Overview
An introduction to the institutions of government, with particular emphasis on the U.S. and Texas Constitutions. Focus on the structure and powers of the three branches of government (both national and Texas); the division of power between those branches (separation of powers); the division of power between the national and state governments (federalism); and issues related to civil rights and civil liberties. Satisfies the legislative requirement for a course emphasizing the Texas constitution.

Materials
Required Text

Other
Any required journal articles, book chapters, or other materials will be provided by me and placed in Canvas.

Technology
Access to a reliable, modern computer will be necessary. We will utilizing podcasts and other forms of digital media to create a rewarding classroom experience. Plus, your grade will always be on Canvas.

Learning Objectives
Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

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 democratic nature and effectiveness of the U.S. and Texas institutions of government (including their constitutions)
3. Evaluate the balance of power between the branches of government, state and national governments, and the people and the state
4. Evaluate constitutional and extra-constitutional powers of the three branches of government at both the Texas and national levels
5. Describe and explain the nature of individual rights and liberties and the limits of governmental power in the context of the Bill of Rights and Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Grading Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Assignment Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Investigation Assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>RAP Assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>In-class Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Energy Policy Project</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Grades will follow the standard scale:

- A = 89.51-100
- B = 79.51-89.5
- C = 69.51-79.5
- D = 59.51-69.5
- F < 59.51

About Me
I have been in higher education for 15 years. I enjoy teaching because students are getting ready for a big step into a large world, and I want to make sure they are as prepared as possible. I can teach government, economics, and statistics, so feel free to come to me with questions about any of those subjects!
Notice I use the international standard for rounding; .5 and below rounds down, while .51 and above rounds up. Curving is at my discretion.

Investigation Assignments
In the online textbook, there are numerous (≈ twenty-two) assignments called “Investigations”. Their purpose is to allow students to dive deeper into any given topic. I will drop the lowest four grades and the simple average of the remaining grades will comprise a total of 20% of the final course grade.

RAP Assignments
For each chapter we cover, a RAP assignment will be turned in and graded in which you will Read all parts of the chapter, Ask questions, and Paraphrase what you read. More specifically, you will read the chapter, write out three pertinent questions about the material, and summarize the chapter in two double-spaced pages. These assignments will comprise 20% of your grade. The purpose of this assignment is to give you a quick reference for the material and provide an opportunity to practice synthesizing and evaluating information.

In-class Activities
In-class activities can include discussions, polls, simulations, and other activities designed to engage the student in deeper and more impactful learning. Consider these assignments the 21st Century equivalent to the “participation grade”. 20% of the overall course grade comes from the simple average of these grades, so attendance is important as these cannot be made up under any circumstances.

Wicked Problem - Energy Policy Project
We will use the material learned in this course to design an energy policy blueprint that Texas could use to meet its future energy needs. The question you will be answering is: How can Texas ensure long-term access to electric power?

This project will comprise 40% of your final course grade. The assignment will be scaffolded and we will have classtime to work in teams as well as regularly scheduled meetings with the professor to ensure progress is being made. Furthermore, this project will help you better understand the difficulties faced in the policy and regulation arenas; as you set about designing the Serve Lewisville space, you will face limitations created by federal, state, and local policy. Keep that in mind as you work on this energy policy project.

Withdrawal Policy
The last date a student can withdraw from this class without an “F” is Friday, November 10, 2023. I will not withdraw you from the course for any reason; if you desire to withdraw, you must instigate those procedures.

ADA Accommodation Statement
UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA Website.

FAQs

Why do I have to take this class?
Because you need it to graduate, but that isn’t very helpful. Instead, understanding how the institutions of government operate is necessary to answer questions such as: how and why are human behaviors regulated? How can individuals affect their system of government? How can political institutions both help and hinder solving social problems? Plus since we are working on a “wicked problem”, this class should help develop the skills you will need for your cohort PDA project.

I don’t like political science and I’m afraid I will fail. What do I do?
Approach the class with an open mind and see what happens! In my experience, students who fail do so because they quit. So as long as you don’t quit on me, the course, but most importantly yourself, you will most likely pass.

Will this class be hard?
Probably! But then again, anything worth doing well is difficult. Do not seek to cut corners. It shows and everyone gets all awkward and weird when confronted with the fact they tried to cram something at the last minute. This also applies when one tries to profess knowledge they do not possess.
Attendance Policy

Given the collaborative nature of this course and the fact I only see you twice a week, regular attendance is ideal. Secondly, your teammates are depending on you. Also, since so much graded work will occur in the classroom, I strongly suggest making class a priority. The course is designed such that our class session will be light on lecture and heavy on application of what we have learned. In short, class should be fun!

Also, in my experience, participation and engagement correlate with higher grades. Please let me know when unexpected situations arise; we can try our best to maintain continuity in the course.

Professional Communication

Communicating with me doesn’t have to be a formal affair; however, it is also not like texting your friend about where to meet after class. This is a great time in your academic career to learn professional communication strategies. Allow 24 hours for me to reply to all weekday emails; I do not typically check email between the hours of 6pm and 6am. I do not usually check emails over the weekend. On a more general note, here are some tips for e-mail success (and requirements for future success on the job) (hat-tip to my doctoral advisor, who used similar notes while he was at Minnesota):

- Provide a useful and descriptive subject line (ex: Question about my Inquiry Project score)
- Begin with a greeting (ex: “Dear Dr S”) and end with a signature (ex: “Sincerely, Student”). Launching straight into the message is bad, but “Hi!” is poor form and “Hey Prof!” is a disaster. “Dear” and “Hi” are fine, so long as you follow both by a name or title: “Hi Professor” or “Hi Dr S”.
- Be clear and concise. Write short messages, make clear requests, get to your point quickly, and offer to provide more information rather than launch into your life story.
- Check to see whether your question is already answered in the syllabus or other course materials before sending an e-mail. Also, don’t ask for information before you’ve looked on Google. “Can you send me paper X?” makes it seem as though you don’t care about your education, which we know isn’t true!
- Use your official school email address. Email addresses like “hotmuffin02@hotmail.com” and “mikeygforlife@gmail.com” are just not appropriate and preclude me from replying due to federal privacy laws.
- Form: Capitalize and punctuate.

Student Expectations

I expect each student to:

- Fully read and understand the syllabus.
- Understand that due dates are just that, dates on which any given item is due.
- Have familiarity with and proficiency in common word processing, data organization, and presentation creation software.
- Have familiarity with Canvas.
- Check their UNT email at least every 48 hours.
- Come to class prepared for all activities and events happening in that class time.
- Let me know when difficulties arise.

Students can expect from me:

- Course preparedness, professionalism, and collegiality.
- Confidentiality regarding anything you may say to me regarding yourself or another (with the exception of statements made in which I am bound by law to report)
- Efforts made to help you the best I possibly can.
- Please remember, I want you to succeed!

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 Dean of Students to consider whether the student’s conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found here.

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Cheating & Plagiarism

Students caught cheating on any given assignment will receive no credit for the assignment. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, which may impose a further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. 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(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. The use of ChatGPT or other AI to complete coursework is equally prohibited and punishable.

I want you to succeed, so you are highly encouraged to see me when questions and concerns arise. Another way to limit the probability of cheating is to start your coursework in plenty of time so you don’t end up cramming. To do this, consider temporal discounting and ensure you are adequately valuing the present and the future.

Begun, the AI Wars Have

As the technological singularity creeps ever closer to reality, people in numerous industries have used AI for both good and ill. Since the major assignment is your team-based project, the temptation to use AI instead of your own writing abilities will exist and could be significant. I reserve the right to transform the project into an oral assignment done at the individual level if I suspect that AI has been used to craft the writing. The reason for this policy is to ensure you can apply in an interesting way material you have learned; I am not assessing your ability to type a request into a box.

Technical Support

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues. Please do not rely on me for technical support – I am not the person for that.

UIT Help Desk: UIT Student Help Desk site

Email: helpdesk@unt.edu
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Policy Problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/21 - 8/23</td>
<td>Syllabus Review</td>
<td>assigned reading</td>
<td>Is energy a supply or demand issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; Political Cultures</td>
<td>assigned reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8/28 - 8/30</td>
<td>US Constitution</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Wait, wasn’t the Constitution written before electricity...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/4 - 9/6</td>
<td>US Constitution</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>...so how does it help us understand energy policy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/11 - 9/13</td>
<td>Texas Constitution</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>Does Texas make money on energy production?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/18 - 9/20</td>
<td>Federalism</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Why does Texas have its own electric grid?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9/25 - 9/27</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Why are the TVA and ERCOT so different if they do the same thing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/2 - 10/4</td>
<td>Texas Legislature</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>How much can electricity providers charge?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/9 - 10/11</td>
<td>Presidency</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>Can “red vs. blue” leadership differences explain energy policy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10/16 - 10/18</td>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>How is electricity regulated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10/23 - 10/25</td>
<td>Texas Plural Executive</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>How is ERCOT regulated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>10/30 - 11/1</td>
<td>Judiciary</td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>Are electricity prices a matter of equality?</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>11/6 - 11/8</td>
<td>Texas Judiciary</td>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>Is ERCOT liable for storm damage?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11/13 - 11/15</td>
<td>Civil Liberties</td>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>Do you have a right to electricity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>11/20 - 11/22</td>
<td>FALL BREAK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>11/27 - 11/29</td>
<td>Civil Rights</td>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>Is the placement of power plants an equality issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>12/4 - 12/6</td>
<td>Local Governments</td>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
<td>How can rural areas receive adequate power supplies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>12/13</td>
<td>Project Presentations</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.*

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1. Chapter work is due every Sunday before class
2. No class on the fourth - Labor Day