



PSCI 2316.005

Honors U.S. and Texas Constitutions and Institutions

University of North Texas
Mondays, 2:00-4:50p, ENV 120
Syllabus, Fall 2021

Welcome to UNT!

As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact. UNT does not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

Please let me or another professor know if you are having any problems with your safety, well-being, or access to educational or other resources during the pandemic, or if you know of another student who is having trouble. If you are in doubt about whether you should ask for help, please contact me. My colleagues and I care about your well-being and success and we are here to help you.

Description

This course explores the U.S. and Texas constitutions, federalism, the establishment of civil rights and liberties, and the structure of American and Texas government. This course “must be taken to satisfy the requirement of a course emphasizing U.S. and Texas constitutions.”

Core Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate creative thinking, innovation, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
- Effectively develop, interpret, and express ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.
- Connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.
- Demonstrate increased intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

Substantive Learning Objectives

- Evaluate the democratic nature and effectiveness of the U.S. and Texas institutions of government and explain the philosophical foundations.
- Evaluate constitutional and extra-constitutional powers of the three branches of government.
- Evaluate the balance of power between the branches of government, state and national governments, and the people and the state.
- Explain the role of government in securing individual rights and freedoms.

Instructor

Dr. Elizabeth Oldmixon
(she/her)
Email via Canvas
IRL Office: Wooten Hall 139
Virtual Office: Zoom via Canvas
Student Hours: In person or
virtual, Thursdays from 9:00-
11:50a

Required Materials

American Government, 3rd
ed. (978-1-951693-38-1).
Available for free online via
Canvas. (TB)

2306 Workbook (978-1-949164-
97-8). Purchase access code at
the UNT bookstore. (WB)

Additional readings available via
Canvas.

iClicker: This is a student
response platform and free to
UNT students. Create an
account using the link in Canvas
and download the app to your
tablet or smartphone.

COVID Protocols

Face coverings. UNT encourages everyone to wear a face covering when indoors, regardless of vaccination status, to protect yourself and others from COVID infection, as recommended by current CDC guidelines. Face covering guidelines could change based on community health conditions.

Attendance. My priority in teaching this class is providing you with the best possible educational experience while also protecting our well-being. Attendance is encouraged, of course, but it is not a component of your grade. If you show symptoms of illness or suspect that you have been exposed to COVID-19, please do not come to the in-person lecture or my in-person office hours. The newest variant of COVID-19 is highly contagious, even among asymptomatic people. Please err on the side of caution when deciding whether to attend class. If you think that you could be sick, you should assume that you are sick and stay home and use the recorded video lectures to cover the course material.

Moreover, if you are experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider **PRIOR** to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Team at COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.

Class recording. Synchronous (live) sessions in this course will be recorded for students enrolled in this class section to refer to throughout the semester. Class recordings are the intellectual property of the university or instructor and are reserved for use only by students in this class and only for educational purposes. Students may not post or otherwise share the recordings outside the class, or outside the Canvas Learning Management System, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

Assignments

Workbook. Students will read and complete the multiple-choice questions in each of the eight workbook chapters. Each chapter is organized around the four learning objectives adopted by Texas's Higher Education Coordinating Board. Each Workbook assignment may be taken up to three times, and I will record the higher score. Late Workbook Assignments submitted within five days of the original due date will be eligible for 50% credit. No credit will be given for assignments submitted more than five days late. (120 points, 15 points each)

Examinations. There will be three in-term exams and an optional final. The final will be cumulative and will be used as a make-up exam or replacement for a midterm score. All exams will be taken at home or any other location where you have internet access. The in-term exams will consist of approximately 50 questions each. The final exam will consist of approximately 75 questions. Each exam will be multiple choice format and will draw questions from lectures and the assigned readings and videos. Each exam will be open book and open notes, but students are expected to complete each exam independently. You may take the exam anytime between 6am and 11:59pm on the day scheduled for the exam. (300 points, 100 points per exam)

Reflections. Students will complete two individual reflective writing assignments and a plagiarism training session, which we'll collectively call "Reflections." These reflections will ask you to think

about course concepts and the ways in which they apply to your life and/or to contemporary political debates. Assignment details are in Canvas. Late Reflections will be penalized 10 points for each 24-hour period they are late. Due dates for Reflections 1 and 3 are posted on the Schedule below. Reflection 2 has multiple due dates. Please check Canvas. (60 points, 20 points each)

iClicker. Several clicker questions will be asked each day in class. Students who accrue 80% of available points will receive 20 participation points.

Grading

Final grades will be assigned based on the schedule to the right. Scores will be rounded to the nearest whole number using conventional rules of rounding. Extra credit will not be available. Please plan accordingly.

A	450-500 points
B	400-449 points
C	350-399 points
D	300-349 points
F	Fewer than 300 points

In order to facilitate some flexibility in the course while maintaining fairness in grading for all students, each student in the course begins the semester with 1 course token. Token can be redeemed for:

- A 72-hour extension in the completion of one Reflection.
- Receive credit for 1 missing Workbook Assignment.

Students who introduce themselves in the class discussion thread by August 27, 11:59p, will receive an extra token. In order to redeem a token, you must click on the token redemption link on Canvas and describe in the notes section your request to use a token. Tokens requests that do not list a specific assignment for which they are being redeemed will not be honored. Requests for credit for a missing Workbook assignment must be submitted no later than 11:59pm on Thursday, December 2nd.

Schedule

Introduction	
August 23	Read the syllabus
August 30	Politics and Democracy TB Chapter 1 Levitsky and Ziblatt, “This is How Democracies Die” The Economist, “Identity politics are stronger on the right than the left”
September 4	Last day to drop without a W
September 6	No class, UNT closed for Labor Day
September 9	Reflection 1 (Plagiarism) due, 11.59p
Module 1: Constitutions and Federalism	
September 12	WB Chapter 1 due, 11.59p

September 13	The U.S. Constitution TB Chapter 2 Madison, Federalists 10, 51 The Declaration of Independence Listen: Declaration of Independence Deleted Passage, 1776, Documents That Changed the World (podcast) Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" (excerpt)
September 20	The Texas Constitution TB Chapter 14 Ericson and Wallace, The Constitution of 1876 Watch: League of Women Voters of Texas, The Texas Constitution Watch: Samuels, "Can the Texas Legislature override local ordinances?" Special "Election Set For 8 Proposed Amendments To Texas Constitution"
September 26	WB Chapter 2 due by 11.59p
September 27	Federalism TB Chapters 3 SoRelle and Walker, "Both Democrats and Republicans care about 'states' rights' — when it suits them" Binkley, "States banning mask mandates could face civil rights probes" Karteron, "Congress can't do much about fixing local police – but it can tie strings to federal grants"
October 4	Midterm Exam 1
Module 2: Governmental Institutions	
October 10	WB Chapter 3 due by 11.59p.
October 11	U.S. Congress TB Chapter 11 Prokop, "Beating the odds: Why one bill made it through a gridlocked Congress—and so many don't" Elder, "Why aren't there more Republican women in Congress?"
October 17	WB Chapter 4 due by 11.59p
October 18	Presidency TB Chapter 12 Adler, "Maybe the anti-Federalists Were Right -- About the Presidency" Teddy Roosevelt on executive power, autobiography excerpt Watch: How a Bill Does Not Become a Law -- SNL
October 24	WB Chapter 5 due by 11.59p
October 25	Courts TB Chapter 13 Elliott, "Fixing a broken process for nominating US Supreme Court justices" Reid and Curry, "Native Americans won an unusual legal victory at the Supreme Court. Congress could undo it."
November 1	Midterm Exam 2

Module 3: Grappling with Policy	
November 7	WB Chapter 6 due by 11.59p
November 8	Bureaucracy TB Chapter 15 North, "Betsy DeVos's sexual assault rules have already hurt survivors" Lowe et al., "Pete Buttigieg may not know this yet: Rail transportation funding is a racial equity issue."
November 12	Last day to drop with a W
November 14	Workbook Chapter 7 due by 11.59p
November 15	Civil Rights TB Chapter 5 Watch: Michelle Alexander at TEDxColumbus, The future of race in America Ura, "Texas voting bills: What to know about the latest legislation" Watch: Sojourner Truth, Ain't I A Woman? Seneca Falls Conference, The Declaration of Sentiments
November 19	Reflection 3 (Policy Letter) due, 11.59p
November 21	Workbook Chapter 8 due by 11.59p
November 22	Civil Liberties TB Chapter 4 Lund, "The Second Amendment and the Inalienable Right to Self-Defense" Watch: Duane, "Don't Talk to the Cops" Ziegler, "The Supreme Court just took a case that could kill Roe v. Wade — or let it die slowly" Whittington, "Trump says the Supreme Court would allow a 'very powerful flag-burning statute.' He's wrong."
November 29	Midterm Exam 3
December 2	Last day to submit a Token request
December 6	Optional Final

Additional Class Policies

The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus.

Remote Instruction. Remote instruction may be necessary if community health conditions change or you need to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19. Students will need access to a webcam and microphone to participate in fully remote portions of the class. Information on how to be successful in a remote learning environment can be found at <https://online.unt.edu/learn>.

Academic Integrity. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic

dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Statement of ADA Compliance. UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of 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 accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

Acceptable Student Behavior. 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. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.deanofstudents.unt.edu.

Survivor Advocacy. UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially.

Emergency Notification & Procedures. UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in an event of emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at www.my.unt.edu. Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) ensuring you know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas, determining how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and identifying where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, your instructor will communicate with you through Canvas regarding assignments, exams, field trips, and other items that may be impacted by the closure.

Student Evaluation of Teaching. Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at

UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13, 14 and 15 [insert administration dates] of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website at www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.