

# US AND TEXAS CONSTITUTIONS AND INSTITUTIONS PSCI 2306.403

Summer 2026 5W2  
ONLINE

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**Professor:** Leslie Finger  
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**Virtual Office Hours:** by appointment

For students with A-M last names, your TA is:  
**TA:** Catarina Bezerra  
**E-mail:** [CatarinaRoseBezerra@my.unt.edu](mailto:CatarinaRoseBezerra@my.unt.edu)  
**Virtual Office Hours:** by appointment

For students with N-Z last names, your TA is:  
**TA:** Veronica Green  
**E-mail:** [VeronicaGreen@my.unt.edu](mailto:VeronicaGreen@my.unt.edu)  
**Virtual Office Hours:** by appointment

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**Course Prerequisites:** None

**Course Delivery:** Online through Canvas (not meeting on campus and no Zoom lectures) and asynchronous (not meeting at a particular time)

## **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, 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.

(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. Evaluate the balance of power between the branches of government, state and national governments, and the people and the state
2. Evaluate constitutional and extra-constitutional powers of the three branches of government at both the Texas and national levels
3. Interpret the role of minority groups in U.S. politics
4. 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. The online textbook bundles together all the course material you need in one easy to use location. The online textbook is made up of a TEXTBOOK and a WORKBOOK put together:

Evans, Jocelyn, and Kristy Michaud. 2025. U.S. and Texas Politics with 2306 Workbook. Asheville, NC: Soomo Learning. ISBN: 8220144129937. (At the bookstore, it is called “UNT 2306 Department Bundle.”)

You can purchase this directly through the course Canvas site OR you can purchase an access code from the UNT bookstore. If you are waiting for financial aid, you can sign up for a short free trial of the materials via Canvas, but you will need to purchase the materials soon. You cannot expect to succeed in this class if you do not have access to the course materials (i.e. you are able to purchase the textbook) after the first few chapters. If you are having trouble with paying for the material, you need to contact your TA on the first day of the course.

### **Technical Requirements:**

Since this is an online course, you will need regular access to your course through a computer or other mobile device that connects to the internet. 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. The link to download Lockdown Browser is on Canvas.

### **Technical Support:**

Neither the instructor nor the teaching assistants are technical support resources. If you experience any kind of technical problem, please contact:

Student Helpdesk:  
UIT Helpdesk  
Sage Hall 130  
940-565-2324  
[helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)

**If you are having difficulty with the Soomo product, please contact the publisher directly at <http://soomolearning.com/support>**

**Please note:** 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 us an email with the problem you experienced and how you’re addressing it. In most cases, though, failing to complete an assignment or exam because of technical issues will not be reason enough to dismiss the grade or allow a retake.

**Communication:** I won’t be seeing you every week, but I am definitely available to you. You can e-mail me at [leslie.finger@unt.edu](mailto:leslie.finger@unt.edu). You may also request to speak with me over Zoom. If you do e-mail me, I typically respond within 24 hours M-F and by the following Monday if contacted over the weekend. **Before you reach out to me, however, you should contact your assigned teaching assistant. If you don’t hear from your TA within 24 hours, or if the issue is urgent, it is okay to then reach out to me.**

## Course Requirements

Syllabus Quiz	5%
Chapter Multiple Choice Homework (chapter quiz and questions within chapter)	10%
Investigation Assignments	15%
Workbook Assignments	15%
Midterm Exam	25%
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>30%</u>
Total	100%

**Grading:** A=89.5-100, B =79.5-89.4, C =69.5-79.4, D =59.5-69.4, F = Below 59.5

**I use standard mathematical rounding to one decimal point, 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, and that is never practical.**

### *Specifications for Grading*

1. ***Syllabus Quiz (5%):*** Please read the syllabus and use Respondus Lockdown browser to open the Syllabus Quiz. You can take the quiz as many times as you need to get 100%. The quiz will be made up of 11 questions that demonstrate that you have read the syllabus and understand it. It also shows me you downloaded and can use Respondus Lockdown browser.
2. ***Chapter Multiple Choice Homework (10%):*** Your online textbook has two types of chapters: Central Ideas in American Government (CIAG) chapters and Workbook chapters. **Unless otherwise specified, the chapters referred to in the list of course readings and assignments are the CIAG chapters.** The CIAG chapters have multiple choice questions on each page as well as a quiz at the end of the chapter. These multiple choice questions *may be attempted three times*, 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.). At the end of each chapter, there is a chapter quiz, for which you are allowed *two attempts* per question. **I will drop the lowest two CIAG Chapter Multiple Choice Homework scores (2).**
3. ***Investigation Assignments (15%):*** In each of the CIAG textbook chapters there is a section labeled "Investigation." Investigation assignments give students an opportunity to engage course material on a higher level, engaging in analysis and explanation. The questions asked in Investigation Assignments can only be attempted *TWICE*. (Once the due date passes, though, don't reset the questions because it will override your good score with a late score.) **I will drop the lowest two Investigation Assignment scores (2).**
4. ***Workbook Assignments (15%):*** Each workbook 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. These multiple-choice questions *may be attempted three times*, 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.) **I will drop the lowest two Workbook Assignment scores (2).**

5. **Exams (Midterm 25% and Final Exam 30%):** There will be two exams in this course: a midterm and a cumulative final. Exams will cover material from the main chapters. Exams will consist of objective questions (multiple choice) drawn randomly from a test bank. The exams can be accessed by opening Lockdown Browser and then going to Canvas and starting the exam. You can bring hand-written notes to the exam to help you. No other outside materials are permitted.

This course requires students to use Lockdown Browser. You may be asked to access a webcam for the exams. If you are worried about whether your computer or other device supports Lockdown Browser with a webcam, please call the Student Helpdesk to find a location on campus where you can take the exam. It is important that you plan when and where you will take the exam before the exam date.

### **Missing Work:**

Late work will not be accepted. All course work must be taken at the scheduled time. No make-up exams or paper extensions will be granted. Excuses that may prove acceptable include: serious injury and family emergencies (serious illness of a family member or death in the immediate family such as parents grandparents or siblings), serious accident (such as those requiring immediate hospitalization), or the observance of a religious holiday. To be excused, students need to go through the Dean of Students Office, who will work to verify excusable conditions and report them to me, and contact their designated TA. If I do not receive a notice from the Dean of Students, then I will not give extensions or make-ups. Missing assignments due to extracurricular activities (sports, Greek life, or club activities) or work schedule conflicts may be given consideration at the sole discretion of the instructor, but they will likely be denied. You are to prioritize academic life over extracurricular life and accommodate it appropriately in your work and social life. Students who miss an examination and those without proper documentation should expect to receive zero points (0).

### **Submission of Materials:**

All assignments, exercises, assessments, quizzes, and test scores are tracked in Canvas Gradebook. This saves resources, as well as being more efficient and effective. Most grades for assignments are returned immediately through the online system. Material "disappears" on Canvas after the due date and cannot be turned in for credit. You may always turn in assignments early. **IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE A GRADE ONLINE FOR ANY PART OF THIS CLASS, SEE ME WITHIN ONE WEEK OF THE DUE DATE.** Once the final exam is submitted, all of your other grades are also final, and I will not review missing assignments. This means that if an assignment was due on Thursday, and the final exam is due on Friday at 11:59 p.m. then all assignments submitted on Thursday or before are final once you hit the submit button on the exam. If you missed an assignment or if you did not receive a grade for something on Thursday or before, and you do not contact me on Friday about it, then you figure it out on Saturday that you have an assignment that you did not receive a grade for, it's too late at that point. If you miss the final exam, there will be no make ups. In other words, after the final exam, you cannot petition for review of missing assignments. Do not wait until the end of the term! You have to be on top of your grades. I reserve the right to refuse credit.

If you are having trouble with accessing Canvas, you must contact the Canvas Help Desk because they are the best personnel to assist you in the submission of online materials. They are on-call during scheduled hours. Email: [helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu) Phone: (940) 565-2324 (Sage Hall Room 233). Inform them of the issue,

and they will keep me posted. When in doubt, university computer labs and assistants there can assist you with problems you have with submitting materials.

For help with the Soomo web text, please email: support@soomolearning.com You can also get in touch with Soomo through their messaging feature which can be found on the bottom right of any page in the workbook (see image below).

### **Changes to the Course:**

I reserve the right to change anything on this syllabus throughout the semester as necessary. I reserve the authority to change requirements by providing you with a 48-hour notice of changes in class and on Canvas. You are responsible for any changes that occur during the semester.

## **Course Reading and Assignment Schedule:**

All work due on specified days at 11:59 P.M. Although it is unlikely, the assignments may be altered at the professor's discretion.

### **Introduction**

#### **All Work Due By 11:59pm on Monday, June 22**

- Read the syllabus
- Familiarize yourself with the Canvas webpage
- Watch Lockdown Browser video presentation
- Download Lockdown Browser
- Purchase course materials (MUST PURCHASE ON DAY 1)
- Assignment Due:
  - Take Syllabus Quiz *through Lockdown Browser*

### **Module 1: The U.S. Constitution**

#### **All Work Due By 11:59pm on Wednesday, June 24**

- Assignments Due:
  - Read Chapter 1: The Founding and the Constitution and take chapter quiz
  - Chapter 1: Investigation "Passing the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment"
  - Chapter 1: Investigation "Comparing Constitutions"
  - Workbook Chapter 3: The U.S. Constitution

### **Module 2: Civil Liberties**

#### **All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, June 26**

- Assignments Due:
  - Read Chapter 16: Civil Liberties and take chapter quiz
  - Chapter 16: Investigation "Free Speech for Students"
  - Chapter 16: Investigation "The Meaning of the Right to Privacy"
  - Chapter 17 Workbook: Civil Liberties

### **Module 3: Civil Rights**

#### **All Work Due By 11:59pm on Monday, June 29**

- Assignments Due:

Read Chapter 18: Civil Rights and take chapter quiz  
Chapter 18: Investigation “Till We Have Suffrage: The Movement”  
Chapter 18: Investigation “Brown V. Board”  
Chapter 19 Workbook: Civil Rights

#### **Module 4: Congress**

##### **All Work Due By 11:59pm on Wednesday, July 1**

Assignments Due:

Read Chapter 6: Congress and take chapter quiz  
Chapter 6: Investigation “Drawing Political Lines”  
Chapter 6: Investigation “Setting the Legislative Agenda”  
Chapter 7 Workbook: Legislatures

#### **Module 5: Presidency**

##### **All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, July 3**

Assignments Due:

Read Chapter 8: The Presidency and take chapter quiz  
Chapter 8: Investigation “The Broken Presidency”  
Chapter 8: Investigation “Eavesdropping on the Oval Office”  
Chapter 9 Workbook: The Presidency

#### **Module 6: The Federal Bureaucracy**

##### **All Work Due By 11:59pm on Monday, July 6**

Assignments Due:

Read Chapter 12: Bureaucracy and take chapter quiz  
Chapter 12: Investigation “The USDA: An Agency for Farmers”  
Chapter 12: Investigation “Implementing the ACA”  
Chapter 13 Workbook: The Bureaucracy

#### **Module 7: The Judiciary**

##### **All Work Due By 11:59pm on Wednesday, July 8**

Assignments Due:

Read Chapter 14: The Judiciary and take chapter quiz  
Chapter 14 Investigation: “Marbury vs Madison”  
Chapter 14 Investigation: “The Path to Marriage Equality”  
Chapter 15 Workbook: The Courts

#### **Module 8: Midterm Exam**

##### **All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, July 10**

\*\* Midterm Online Open From 6:00am to 11:59pm (midnight) on Friday, July 10\*\*

You can start the midterm any time between 6:00am and 11:59pm (midnight). The midterm will submit at 11:59 p.m. no matter how much progress you have made on the exam, so give yourself the full amount of time for the exam by starting it early. Once you start the exam, you must complete the exam in 80 minutes. You can use your own hand-written notes to help you with the exam, but no other materials. You must work alone.

#### **Module 9: Federalism**

##### **All Work Due By 11:59pm on Monday, July 13**

Assignments Due:

Read Chapter 4: Federalism and take chapter quiz  
Chapter 4: Investigation “McCulloch v Maryland”  
Chapter 4: Investigation “The Business of Weed”  
Chapter 5 Workbook: Federalism

### **Module 10: Texas Constitution**

**All Work Due By 11:59pm on Wednesday, July 15**

Assignments Due:

Read Chapter 2: Texas: The Constitution and take chapter quiz  
Chapter 2: Investigation “Public Opinion and Constitutional Amendments in Texas”

### **Module 11: Texas Legislature**

**All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, July 17**

Assignments Due:

Read Chapter 10: Texas: The Legislature and take chapter quiz  
Chapter 10: Investigation “Public Opinion and Legislative Officers in Texas”

### **Module 12: Texas Executive Branch**

**All Work Due By 11:59pm on Monday, July 20**

Assignments Due:

Read Chapter 11: Texas: The Executive Branch and take chapter quiz  
Chapter 11: Investigation “Public Opinion and Elected Officials in Texas”

### **Module 13: Final Exam**

**All Work Due By 11:59pm on Thursday, July 23**

**\*\*Online Final Exam Open From 6:00am to 11:59pm (midnight) on Thursday, July 23\*\***

You can start the final exam any time between 6:00am and 11:59pm (midnight). The final exam will submit at 11:59 p.m. no matter how much progress you have made on the exam, so give yourself the full amount of time for the exam by starting it early. Once you start the exam, you must complete the exam in 160 minutes. You can use your own hand-written notes to help you with the exam, but no other materials. You must work alone.

## **University Policies and Procedures**

**Americans with Disabilities Act 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 \(https://disability.unt.edu/\)](https://disability.unt.edu/).

**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: <http://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity>

**Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004):** 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.

**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.

**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](http://www.unt.edu/csrr) . In short, please be considerate of others.

**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.

### **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 \(http://www.ecfr.gov/\)](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.

**UNT 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](mailto:internationaladvising@unt.edu)) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

**Student Verification:** UNT takes measures to protect the integrity of educational credentials awarded to students enrolled in distance education courses by verifying student identity, protecting student privacy, and notifying students of any special meeting times/locations or additional charges associated with student identity verification in distance education courses. See [UNT Policy 07-002 Student Identity Verification, Privacy, and Notification and Distance Education Courses](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002>).