

US and Texas Constitutions and Institutions

PSCI 2306.402

Fall 2026
ONLINE

Professor: Leslie Finger
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Office Hours: Mondays* from 10:00 to 11:30am on Zoom and by appointment.
Zoom Link: <https://unt.zoom.us/j/5051071505>

For students with A-M last names, your TA is:
TA: Diana Amaro
E-mail: DianaAmaro@my.unt.edu
Office Hours: Mon 1-2pm on Zoom or by appt
Zoom Link: <https://unt.zoom.us/j/7229338762>

For students with N-Z last names, your TA is:
TA: Masoud Azarfam
E-mail: SeyyedMasoudAzarfam@my.unt.edu
Office Hours: Tues 10-11am on Zoom or by appt
Zoom Link: <https://unt.zoom.us/j/8567157991>

*There will be no office hours on Labor Day (Sept. 7).

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: 8220153487035. (At the bookstore, it is called *Political Institutions Workbook + Central Ideas in American Government + Texas Politics (Expanded)*.)

You can either buy the textbook through Canvas with a credit or debit card (\$78.75) or purchase it through the UNT bookstore, in which case it will be more expensive (\$112.50). If you do that, you will enter a passkey the bookstore gives you to gain access. You can also sign up for a three-week trial, at the end of which you will need to purchase access using one of the aforementioned methods. If purchasing the book is a financial stressor, write your TA and explain the situation and we will find a solution.

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. 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 the Student Helpdesk at ithelp@unt.edu. They can also be reached at 940-565-2324. For more information, see <https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.html>.
- If you are having difficulty with the online textbook, please contact the publisher directly at support@soomolearning.com. Their support team can be reached at 888-240-0314. Their hours are Monday–Friday 8 a.m.–8 p.m. and Saturday–Sunday 12 p.m.–8 p.m.

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 your TA an email with the problem you experienced and how you're addressing it. Also be sure to document the situation so that you'll be able to provide proof of what happened. I will only consider allowing for assignments to be made up or receive extensions due to technical issues if there is very solid proof of what happened.

Communication:

I will communicate with the class primarily through Canvas announcements, so please be sure that you are getting Canvas notifications.

I won't be seeing you every week, but I am available to you. You can e-mail me at leslie.finger@unt.edu. You can come to my office hours (see above) or we can set up another time to meet 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. If you email me, **please do so from your unt email address and include PSCI 2306 in the subject line.**

NOTE: Before you reach out to me with an issue, 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 reach out to me.

Course Requirements:

Syllabus Quiz	5%
Chapter Multiple Choice Homework (chapter quiz and questions within chapter)	15%
Investigation Assignments	15%
Workbook Assignments	10%
3 Exams	35%
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>20%</u>
Total	100%

Grading:

Here are the point values and the letter grade corresponding to them. If you are borderline, I will round to the nearest ones place. This means if you get an 89.5, that would round to a 90 and you would get an A, but if you get an 89.4, that would round to an 89 and you will get a B:

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F = 0-59%

Assignments:

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 (15%):*** 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 (10%):** 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. **3 Exams (35%)** There are three non-cumulative exams over the course of the semester. They will cover material from the textbook and workbook readings. They will consist of objective multiple choice questions. You will be access the exams by opening Lockdown Browser and then going to Canvas and navigating to the exam. You can bring hand-written notes to the exam to help you. No other outside materials are permitted. You will have a little over one minute per question, and once you finish a question, it will be locked and you cannot return. I will drop your lowest of the three exam scores. It is important that you plan when and where you will take the exams before the exam dates to avoid problems with wifi.
6. **Final Exam (20%):** The final exam is cumulative, meaning it covers material from the whole semester. Like the 3 exams, it will cover material from the textbook and workbook readings. It will consist of objective multiple choice questions. You will access the exam by opening Lockdown Browser and then going to Canvas and navigating to the exam. You can bring hand-written notes to the exam to help you. No other outside materials are permitted. You will have a little over one minute per question, and once you finish a question, it will be locked and you cannot return. I will drop your lowest of the three exam scores. It is important that you plan when and where you will take the exam before the exam date to avoid problems with wifi.

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, August 28, but you can turn it in for half credit until Exam 1 becomes available at 12:00am on Friday, September 18 (so the assignment will close at 11:59pm on Thursday, Sept 17). 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 you have a university-excused absence or extenuating circumstance and provide documentation with 48 hours of the missed deadline. You can find a list of university-excused absences [here](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039>). This policy does not apply to exams and quizzes.

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.

Introduction

All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, August 21

- Read the syllabus
- Familiarize yourself with the Canvas webpage
- Watch Lockdown Browser video presentation
- Download Lockdown Browser
- Purchase course materials
- Assignment Due:
 - Take Syllabus Quiz *through Lockdown Browser*

Module 1: The U.S. Constitution

All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, August 28

- Assignments Due:
 - Read Chapter 1: The Founding and the Constitution and take chapter quiz
 - Chapter 1: Investigation “Passing the 19th Amendment”
 - Chapter 1: Investigation “Comparing Constitutions”
 - Workbook Chapter 3: The U.S. Constitution

Module 2: The Texas Constitution

All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, September 4

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

Module 3: Federalism

All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, September 11

- 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

EXAM 1 available between 12:00am and 11:59pm on Friday, September 18

Module 4: Congress

All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, September 25

- 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, October 2

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 Friday, October 9

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

EXAM 2 available between 12:00am and 11:59pm on Friday, October 16

Module 7: The Texas Executive and Legislature

All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, October 23

Assignments Due:

Read Chapter 10: Texas: The Legislature and take chapter quiz
Chapter 10: Investigation “Public Opinion and Legislative Officers in Texas”
Read Chapter 11: Texas: The Executive Branch and take chapter quiz
Chapter 11: Investigation “Public Opinion and Elected Officials in Texas”

Module 8: The Judiciary

All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, October 30

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 9: Civil Liberties

All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, November 6

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”

Module 10: Civil Rights

All Work Due By 11:59pm on Friday, November 13

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

EXAM 3 available between 12:00am and 11:59pm on Friday, November 20

FINAL EXAM available between 12:00am and 11:59pm on Friday, December 4

University Policies and Procedures

ADA Policy

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/).

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.

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](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct) (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>) to learn more.

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 [Eagle Connect](https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect) (<https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect>).

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. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link and information about when the survey closes. 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](http://spot.unt.edu/) (<http://spot.unt.edu/>) or email spot@unt.edu.

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.

Academic Support & Student Services

Mental Health Support

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](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [UNT Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- [UNT Psychiatric Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry>)
- [Individual Counseling](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling>)

Additional Student Support Services

- [Registrar](https://registrar.unt.edu/registration) (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)

- [Student Legal Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services)
- [Career Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center)
- [Multicultural Center](https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center) (https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
- [Pride Alliance](https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance) (https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance)
- [UNT Food Pantry](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry)

Academic Support Services

- [Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources)
- [Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (https://success.unt.edu/asc)
- [UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (https://library.unt.edu/)
- [Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (http://writingcenter.unt.edu/)

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) 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>).