

PSCI 3210.401, U.S. Supreme Court

Summer 5W1, INET, May 18 - June 19, 2026

Live 2026 Update Sessions, Thursdays 7:00 PM - 7:45 PM in Canvas on Zoom (optional, but encouraged)

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Political Science Department Phone: (940) 565 - 2276

Zoom Office Hours:

Mondays: 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm (CST)

<https://unt.zoom.us/j/83220009925>

Feel free to contact me. No appointment is needed during office hours. If you have a question about class policies, read the syllabus first. If you do not find the answer to your question, then contact me.

No appointment is needed during office hours. If the posted hours are no good, let me know and we'll set something else up.

### **Course Description**

Explores varying aspects of the U.S. Supreme Court, including how the Supreme Court selects and decides cases, how justices are appointed to the Supreme Court, how the Supreme Court interacts with other branches of government and interest groups, and how decisions are implemented.

### **Mode of Delivery**

This is an asynchronous online course. You will need regular access to your course through a computer or other mobile device that connects to the internet and to Canvas. There will be 5 Canvas modules that you will need to work through to complete the course. In addition, **you will need access to Lockdown Browser** and may need access to a webcam for taking your

exams. You are expected to watch the video instructions for how Lockdown Browser works and ensure that you have a device that supports Lockdown Browser.

Every Thursday night during the term, I will host a live Zoom session from 7:00 pm - 7:45 pm (cst). The sessions are optional, but I will try to update and clarify any material from the video recordings. I will record these sessions. You must first enter Canvas and then access Zoom.

## Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1.
  1. Describe the Court's place in the American judicial system, its role as an institution, and what justices do.
  2. Explain the selection process of a Supreme Court Justice; who is selected, their career paths, their attributes; and how justices leave the Court.
  3. Describe how cases reach the Court through the actions of litigants, attorneys, and interest groups, screening procedures and the criteria for decision
  4. Describe the components of the court's decision-making process.
  5. Compare the influences on decision making by the justices.
  6. Analyze the types of issues on which the Court concentrates and the policies it supports.
  7. Analyze the Court's impact on litigants; implementation; and responses by legislatures and chief executives; and society.

## Course Expectations

A university course is a joint endeavor between instructor and students. We all have an important part to play.

As the instructor for this course, I am responsible for

- - - providing course materials that will give you the opportunity to achieve our course objectives and providing you with the tools to learn,
    - providing timely feedback on your work and explaining concerns you may have with grading,
    - and being fair in my implementation of rules and policies in the course.

As a student in this course, you are responsible for

- -

- reading and completing all requirements of the course in a timely manner,
- working to remain attentive and engaged in the course and interact with your fellow students,
- and assisting in maintaining a positive learning environment for everyone.

## **Required Texts**

Baum, Lawrence. 2023. *The Supreme Court*, 15<sup>th</sup> ed. CQ Press. You have the option of either purchasing the e-Book, ISBN: 9781071901731, or the Paperback edition, ISBN: 9781071901717.

## **Technical Requirements**

This course has digital components. To participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System and if circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere](#)

## **Technical Skill Requirements**

While this is an online course, the necessary technical requirements are minimal. You will need to navigate our Canvas webpage, follow the link to our online textbook, and follow links to videos and some external websites, upload/download Word and pdf documents, and post to/comment on discussion boards (in Canvas).

In addition, you will need Adobe Flash on your computer, and you will need the ability to take screen shots (screen captures) of websites or your work that can be saved in an uploaded to the course Canvas site.

## **Assessment Components**

### **Exams (65% of final grade)**

There are two online exams, the midterm and final. They will consist of multiple choice, short identifications, and essays. I will not alter the start and end times. LATE WORK IS NOT ACCEPTED!

### **Review Assignments: (10% of final grade)**

Based on chapter readings, these assignments may include, but are not limited to, fill in the blank, multiple choice, true /false, and matching assignments. LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!

### **CURRENT EVENTS PAPERS: (25% of final grade)**

In these papers, you will select two RECENT Supreme Court media (print or electronic) stories (one taking place between dates May 18, 2026 and June 1, 2026 and the other between dates June 2, 2026 and June 16, 2026). Discuss a story about the Supreme Court event and how it relates to material in the text. To receive a satisfactory grade on the paper, it must meet ALL the following criteria:

1. Each paper must be no fewer than 700 words and no more than 1000 words in length
2. Papers paper must cite information relevant to topics in each assigned chapter of the text. Examples could include stories about Justices, major court decisions, Supreme Court processes/policies, lawyers before the Court, and the role of interest groups in litigation. When in doubt, consult with the instructor. Sources must include at least one major news media source (major newspapers or networks such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, Associated Press {AP}, FOX, ABC, etc. The sources used must be cited at the end of your paper and do not count toward the word length requirement. Your paper must provide an overview of the event and an analysis of it. This is a current events project involving the U.S. Supreme Court. It is NOT a legal brief of a case.
3. The articles or stories must have been published between May 18, 2026 and June 16, 2026.
4. Papers with too many grammatical errors or those that are insufficiently understandable will receive an unsatisfactory grade.
5. Current Events Paper Number One is due by 11:59 pm on Tuesday, June 2nd . Current Event Paper Number Two is due at 11:59 pm on Tuesday, June 16th.
6. LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!

### **Grades: (earned and not given)**

Your grade will be determined based on your scores earned in the following activities:

A range = 89.5-100, B range = 79.5-89.4, C range = 69.5-79.4, D range = 59.5-69.4

Your final grade is the culmination of work that you have done over the course of the semester. **It is not the product of bargaining for academic mercy at the end of the term.** Moreover, I cannot make an exception for one student without making it for all students, and that is never practical or fair. If you have a grading question, you must contact me within 48 hours of the posting.

### **UNT Academic Integrity Policy**

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. 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.

## **Political Science Department Policy on Cheating & Plagiarism**

Perish on the thought and do not give in to temptation and the easy way! The Political Science Department adheres to and enforces UNT's policy on academic integrity. Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. The Department of Political Science also considers unauthorized use of AI in any assignment or exam as a form of academic dishonesty. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of "F" in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. For more information go to [Academic Integrity](#)

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 accommodation 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 go to [OFFICE DISABILITY ACCESS](#)

## **Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation**

The University of North Texas (UNT) 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 admission processes; 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.

## **Technical Support**

**The instructor is not technical support resource. If you experience any kind of technical problem, please contact the following resources:**

- - **Student Helpdesk**

**UIT Helpdesk**

**Sage Hall 130**

**940-565-2324**

[helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)

- - **Internet Support: If you experience a loss of internet connection, WIFI signal, or your browser freezes up on you during an assignment or exam, you must contact the UNT resources first, then send me an email with the problem you experienced and how you're addressing it. Technical difficulties do not guarantee that time on assignments or exams will be extended.**

### **Technical Requirements**

Since this is an online course, you are required to have regular access to the course materials and texts through a web interface. In addition, you will be asked to use Lockdown Browser for exams, and you *may* also be asked to use the webcam feature (Respondus).

### **Technical Skill Requirements**

While this is an online course, the necessary technical requirements are minimal. You will need to navigate our Canvas webpage, follow the link to our online textbook, complete multiple choice and short answer questions in the online textbook, follow links to videos and some external websites, upload/download Word and pdf documents, and post to/co

In addition, you will need Adobe Flash on your computer, and you will need the ability to take screen shots (screen captures) of websites or your work that can be saved and uploaded to the Canvas site.

### **Netiquette**

The online environment invites thoughtless and unkind behavior. Please keep in mind that this is a community of scholars, even though we are geographically dispersed. When interacting with your fellow students, instructors, and teaching assistants, you should be polite. When in doubt, pause for five minutes before you hit "submit." Consider whether you would say something to a person's face before saying it to them in an electronic format. Also remember that electronic communication does not convey tone well; a well-intentioned comment may be perceived as harsh or offensive. Whether you are the communicator or the recipient, please keep that in mind. All of this is particularly important in a class on politics. We will, inevitably, touch on topics that are touchy under the best of circumstances.

### **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. Visit UNT's [Code of Student Conduct](#).

### **Emergency Notification & Procedures**

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

### **Retention of Student Records**

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

### **Access to Information - Eagle Connect**

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: [my.unt.edu](http://my.unt.edu). All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit [EagleConnect Email](#)

### **Student Evaluation Administration Dates**

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 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 [SPOT](#) or email [spot@unt.edu](mailto:spot@unt.edu).

## **Student Support Services**

### **Mental Health**

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- - [STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER](#)
  - [COUNSELING AND TESTING SERVICES](#)
  - [CARE Team](#)
  - [PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES](#)
  - [STUDENT COUNSELING](#)

### **Survivor Advocacy**

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination based on sex as well as 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. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-5652648.

### **Chosen Names**

A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. Below is a list of resources for updating your chosen name at UNT.

- - [UNT Records](#)
  - [UNT ID Card](#)
  - [UNT Email Address](#)
  - [Legal Name](#)

### **Additional Student Support Services**

- - [REGISTRAR](#)
  - [FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS](#)
  - [Student Legal Services](#)
  - [CAREER CENTER](#)
  - [UNT Food Pantry presented by Kroger](#)

### **Academic Support Services**

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