

PSCI 2306.403: U.S. & Texas Government – Constitutions and Institutions
SPRING 2026
ONLINE (INET)
PROFESSOR JACQUELINE DEMERITT

Team 2306

Instructor Dr. Jacqueline DeMeritt
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Office: Wooten Hall 164
Office hours: Mondays, 11:00am–12:30pm on Zoom
Office hour link: <https://unt.zoom.us/j/85112776268>

Please contact me if you have substantive questions about the course material. I will hold virtual office hours via Zoom on Mondays from 11am–12:30pm. If these times do not work for you, no worries! I am available to meet with you in person, via Zoom, or by telephone, depending on your preference and with occasional exceptions, Monday through Friday 9:30am–3:30pm or 7pm–9pm.

Email (jdemeritt@unt.edu) is an excellent way to set up a meeting or otherwise reach me. If you write me M–F during normal business hours, I will get back to you within 24 hours. If I don't, please feel free to send me a reminder! A note on etiquette: (1) sign your emails with your first and last name, (2) include an appropriate salutation, and (3) ask a specific question if you need a response. Please see further notes on communication below.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) Ms. Morgan Quinnelly
MorganQuinnelly@my.unt.edu
Office hours: TBA, Zoom
Office hour link: ...

Mr. Jeromey Sims
JeromeySims@my.unt.edu
Office hours: TBA, Zoom
Office hour link: ...

If you'd like to meet with one of your TAs, please join their Zoom meetings or email them. TAs are available to answer substantive questions about the course material. In addition, any problems you have with administration or procedural matters such as incorrect grades or problems with homework should be discussed first with a TA. If you have a complaint, contact me *after* you have spoken to a TA to clarify the problem. Please see further notes on communication below.

Course Prerequisites:

None

Course Description:

As you begin this course, you should keep two things in mind:

1. Government matters to you. Regardless of your age, citizenship, race, religion, or gender, you value something in this world (your family, your education, faith, money ... whatever!). Chances are very good that government policy affects those things you value in some way. For example, if you value education, government policy helps determine how you are educated in K-12, the availability and accessibility of higher education, and what rights you have as a student. If you want to protect the things you value, you need to understand what the government does, why the government does what it does, and what you (as a member of this community) can do to affect government policy. You may be taking this class because it is required, but the material we cover has real-world implications for your life, and mastering this material can give you the tools to protect the things you value.
2. Rules matter. Institutional structure and the rules by which they operate shape the outcomes of the governmental process. This class will introduce you to the institutions of government, the logic behind their structure and operation, and the rules that constrain their behavior (with particular emphasis on the U.S. Constitution).

Course Objectives:

Students who master the content of this course will be able to:

1. Explain philosophical traditions that inform the U.S. and Texas constitutions (including classical liberalism, republicanism, federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances)
2. Evaluate the balance of power between the branches of government, state and national governments, and the people and the state
3. Evaluate constitutional and extra-constitutional powers of the three branches of government at both the Texas and national levels
4. Interpret the role of minority groups in U.S. politics
5. Evaluate the democratic nature and effectiveness of the U.S. and Texas institutions of government (including their constitutions)

Course Materials:

This course will use an online textbook/workbook combination: *U.S. and Texas Politics with 2306 Workbook 15e*, Soomo (ISBN 978-1-954890-91-6): The cost, which we have worked hard to minimize, is \$93.75. **I strongly recommend purchasing the book directly through the course Canvas site**, though you can also purchase an access code from the UNT bookstore for an additional charge. If you are waiting for financial aid, you can sign up for a short free trial of the materials via Canvas. The trial covers the first three chapters and the first week of the course. *If purchasing the book is a financial stressor and you let me know, I will work with you to find a solution.*

Communication:

Because this is an online course, we will use a variety of communication tools to facilitate the class. Although our course will not meet face-to-face, I am available to assist you in learning the course material and succeeding in the class. To this end, we will use the following tools:

Announcements. I will post course announcements on Canvas. Each time I post an announcement, it will also be distributed to your UNT email account. As a result, it is vital that you use and check your UNT email account. It is your responsibility to check the class Canvas page on a regular basis to remain up-to-date on assignments and announcements.

Virtual Office Hours. I won't be seeing you every day, but I am right here for you! I will host office hours using Zoom on Mondays from 11am until 12:30pm. To set up a different date, time, and/or method by which to meet, please email me at jdemeritt@unt.edu.

Primary Contact. For questions or course concerns outside of virtual office hours, it is best to contact me via email (jdemeritt@unt.edu). When contacting me via email, please be sure to use your UNT email address so that I am certain to receive your message. When emailing me, please include your name in the email message and PSCI 2306 in the message subject.

Students can expect to receive a response to emailed questions within 24 hours of sending a message M-F during the periods in which the university is in session. Questions emailed during the evening or on weekends and holidays will be answered by the end of the next business day.

Assignments and Grading:

Grades are assigned in accordance with the following scale:

$$\begin{array}{lll} 90 - 100\% = A & 70 - 79\% = C & \text{below } 60\% = F \\ 80 - 89\% = B & 60 - 69\% = D \end{array}$$

Specifications for Grading

- **Exams** (40% of your final course grade)

There will be three non-cumulative unit exams and one cumulative final exam in this course. I will drop the lowest of your four exam grades. Exams will cover material from the textbook and workbook readings. Exams will consist of objective questions (multiple choice, true/false, and matching).

- ***Textbook Assignments*** (30% of your final course grade)

Some of the chapters in our online text are actual text chapters (the others are labeled “Workbook”). For all the regular text chapters (14 in total), there are multiple choice questions at embedded in each page. *These multiple choice questions can be answered repeatedly until you get them all correct.*

- ***Workbook Assignments*** (30% of your final course grade)

There are eight workbook chapters. Each chapter is organized around the four learning objectives adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (critical thinking, communication, personal responsibility, and social responsibility). Each chapter includes four essays that expound upon course concepts and give students an opportunity to apply those concepts. Multiple choice questions and occasional polls or short answer questions are embedded throughout each chapter.

Other Grade-related Policies

Late Work

You may turn in textbook and workbook chapters after assigned deadlines for half credit until the day the exam for the relevant unit is given. For example, Chapter 1 is due on Friday January 16, but you can turn it in for half credit until Exam 1 becomes available at 12:01am on Friday February 13. After the exam in which a given chapter’s material is tested, you can no longer earn credit for that chapter. Exceptions exist on a case-by-case basis if and only if the student has a university-excused absence and provides documentation within 48 hours of the missed deadline.

Turnaround Time

We aim to return graded work to you within two weeks of the due date, often much sooner. When this is not possible, we will post an announcement to the class Canvas site with more detail.

Grade Disputes

You are required to wait 24 hours before contacting me to dispute a grade. Within that time, I expect that you will review the assignment details and reflect on the quality of the work you turned in. If you would still like to meet, email me to set up a meeting (I cannot discuss grades over email). You should come to our scheduled meeting with specific examples that demonstrate that you earned a higher grade than you received. If you miss your scheduled meeting, you forfeit your right to a grade dispute. If you do not contact me to schedule a meeting within seven days of receiving your grade, you also forfeit your right to a grade dispute.

Academic Integrity Standards & Consequences

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. Incidents of plagiarism and/or cheating will result in a failing grade for the class and further penalties per the University's judicial process. Students are advised to review the policies established in the UNT Policy on Academic Integrity regarding academic honesty (http://www.unt.edu/policy/UNT_Policy/volume3/18_1_16.pdf). If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, see the professor. Finally, students agree that, by taking this course, all required assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to www.turnitin.com or a similar plagiarism prevention system.

The UNT Department of Political Science Policy on Cheating & Plagiarism: The UNT Policy on Academic Integrity defines *cheating* as the use of unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise, including but not limited to: use of any unauthorized assistance to take exams, tests, quizzes, or other assessments; dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems or carrying out other assignments; acquisition, without permission, of tests, notes or other academic materials belong to a faculty or staff member of the University; dual submission of a paper or project, or re-submission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor; any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage on an academic assignment. *Plagiarism* is defined as use of another's thoughts or words without proper attribution in any academic exercise, regardless of the student's intent, including but not limited to: the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement or citation; the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in selling term papers or other academic materials. *Forgery* is defined as altering a score, grade or official academic University record or forging the signature of an instructor or other student. *Fabrication* is defined as falsifying or inventing any information, data or research as part of an academic exercise. *Facilitating academic dishonesty* is defined as helping or assisting another in the commission of academic dishonesty. Finally, *sabotage* is defined as acting to prevent others from completing their work or willfully disrupting the academic work of others.

The following academic penalties may be assessed at the instructor's discretion upon determination that academic dishonesty has occurred. Admonitions and educational assignments are not appealable:

1. Admonition. The student may be issued a verbal or written warning.
2. Assignment of Educational Coursework. The student may be required to perform additional coursework not required of other students in the specific course.
3. Partial or no credit for an assignment or assessment. The instructor may award partial or no credit for the assignment or assessment on which the student engaged in academic dishonesty, to be calculated into the final course grade.
4. Course Failure. The instructor may assign a failing grade for the course.

Should the procedure for appeal of a case of academic dishonesty extend beyond the date when the instructor submits course grades for the semester, the student will be assigned a grade that reflects the penalty, which shall be adjusted, as appropriate, at the conclusion of any appeal process. Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Policy on Academic Integrity.

Academic Integrity, ctd: Plagiarism, Cheating, and Generative AI/Chatbots

This policy pertains to all assignments in this course that require writing. That includes but is not limited to papers and examinations. All written work you submit in this course must be your own, original work.

What does that mean?

- You give appropriate credit to each and every source, and do so each and every time you use that source, irrespective of whether you paraphrase or quote that source. Failure to give appropriate credit means you present the work as your own.
- You do not use any material written by someone else or by generative AI – including, but not limited to chatbots such as ChatGPT – and present it as your own work.

Why?

- According to the UNT Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003), any form of “unauthorized assistance” constitutes cheating. As a result, use of any artificial intelligence is not authorized for completion of assignments or exams in this course, unless specifically authorized by the instructor.
- Academic integrity is defined in UNT Policy 6.003 and indicates that the following constitute violations of academic honesty: a student has another person/entity do the work of any substantive portion of a graded assignment for them, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, and/or using generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT).
- For additional information, consult UNT Policy 6.003.

What are the consequences?

- Violations will not be tolerated. Any suspected case of academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with current University policy and procedures, as described at <https://vpaa.unt.edu/ss/integrity>.
 - If this is your first academic integrity violation, you can expect a failing grade on the assignment, and you will be reported to the university’s Academic Integrity office.
 - Repeat violations will lead to stronger sanctions up to and including expulsion from UNT.
- These penalties will apply even if you did not knowingly intend to plagiarize or cheat. You must familiarize yourself with the rules of academic integrity and do your own original work – whether at UNT or later in your career – and ignorance is no excuse.

Classroom conduct

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. Disruptive/abusive online comments will be deleted, and the student will receive a warning about inappropriate behavior. After receiving a warning about inappropriate behavior (or in the case of behavior deemed harmful or threatening to any member of the UNT community), the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities 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.unt.edu/csrr

Accommodations (ODA / ADA)

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.

Professor's Statement on Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support (<http://deanofstudents.unt.edu>, deanofstudents@unt.edu, 940.565.2648, or University Union Suite 409). You may also find value in the list of student resources on our course website. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable her to provide any resources that she may possess. I really do care, y'all. If you're still reading, for five extra credit points on your first exam please email a photo of something that brings you joy to all three of your instructors: jdemeritt@unt.edu, morganquinnelly@my.unt.edu, and jeromeysims@my.unt.edu.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, and Assault.

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0. Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate and she can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses Federal Regulation

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking on-line courses, please go to the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website at <http://www.ecfr.gov/>. The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

University of North Texas Compliance

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 experience 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.

Access to Information – Eagle Connection

Students' access points for business and academic services at UNT is located at my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University and this professor 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 email: eagleconnect.unt.edu.

Emergency Notifications & 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.

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is not a contract; I reserve the right to alter both dates and assignments. Any changes made will be announced via email and Canvas announcement, with an updated version to be posted on Canvas as well.

This syllabus is a guideline and is subject to change at any time.

UPDATED: January 9, 2026

UNIT	WEEK	DATES	TOPIC	READING & ACTIVITIES (Includes answering all questions in assigned chapter)	Due Dates (always at 11:59pm)
UNIT 0: INTRODUCTION	1	1/12-1/16	Course intro	Watch welcome video	16-Jan
	1			workthrough "Start Here" on Canvas	16-Jan
	1			workthrough "Instructor and TA information"	16-Jan
	1			workthrough FAQ	16-Jan
	1			workthrough Resources, Policies, and Requirements	16-Jan
UNIT 1: FOUNDATIONS	1	1/12-1/16	US Constitution	Ch 1: The Founding and the Constitution	16-Jan
	2	1/19-1/23	Texas Constitution	Ch 2: Texas: The Constitution	23-Jan
	2			Ch 3: Workbook: The US Constitution	23-Jan
	3	1/26-1/30	Federalism	Ch 4: Federalism	30-Jan
	4	2/2-2/6	Texas Federalism	Ch 5: Texas: Federalism	6-Feb
	4			Ch 6: Workbook: Federalism	6-Feb
	5	2/9-2/13	Exam 1	EXAM 1 AVAILABLE FRIDAY 2/13 12:01AM--11:59PM	13-Feb
UNIT 2: ELECTED POLITICS	6	2/16-2/20	Congress	Ch 7: Congress	20-Feb
	6			Ch 8: Workbook: The Legislative Branch	20-Feb
	7	2/23-2/27	Presidency	Ch 9: The Presidency	27-Feb
	7			Ch 10: Workbook: The Presidency	27-Feb
	8	3/2-3/6	Bureaucracy	Ch 11: Bureaucracy	6-Mar
	8			Ch 12: Workbook: The Bureaucracy	6-Mar
		3/9-3/13	SPRING BREAK	none	none
	9	3/16-3/20	Texas Leg & Exec	Ch 13: Texas: The Legislature	20-Mar
	9			Ch 14: Texas: The Governor	20-Mar
	9			Ch 15: Texas: The Executive Branch	20-Mar
UNIT 3: COUNTERMAJORITY POLITICS	10	3/23-3/27	Exam 2	EXAM 2 AVAILABLE FRIDAY 3/27 12:01AM--11:59PM	27-Mar
	11	3/30-4/3	Courts	Ch 16: The Judiciary	3-Apr
	11			Ch 17: Workbook: The Courts	3-Apr
	12	4/6-4/10	Texas courts	Ch 18: Texas: The Judicial Branch	10-Apr
	13	4/13-4/17	Civil Liberties	Ch 19: Civil Liberties	17-Apr
	13			Ch 20: Workbook: Civil Liberties	17-Apr
	14	4/20-4/24	Civil Rights	Ch 21: Civil Rights	24-Apr
	14			Ch 22: Workbook: Civil Rights	24-Apr
	15	4/27-5/1	Exam 3	EXAM 3 AVAILABLE FRIDAY 5/1 12:01am--11:59pm	1-May
	16				
	16	5/5-5/9	FINAL EXAM	FINAL EXAM AVAILABLE WEDNESDAY 5/7 12:01am--11:59pm	7-May