###  A person in a suit smiling  AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**WELCOME TO POLITICAL SCIENCE 2306:**

**US and Texas Constitutions and Institutions**

Dear Students. Welcome to a new academic year! Perhaps this is your first real college class. If it is, I want to welcome you to a new and wonderful part of your life. You are beginning the journey that will enable you to realize your hopes and dreams. Or perhaps you are a returning student or transfer student who has already made real progress toward your undergraduate degree. Either way, I hope you are going to love this class, learn a great deal, and increase your understanding of American government. Over the upcoming weeks, we will discuss American political culture, the U.S. and Texas Constitutions, federalism, civil liberties and civil rights, and the institutions of government. Rest assured that these are wonderfully interesting topics, much more so than any required course has any right to be! Thank you for being part of this class, and welcome—to UNT, and to this class.

Dr. Gloria C. Cox, Gloria.Cox@unt.edu your prof for this course

(Call me Dr. Gloria or Prof, or even Dr. Cox—whatever is comfortable for you.)

University Distinguished Teaching Professor

Associate Professor, Internship Coordinator, Associate Department Chair

Founding Dean, Honors College

Connect with me through email and/or by coming by my office (Wooten 163) during office hours. I try to answer email promptly so if you do not hear back from me within one day, please feel free to send me a reminder. (I typically try to take a break from email on the weekends, so I may not get back to you quite as quickly.) If your message is urgent, please write **Urgent** in the heading so I will read it right away. Also, please put your section # in the subject line.

I will hold office hours in Wooten 163 from 2-3 on Monday and Wednesday afternoons and on Tuesday mornings from 9 till 11. Please send me a message if you need another time so we can set something up.

**What are Office Hours, you ask!** They are specific times I set aside each week to be available in case you would like to talk with me. It does not have to be a crisis for us to meet. I look forward to meeting my students as the semester moves along so drop by when you can. If we find a really nice day, we might meet outside Wooten Hall on one of the benches there. When I have a few minutes, I often go sit outside for a bit, as we have many beautiful trees on this campus, and I look forward to seeing you there in case it works out.

**Success in this Class: What It Takes, What It Looks Like**

1. Come to class—every class day if at all possible. It is the key to success.

2. Bring a notebook and take notes in class. Just sitting and listening is not enough.

3. Be responsible: make sure you know when tests are scheduled and take the test as assigned.

**IMPORTANT**: Some students find themselves overwhelmed as the semester goes by. There are lots of reasons, including feeling academically overwhelmed, having time management issues, having a bout of illness, giving other things priority, or just abandoning a class. Whatever the issue, if you get behind or overwhelmed, UNT has many programs to assist you so please inquire or ask me if you need info about available services. I want you to be successful.

If things get out of hand, and your feelings go beyond ordinary pressure, please consider talking with a counselor or other health professional to get whatever help is appropriate. Nothing is more important than your mental and physical health—please safeguard it. If you need my help, please feel free to be in touch.

*A Sincere Message from Me to You:*

Over the years, I have occasionally heard a student say that they are just not that interested in government and that government has nothing to do with their upcoming career in business, engineering, music, teaching, medicine—and so on. Or perhaps you are taking the class “to get it out of the way.” Oh, no, may I respectfully suggest that you are mistaken! Everyone is a member of society and government is the way we live in a community with others. Without government, there would be chaos and anarchy everywhere all the time. We believe that you will understand society better if you learn the things this course is about. This class will contribute to your being a more educated person and it may even result in your taking an interest in what is happening in our country, from child hunger to elections. While many of you will live in the United States, what we study will have relevance to other countries, too. I probably don’t need to remind you that these are difficult times in our democracy, and your interest and involvement as good citizens are much needed.

And one more thing: Please remember that I, as your professor, care about your progress and I want this to be a meaningful class for you, not just a required check mark. Please don’t quit coming to class or decide not to show up for a test, or fail to do the assignments. That just sets you up for failure, which keeps you from making progress toward your degree. Please let me encourage you to keep up and succeed. If you encounter problems, please be in touch so we can think of some strategies that might help.

Thank you and best wishes.

Your professor, Gloria Cox

**Teaching Assistants**

Teaching assistants are graduate students who are working toward an advanced degree. They are assigned to our undergraduate classes to provide support—to me and to you! They help me with setting up for class (PowerPoint slides, videos, music, announcements, etc.) as well as taking attendance, editing tests, and working with grades. Here’s the thing, though: they are here to support you, too. You are welcome to send a message to ask for help with course material, clarify requirements, or other matters, so please feel free to contact one of our teaching assistants. I will put their names and contact information on the course Home page in Canvas.

**Course Objectives**

* Develop information literacy about American government. This means learning about key concepts like rule of law and others relevant to today’s political culture, including authoritarianism, disinformation, and polarization.
* Gain understanding of the important principles and details of the U.S. and Texas Constitutions;
* Learn about civil liberties and the development of individual rights over time through legislation and court action.
* Explore the concept of equality and its progression for groups in American society.
* Learn about the institutions of government—legislative, executive, and judicial—along with the bureaucracy, for both federal and state government.
* Learn about the ideals of citizenship and how to be a good citizen in your country.
* Learn how to acquire accurate information about government and use that information to make decisions about ideas and policies.
* Learn in a supportive environment in which we demonstrate respect for one another, and a healthy dose of kindness, too.

**Required Course Materials**

The required material is an online workbook that contains our homework assignments. You may purchase it at the UNT Bookstore or online from Soomo, although not from Amazon or other vendors. To purchase from Soomo, go to our class in Canvas and to Assignments. Click on the first web text assignment. An option to purchase online should come up. The cost is around $30. You get three weeks of access before you have to purchase. It does not work to do all the assignments then because your scores will not be there for you if you do not pay for the materials. One more thing: do not go directly to the Soomo website. You cannot access the material that way.

We do not have a printed textbook but if you feel the need for one, it is easy to find one online at a good price. Just make sure anything you buy is fairly recent.

**PROFESSOR, WHAT ARE YOU ASKING ME TO DO IN THIS CLASS?**

**First, please make sure you can find Canvas and this course within Canvas.**

Please make sure you know how to access Canvas and find this class. We will use **Canvas** for many things, including announcements, posting reviews and slides, and even completing the homework assignments. If you have trouble finding it, please let me or one of the teaching assistants help you with it. It really is essential to your success and we are glad to help.

1. Four tests, with the lowest grade dropped. 300 points 50%
2. Eight workbook assignments (30 points each) 240 points 40%
3. Attendance/Participation 60 points 10%

Grading Scale

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 600 to 540 points | 100-90 | Grade of A |
| 539 to 480 points |  89-80 | Grade of B |
| 479 to 420 points |  79-70 | Grade of C |
| 419 to 360 points |  69-60 | Grade of D |
| 359 and fewer points | 59 and lower | Grade of F |

**Please read on for more details, especially about tests.**

**TESTS: This really is important information, as everyone needs to know about our tests.**

* We have four tests this semester. We will count your three highest test grades. The dates are on the syllabus and on Canvas. Please go ahead and note the test dates as it is very important to take the tests on the assigned date.
* On the day of each test, our class will not meet. Instead, you will go to the test center in Sage Hall 311 to take your test. The test center is open from 7:30 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. and you will be able to pick the time that suits you best. When you get to the test center, you will need your UNT ID card. You will also need to know how to access Canvas because I will have posted the test to Canvas.
* Tests will be 50 questions each and each test will cover two of the eight topics of the course. Slides for each topic and a review will be uploaded when we complete our study of each topic and just before the test on the material.
* **Makeup Tests:** Occasionally a student will be unable to take a test when scheduled because of illness or accident or some other situation. Contact your prof before the test and let her know that you cannot make it and what the problem is. A makeup will be offered one week following the regular test for those students who missed the test and have an acceptable reason for doing so.
* If you are approved for a makeup test, it will be a paper and pencil test in the political science office. No online makeup tests will be offered.
* **Very Important: each student is limited to one makeup test per semester. An exception will be made only if you can provide documentation of why you were not able to take the test as scheduled.** If you miss an additional test, you will need to make it up at the end of the semester. Exceptions will be made if you provide acceptable documentation of being in the hospital or the ER, but not for routine medical appointments that you choose to schedule on the day of the test. Exceptions are always made for students representing the University in an official capacity and for those military service members who are officially deployed, of course.
* **A student who takes all four regular tests with the class i.e., no makeups for any test, will receive ten extra credit points at the end of the semester.** This is offered as an incentive to take each test on the scheduled day.
* **Last Chance** **option: the final exam is optional**. You can take it, though, if you need to replace a zero for missing a test or want to try to replace a low test grade. We will discuss these options in class in plenty of time for you to decide, but remember the final is not required.
* **Difficult Situations:** From time to time, unfortunately, someone experiences extraordinary circumstances, such as a serious accident or illness requiring hospitalization or even the death of a parent or other very close relative. Please let me know if something like this happens to you. I will want to talk with you so we can make plans for you to complete the class successfully.
* **Representing the University:** If you miss a test because you are away from UNT representing the University in an official capacity, such as a University athlete or a member of the Green Brigade, it is your responsibility to let me know you will be missing the test and we will schedule a makeup for you within a week. For a student to qualify for a makeup test, the absence must be officially excused by the University. An official absence is one from the Office of the Dean of Students. Occasionally a student will decide to go someplace, but remember an official absence is one excused by the Office of the Dean of Students.

**NEXT, WORKBOOK ASSIGNMENTS:**

We will have eight assignments in the workbook. This workbook must be purchased, either from the UNT Bookstore or directly from the publisher, Soomo, through Canvas. To purchase it online, go to the first Web text assignment in Canvas and click there. The option to purchase the workbook should come up for you. Do not go to the Soomo website, as the material is not available there. The price is approximately $30. It is not available in hard copy or at other sites like Amazon.

* There are recommended due dates for each assignment in the Course Outline.
* All of the assignments will remain open until December 2. After that, they will no longer be available for credit.
* Once the workbook closes, I cannot re-open it.
* Each workbook assignment is worth 30 points.

**NEXT, CREDIT FOR ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION**

Attendance is **required** in this class. Attendance will be checked and you will receive two points of credit for each class for which you are present in its entirety, up to a total of 60 points. Based on my experience, students who attend regularly are almost always successful while those who do not are much more likely to fail the course. For that reason, I have built in credit for attendance and participation as part of your course requirement. Our class meets 45 times so there is room built in for you to miss the occasional class such as for illness or conflicts.

We will check attendance each class day and the teaching assistants will be in charge of tracking attendance. Any issue with attendance credit must be reported right away, as we cannot verify attendance from days or weeks in the past. Occasionally a student will come to me midway through the course and say they have been present all along but for some reason did not receive any credit. As we cannot verify the situation, we will be unable to award credit for days in the past. There is no need to provide excuses for your absences. We do not penalize you for being absent. Instead, we reward you for being present.

**EXTRA CREDIT**

I love extra credit and will provide several opportunities for you to earn extra credit points. They will be added to your points total for the semester. In a typical semester, you will have a chance to earn 35 or more extra points to add to your total.

**A Great Classroom with Great Students and Respect for All**

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged and are part of the learning process, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

**Is College Really Worth It?**

There is lots of talk these days about whether going to college is really worth it. Perhaps you have wondered about it. I want to offer some information you might find interesting and useful. It is from Forbes at <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/student-loans/why-should-you-go-to-college/> and the article is entitled “7 Compelling Reasons Why You Should go to College.”

Among the reasons discussed in the article are the following:

1. You will make more money over your lifetime.

2. You will enjoy increased job security.

3. “More schooling could lead to a happier life,” including longer marriages.

4. You will find it easier to have health insurance and other benefits.

5. “Having a college education can actually help you live longer.”

6. Going to college can help expand your world view, including special interests.

7. Going to college helps you expand your network and get to know people in your chosen profession.

**My wish for you: study hard, in the knowledge that it is well worth the effort, and look forward to the day when you will walk across the stage with a college degree in hand. I wish you the best!**

**IMPORTANT OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY**

I. Procedure Process

A. Policy Statement

B. Required Statements

1. 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. Academic dishonesty in this class will result in a zero on the assignment and failure in the course for very serious or[Insert specific sanction or

academic penalty for specific academic integrity violation].

2. ADA Accommodation Statement

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.

3. Safety Instructions for Lab Courses

4. 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 the UNT Learning Management System (LMS) for

contingency plans for covering course materials.

C. Optional Statements

1. 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 Blackboard 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.

2. 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

deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

3. Access to Information – Eagle Connect

Students’ access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at:

my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a

student’s Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that

explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

4. 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 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 spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

5. 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 reported to the Title IX Coordinator at oeo@unt.edu or at (940)

565 2759.