regular access to a computing device and a high-speed Internet connection 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 is an asynchronous, online course with specific deadlines that utilizes a webtext along with some supplementary readings coupled with online assignments and exams completed through Canvas. 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, 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 (60% of final course average)

Students will take three exams, each worth 20% and combined worth 60% of the final course average. All exams will include material from the assigned readings and supplementary material. All exams will consist of fifty multiple choice questions and students will have 60 minutes to complete each one. Exams will be available for 5 days, however, it can only be opened once and the timer will not be reset.

These exams are closed books and closed notes. Students must have Respondus Lockdown Browser installed and enabled to access the exams. Students also must have a webcam turned on during the exam to utilize Respondus Monitor. Please review the information provided above in the "Technology Requirements for Courses with Digital Materials" sections for information on how to do this. A course module within Canvas will provide more information about these requirements and offer a way to test computing devices in advance of the actual exams to make sure they will work. Missed exams will not be reopened, but there is a section below that discusses the process for requesting makeup exams.

Exam Dates

Exam	Covers	Opens at 9 AM	Closes at 11:59 PM
Exam 1	SWC 1-5	3/23/26	3/29/26
Exam 2	SWC 6-13	4/13/26	4/19/26
Exam 3	SWC 14-19	5/4/26	5/8/26

***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. Requests must be received within two calendar days of the missed exam date unless a 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. 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 the availability dates, technological issues, or simply not taking it will not constitute a legitimate reason for requesting a makeup. Please note that the reasons listed above do not guarantee a make-up exam. I will consider requests based upon their individual merits.

Workbook assignments (25% of course average)

Students will complete eight Workbook Chapter assignments from the SWC's, collectively worth 25% 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. The two lowest assignment grades are dropped from the class average. The due date for all workbook assignments is 5/1/26. You are strongly encouraged to complete the assignments as you progress through the course as they are designed to help you prepare for the exams. For example, Exam 1 covers Chapters 1–5, so you should complete the assignments for Chapters 2 and 5 before taking Exam 1.

List of Workbook Assignments
Unit 1
Chapter 2: Workbook: The U.S. Constitution
Chapter 5: Workbook: Federalism
Unit 2
Chapter 7: Workbook: Legislatures
Chapter 10: Workbook: The Presidency
Chapter 12: Workbook: The Bureaucracy
Unit 3

Chapter 15: Workbook: The Courts
Chapter 17: Workbook: Civil Liberties
Chapter 19: Workbook: Civil Rights

Webtext assignments (15% of course average)

Students will complete eleven webtext assignments from the SWC's, collectively worth 15% of the final course average. The three lowest assignment grades are dropped from the class average. The due date for all webtext assignments is 5/1/26. You are strongly encouraged to complete the assignments as you progress through the course as they are designed to help you prepare for the exams. For example, Exam 1 covers Chapters 1–5, so you should complete the assignments for Chapters 1, 3, and 4 before taking Exam 1.

List of Webtext Assignments
Unit 1
Chap 1: The Founding and the Constitution
Chap 3: Texas: The Constitution
Chap 4: Federalism
Unit 2
Chap 6: Congress
Chap 8: Texas: The Legislature
Chap 9: The Presidency
Chap 11: Bureaucracy
Chap 13: Texas: The Executive Branch
Unit 3
Chap 14: The Judiciary
Chap 16: Civil Liberties
Chap 18: Civil Rights

Late Work

Because all assignments are due on the last day of classes (5/1/26), late work will not be accepted. Exams cannot be taken late or reopened, however, students can request a makeup exam using the process described 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 primary way to reach me is via email through Canvas. However, your first point of contact should be your assigned Teaching Assistant (TA), who can help with both course content and Canvas-related questions.

- Response time:
    - Emails sent Monday–Friday during business hours will be answered within 24 hours.
    - Emails sent after 5 PM Friday through Monday morning will be answered within 48–72 hours.
- When emailing:
    - Include your course number and section number in the subject line.
    - Provide a brief description of your question or issue.
    - Use a courteous and professional tone.
    - Send from your official University email address. Emails from third-party providers will not be answered.

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 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.

For the purposes of exams, use of any materials (notes, textbooks, the Internet, AI, phones/tablets/other devices, etc.) is prohibited. Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor are intended to ensure that students are not using any of these prohibited resources during the examination periods. Respondus Monitor will record behavior suggesting the use of unauthorized materials or unpermitted assistance, including but not limited to using another electronic device, viewing notes, speaking with another person, or repeatedly disconnecting from the exam. If such behavior is observed or documented, the instructor may void the results of an exam as well as report such actions as violations of academic honesty policies.

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 a specified number of low assignments).

Additional Important Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

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

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 meet with me or your TA 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.

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. The instructor may assign short articles or news stories at times via class announcements.

Week	Dates	Topic	Reading Assignment
		Unit 1	
1	3/16-3/22	The Constitution	SCW 1 & 2
		Texas Constitution	SWC 3
2	3/23-3/29	Federalism	SCW 4 & 5
		Exam 1	
		Unit 2	
3	3/30-4/5	Congress	SWC 6 & 7
		Texas Legislature	SWC 8
4	4/6-4/12	The Presidency	SWC 9 & 10
5	4/13-4/19	Bureaucracy	SWC 11 & 12
		Texas Executive Branch	SWC 13
		Exam 2	
		Unit 3	
6	4/20-4/26	The Judiciary	SWC 14 & 15
7	4/27-5/3	Civil Liberties	SWC 16 & 17
		Civil Rights	SWC 18 & 19
8	5/4-5/8	**Exam 3**	