

PSCI 2306.403 Fall 2026 Government and Politics: The Constitution and Government Institutions

Course Information

- Course: **PSCI 2306.403**, 3 Credit Hours
- Format: Online

Instructor

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Office Hours: Zoom by appointment

TA's:

Maria Lara (A-J): MariaLara3@my.unt.edu

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Course Materials

This course will use an **online textbook**. The easiest way to purchase the textbook is to open one of the chapter links in Canvas and you will be prompted on the steps to purchase the book.

Title: **Political Institutions Workbook + Central Ideas in American Government + Texas Politics 15e**

UNT Dept. of Political Science | Jocelyn Evans | James R. Henson

ISBN: 978-1-963859-42-3

Technology requirements:

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on Canvas Learning Management System. 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](#).

[Since this is an online asynchronous course where most of our communication will be through our modules and weekly Canvas announcements. It is extremely important that you read this syllabus completely and thoroughly and understand the requirements and expectations. Continued enrollment in the course through completion of the first week, implies understanding of the following information.](#)

Course Description

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

- Government matters to you. Regardless of your age, citizenship, race, religion, or gender, you value something in this world (your family, your education, money, faith ... whatever!). Chances are very good that government policy affects those things you value in some way. 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.
- 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:

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

Course Expectations

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

As the instructor in 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.
- Being fair in my implementation of rules and policies in the course.

You will be assigned a TA who handles questions about class policies, helps with procedures, and can assist with questions about the course (see the Alpha breakout at the beginning of the syllabus). Please give them 24 hours to respond (48 hours if you contact them on a Friday). Then send a second message (including the first one you sent so I can see you *tried*) and include me. The TA takes care of general course questions and operations so they should always be your first contact!

As a student in this course, you are responsible for:

1. Reading and completing all requirements of the course in a timely manner.
2. Working to remain attentive and engaged in the course and interact with your fellow students.
3. Assisting in maintaining a positive learning environment for everyone.

Announcements

You will be notified of any changes to the course or other pertinent information via announcements sent through Canvas. Therefore, it is **essential** that you have your email notifications set up properly so that you see these announcements in a timely fashion.

Notifications are sent to the email address associated with your university account (generally your UNT email).

Helpful hints for success:

- Make sure your notification settings are set so that you receive all pertinent course communications
- Check upcoming assignments and their due dates easily by clicking on the 'Assignments' category in the course navigation and referring to your course syllabus and calendar provided in Canvas.

Course Requirements

Assignments	Percentage of Final Grade
Chapter Questions and Investigations	30%
Reading Check Quizzes	15%
Workbook Assignments	25%
Exams	30%

Exact time and day due dates are detailed in your modules within the Canvas platform of the course and also in a calendar at the end of this syllabus. Please refer to Canvas or the end calendar for those dates.

Exams

There will be 3 exams in this course:

- Exam1 over modules 1-3
- Exam 2 over modules 4-6
- Final Exam (comprehensive, modules 1-8)

One exam score will be dropped. Exams will consist of objective questions (multiple choice) drawn randomly from a test bank.

I advise everyone to take the first two exams. Then, if you are happy with your grade in the exam category after the second exam you may opt out of the final exam.

Chapter Questions and Investigations

Your online textbook has two types of chapters: Central Ideas in American Government (**CIAG**) **chapters and Workbook chapters**. The CIAG chapters have “study questions” or “Get the Gist” questions at the end of each page. They also include investigation assignments. Investigation assignments give students an opportunity to engage course material on a higher level, engaging in analysis and explanation. The book questions and investigations will be tallied for a cumulative grade at the end of the chapter. These multiple-choice questions **have unlimited resets**. So, aim to get the highest score you can! 100% correct should be your goal. Once the due date passes, though, don't reset the questions because it will override your good score with a late score. **The lowest score (1) for a chapter will be dropped.**

Workbook Assignments

The other type of chapter in your online textbook is called a workbook chapter. Each workbook chapter consists of four essays that explore some facet of the topic of the module, and the essays are followed by questions (usually multiple choice, but sometimes a “poll” (where you can see the summary results of the class) or a short answer question. You can reset and repeat the questions until you get them all correct, so you should aim to get a perfect score on the multiple-choice questions! There is also a “Quiz” at the end of each of these essays. You may look back at your previous work to answer the quiz questions, but these answers may only be submitted once so make sure you are ready when you begin those sections. An “assignment” involves completing all the questions and the quiz for each of the workbook essays for each week. **The lowest grade gets dropped.**

Reading Check Quizzes

After completing your assignments on Soomo, you must take the reading check quizzes in each lesson. These questions cover material from the chapter readings and may be attempted three times. These quizzes are your opportunity to test your retention of the material and prepare for the three major exams. If you are happy with your grade after attempting the quiz, there is no need to take it again, and these quizzes make up 10% of your grade. ***Your lowest quiz grade (1) will be dropped.***

Grading

Your final grade 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	Below 60%

A 69.5 or higher is required to receive a “Pass” in this class.

I use standard mathematical rounding, but I will make no other adjustment of grades. Please remember that 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 at the end of the term. Moreover, I cannot make an exception for one student without making it for all students, as that is never practical or fair.

Late Work and Missed Work Policy

- CAIG, Workbook, and Investigation Assignments will be accepted up to 3 days late with a 50% penalty assessed from your scored work. After 3 days, it will not be accepted.
- If you miss either of the first two exams for any reason, you will be asked to take the final exam as a back-up. If you miss both of the unit exams, you cannot have a make-up opportunity on an exam without documented evidence of a family or medical emergency.
- Reassessments will not be necessary on Book Questions, Investigation and Workbook Assignments which allow you multiple attempts before final submission. Take your time and try to score maximum points here!

- **Reassessments on unit exams and the final will not be offered, therefore, prepare to succeed on your first attempt.**

Please note that it does not matter why the work is late; this policy is uniform. If you DO have an issue such as a family emergency or illness, your grade will not necessarily suffer. At least one grade is dropped for each type of homework, so having a penalized grade or even a missing grade is not the end of the world. Extreme situations will be given consideration

Please see below for Calendar.

Units/Modules	Due Dates @ 11:59 pm	Content	Assignments Although such changes are unlikely, note that the course calendar is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.
The Founding and the U.S. and Texas Constitutions	8/23	Chapters 1 and 2	• Chapter 1 and 2 + Investigations
The Founding and the U.S. and Texas Constitutions	8/30	Chapter 3	• Chapter 3 Workbook • Reading Quiz (Chapters 1-3)
Federalism	9/6	Chapter 4	• Chapter 4 + Investigation
Federalism	9/13	Chapter 5	• Chapter 5 Workbook • Reading Check (Chapters 4 and 5)
Civil Liberties	9/20	Chapter 6	• Chapter 6 + Investigations
Civil Liberties	9/27	Chapter 7	• Chapter 7 Workbook • Reading Check (Chapters 6 and 7)
Exam I	9/28@ 11:59 pm	EXAM I	EXAM I available between 5 a.m. on 9/27 and 11:59 pm on 9/28
Civil Rights	10/4	Chapter 8	• Chapter 8 + Investigations
Civil Rights	10/11	Chapter 9	• Chapter 9 Workbook • Reading Check (Chapters 8 and 9)
Congress	10/18	Chapter 10 and 12	• Chapters 10 and 12 + Investigations
Congress	10/25	Chapter 11	• Chapter 11 Workbook • Reading Check (Chapters 10, 11 and 12)
Executive/Presidency	11/1	Chapter 13 and 15	• Chapter 13 and 15 + Investigations
Executive/Presidency	11/8	Chapter 14	• Chapter 14 Workbook • Reading Check (Chapters 13, 14 and 15)

Exam II	11/9	EXAM II	EXAM II available between 5 a.m. on 11/8 and 11:59 p.m. on 11/9
Bureaucracy	11/15	Chapter 16	• Chapter 16 + Investigations
Bureaucracy	11/22	Chapter 17	• Chapter 17 Workbook • Reading Check (Chapters 16 and 17)
The Courts	11/29	Chapter 18	• Chapter 18 + Investigations
The Courts	12/6	Chapter 19	• Chapter 19 Workbook • Reading Check (Chapters 18 and 19)
Final Exam	12/8	Final Exam	FINAL EXAM (if applicable) between 5 a.m. on 12/7 and 11:59 pm on 12/8

University Policies

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement: The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Academic Misconduct: Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. 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 policy and procedures: [Academic Integrity](#).

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 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.

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 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 . In short, please be considerate of others.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault: The University has procedures in place that aim to be aware of the needs of those who make an institutional report of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Procedures include informing individuals about their right to file criminal charges as well as the availability of counseling, health, mental health, victim advocacy, legal assistance, visa and immigration assistance and other services on and/or off campus, as well as additional remedies to prevent contact between a complainant and a respondent, such as housing, academic, transportation and working accommodations, if reasonably available. The University will make such accommodations, if the victim requests them and if they are reasonably available, regardless of whether the complainant chooses to report the crime to the UNTPD or local law enforcement.

Anyone can report prohibited conduct by notifying the Dean of Students Office (940.565.2648), the Title IX Coordinator (940.565.2759) or the UNT Police Department (940.565.3000). The online reporting form is found at <http://report.unt.edu>.

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 online courses, please go to the [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website](#). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at "Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G)" and can be found buried within this document: [Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph](#)

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.