

US and Texas Constitutions and Institutions

PSCI 2306.402

Summer 2026 5WK1

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Class: INET, Asynchronous

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Course Overview

This course provides for an introduction to the laws and institutions of American and Texas governments. We will study the structure of government, including its constitutional foundations and the branches of federal and Texas governments. We will pay particular attention to the constitutional issues of federalism, civil rights, and civil liberties, and emphasize the unique features of the Texas Constitution. We will also apply our understanding of American and Texas government to current events and topics.

Course Learning Objectives and Outcomes

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, 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

Required: UNT 2306 Department Bundle: U.S. and Texas Politics, 15e

If you are waiting for financial aid, please access the text through Canvas and choose the free trial of the text (three chapters). **If you do not acquire access to the course materials in a timely fashion your grade may be irreparably harmed.**

Course Policies, Procedures, and Assignments

Communications: If you have any questions about the class, **please message your TA first.** I typically respond to emails with 24-hours Monday-Friday, and by Monday on emails sent after 3p on Fridays. **If you choose to message me in Canvas, please keep in mind that I do not check Canvas as often as email and my response will be delayed.**

Netiquette: Although the bulk of this asynchronous online class will not be interactive, there are times that you will communicate with me or your classmates virtually. When interacting with your fellow students, instructors, and teaching assistants, you should be polite. When in doubt, pause for five minutes before you hit “submit” or “send.” Consider whether you would say something to a person’s face before saying it to them in an electronic format. Also remember that electronic communication does not convey tone well; a well-intentioned comment may be perceived as harsh or offensive. Whether you are the communicator or the recipient, please keep that in mind.

Course Grade Distribution:

1. CIAG Assignments	35%
2. Workbook Assignments	35%
3. Exams	30%

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

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.

The grades listed above indicates **the total number** which will count toward your final grade. I will “drop” the lowest grades for each category of assignment at the end of the semester.

Late Work and Missed Work Policy

- CIAG and Workbook assignments will be accepted up to one week late with a 50% penalty. After one week, late assignments will not be accepted without documentation. **No work will be accepted for credit after June 19.**
- If you miss any of the first three exams for *any* reason, you will be asked to take the final exam as a back-up option. The likelihood that you will be able to make-up an additional missed exam is low.

Specifications for Grading:

1. **Exams:** There are four exams in this course: three-unit exams and a cumulative final exam. Exams will cover material from the main chapters (with the exception of the investigation assignments). Exams will consist of objective questions (multiple choice) drawn randomly from a test bank.

This course requires students to use Lockdown Browser. You may be asked to access a webcam for the exams. This is to ensure the integrity of the exam even though you are

taking it remotely. 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.**

One (1) exam score will be dropped. Students always want to know if they have to take the final exam. If you are happy with your grade in the course after **you have taken the first three exams** and completed all of the assignments, **you do not need to take the final exam.** If you want to improve your grade in the course after taking the first three exams, you should study for and take the final exam. Likewise, one low unit exam grade or missing an exam will not ruin your chances of passing the course as long as you take the final exam. Students who miss more than one exam without proper documentation will have an adverse impact on their grade.

2. ***CIAG Homework Assignments:*** Your online textbook has two types of chapters: Central Ideas in American Government (CIAG) chapters and Workbook chapters. The CIAG chapters have multiple choice questions at the end of each page. 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.) Do not forget to complete the ***Investigation Assignments*** (which you may attempt twice) in most chapters as these also must be completed to receive full credit. At the end of each chapter, there is a chapter quiz, for which you are allowed two attempts per question. **The lowest score among each CIAG chapter grades (1) will be dropped.**

3. ***Workbook Assignments:*** 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.) At the end of each chapter, there is a chapter quiz for which you are allowed two attempts per question. **The lowest score among each workbook chapter grades (1) will be dropped.**

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.**

Technical Skill Requirements:

Although this is an online course, the necessary technical requirements are minimal. You will need to navigate our Canvas webpage, follow the link to our online textbook, and complete multiple choice and short answer questions in the online textbook. You may need to follow links to videos and some external websites, upload/download Word and pdf documents, and post comments in the

workbook. In addition, you may need to be able to take screen shots of websites or your work that can be saved and uploaded to the course Canvas site.

Primarily, you need to have reliable internet access to complete this class. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have timely and consistent access to the internet.

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:

UTT Helpdesk
Sage Hall 130
940-565-2324
helpdesk@unt.edu

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 to dismiss the grade or allow a retake.**

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

Canvas: Canvas is an online course information and management program. All course documents (syllabus, assignments, etc.) will be posted on or via Canvas. You should check it regularly and read every announcement carefully.

Email: Please use your UNT email address for communications about this class and check it frequently. If you do not you could miss important course information.

Late Work, Illness and Family Emergencies: It is expected that all work will be submitted at the scheduled times. **Late assignments will be docked 50% after missing the deadline.** After 1 week they will not be accepted. **No work will be accepted for credit after June 19.** You can work on this class at your own pace, and your work is available to complete far in advance of the deadlines. This allows you to plan ahead for almost all circumstances, including busy weeks, shifting work schedules, religious holidays, family vacations, and the like. The dropped grades policy will accommodate almost all circumstances related to missing work, including exams. If you are unable to turn in work on time because of an emergency, you must contact me prior to the deadline, either by phone or email. All illnesses and family emergencies must be documented with appropriate evidence and must be approved by the instructor to qualify for any exception to the late policies.

Course Schedule

All work is due at 11:59 p.m.

Due May 18

Getting Started Read PDF of Syllabus; Familiarize yourself with the Canvas Page
Purchase Textbook/Workbook access or set up trial

Due May 20

Module 1 US AND TEXAS CONSTITUTION
Chapter 1: The Founding and the Constitution
 The 19th Amendment INVESTIGATION
 Comparing Constitutions INVESTIGATION

Due May 21

Module 1 continued Chapter 2: Texas Constitution
 Public Opinion and Amendments INVESTIGATION
Chapter 3: Workbook—The US Constitution

Due May 25

Module 2 FEDERALISM
Chapter 4: Federalism
 McCulloch v Maryland INVESTIGATION
 Business of Weed INVESTIGATION
Chapter 5: Workbook—Federalism

May 26

EXAM 1

Due May 28

Module 3 CONGRESS
Chapter 6: Congress
 Drawing Political Lines INVESTIGATION
 Setting the Legislative Agenda INVESTIGATION
Chapter 7: Workbook—Legislatures

Due June 1

Module 4 PRESIDENCY
Chapter 8: The Presidency
 The Broken Presidency INVESTIGATION
 LBJ's First Days INVESTIGATION
Chapter 9: Workbook—The Presidency

Due June 3

Module 5 TEXAS LEGISLATURE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCH
Chapter 10: Texas—The Legislature
 Public Opinion and Legislative Officers INVESTIGATION
Chapter 11: Texas—The Executive Branch
 Public Opinion and Elected Officials INVESTIGATION

Due June 5

Module 6

BUREAUCRACY

Chapter 12: The Bureaucracy

The USDA INVESTIGATION

Implementing the ACA INVESTIGATION

Chapter 13: Workbook—The Bureaucracy

June 8**EXAM 2****Due June 10**

Module 7

US COURTS

Chapter 14: The Judiciary

Marbury v Madison INVESTIGATION

The Path to Marriage Equality INVESTIGATION

Chapter 15: Workbook—The Courts

Due June 15

Module 8

CIVIL LIBERTIES

Chapter 16: Civil Liberties

Free Speech for Students INVESTIGATION

Right to Privacy INVESTIGATION

Chapter 17: Workbook—Civil Liberties

Due June 16

Module 9

CIVIL RIGHTS

Chapter 18: Civil Rights

Till we Have Suffrage INVESTIGATION

Brown v. Board INVESTIGATION

Chapter 19: Workbook—Civil Rights

June 17**EXAM 3****June 18****COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM****University Policies and Procedures**

University Holidays: Both May 25 and June 19 are UNT holidays. Therefore, responses from me, your TA's, or technical support may be slower than normal. Because of the condensed nature of the summer session and to give you more time to complete the modules before the first exam, Module 2 assignments are due on May 25, and June 19 is your last day to complete any late work. You are more than welcome, nevertheless, to finish these assignments before these holidays.

Dropping Courses: Please link <http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/summer-registration-guide> for information concerning drops, withdraws, and other administrative information.

Course Evaluation: Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is the student evaluation system for UNT and allows students the ability to confidentially provide constructive feedback to their instructor and department to improve the quality of student experiences in the course.

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: 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.

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.

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.

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.

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>).