Instructor Information: Melissa McKay, Ph.D.
Office: Hall Park #125C
Virtual – Tuesday 6:00-7:00pm and by appointment
Email: melissa.mckay@unt.edu
(I will only email you on your university account)

Class Information:
Meeting times: Tuesday 1:00pm -2:20pm, Thursday via Zoom (link in Canvas)
Meeting place: Hall Park B #128
Online classroom: https://unt.instructure.com

Welcome to UNT! As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact. UNT does not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. UNT’s full Non-Discrimination Policy can be found in the UNT Policies section of the syllabus.

Course Description:
The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the roles of the United States and Texas governments in the American political system. We will study the institutions, processes, and decisions of political actors that define American and Texas government. We focus particular attention on the United States and Texas constitutions, civil rights and liberties, federalism as well as the institutions that comprise the three branches of government.

Class Overview:
This class will be delivered in a blended format. Unless arrangements are made otherwise, Tuesday classes are held in-person and Thursday classes will all be conducted online as collaborative Zoom meetings or group projects. To recap: we will be in-class on campus on Tuesday, but fully remote every Thursday.

Class Communications:
You can send me a note via Canvas, or email me directly at the address provided above. Please allow me around 24 hours to get back to you, but if it’s been longer and you haven’t heard back, don’t be shy about sending me a reminder. I have a handful of other classes, so my off-hours vary throughout the week. If you send a note on Friday-Sunday, please expect that I will not write you back until Monday.

Required Materials:
• Central Ideas in American Government 2306 + Workbook. Soomo Publishing.
  o This is an ONLINE book and workbook combination. You can purchase this directly through the link in our Canvas classroom –OR– purchase a code from the UNT bookstore.
• Access to a popular and reliable podcast app (Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Play, etc....)

1 A portion of this syllabus is adapted from materials and simulations created by Dr. Wendy Watson and Dr. Jacqueline Demeritt, to whom I am grateful.
• Consistent and reliable access to the internet
• A Packback student account ($15)
• A Google Drive account (Gmail) to access collaborative documents
• A laptop, desktop, or other reliable computer – our entire class is based on digital materials and you’ll need a reliable computer. If you do not have one, you can check out a laptop on campus for daily use, or your home high school may also have laptops to loan to students. Please reach out to me if you are having a hard time securing the use of a computer.
• Lockdown Browser will need to be installed on whichever computer you intend to take exams (we can work together or with UNT Help Desk if you have any issues)

Technical Support Resources:
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.

UIT Help Desk: [UIT Student Help Desk site](http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm)
Email: helpdesk@unt.edu
Telephone Availability:
- Sunday: noon-midnight
- Monday-Thursday: 8am-midnight
- Friday: 8am-8pm
- Saturday: 9am-5pm
Laptop Checkout: 8am-7pm
For additional support, visit [Canvas Technical Help](#)

Rules of Engagement
Rules of engagement refer to the way students are expected to interact with each other and with their instructors. Here are some general guidelines:

• While the freedom to express yourself is a fundamental human right, any communication that utilizes cruel and derogatory language on the basis 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 will not be tolerated.
• Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in any communication online or face-to-face, even when their opinion differs from your own.
• Ask for and use the correct name and pronouns for your instructor and classmates.
• Speak from personal experiences. Use “I” statements to share thoughts and feelings. Try not to speak on behalf of groups or other individual’s experiences.
• Use your critical thinking skills to challenge other people’s ideas, instead of attacking individuals.
• Avoid using all caps while communicating digitally. This may be interpreted as “YELLING!”
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm in emails or discussion posts as tone can be difficult to interpret digitally.
- Avoid using “text-talk” unless explicitly permitted by your instructor.
- Proofread and fact-check your sources.
- Keep in mind that online posts can be permanent, so think first before you type.

See these Engagement Guidelines for more information.

University and Class Policies:

**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.

**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 at disability.unt.edu.

**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 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 at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

**Sexual Assault Prevention**
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.

**Federal Regulation:** Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses
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/). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

**Face Covering Requirement**
Face coverings are required in all UNT facilities. Students are expected to wear face coverings during this class. If you are unable to wear a face covering due to a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Access to request an accommodation. UNT face covering requirements are subject to change due to community health guidelines. Any changes will be communicated via the instructor.

Please do not let a lack of access to clean masks keep you from attending class. I will always have masks with me, and I will try to keep them at the back of the classroom for you to grab if you need one.

**COVID-19 & Attendance**
Attendance at every class is expected for this class. I am required to take attendance at the beginning of every class for COVID contact tracing purposes. Attendance will not be formally factored into your overall grade, but could be
potentially referenced if you request leniency for missing a due date or even an exam.

While attendance is expected as outlined above, it is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community, especially given concerns about COVID-19. Please contact me if you are unable to attend class because you are ill, or unable to attend class due to COVID-19 including symptoms, potential exposure, pending or positive test results, or if you have been given specific instructions to isolate or quarantine from a health care provider or a local authority. It is important that you communicate with me prior to being absent so I may make a decision about accommodating your request to be excused from class.

If you know you are not going to be in class, please let me know via email. There is NO NEED for you to share details at all, but with our unique policies centered on COVID-19, *ALL* absences will be marked and reported every week. If you are absent and I do not know better, the University may assume that you’re quarantining or self-isolating. Please keep this in mind if you have to miss a class!

If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PROR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure. While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important.

Class Instruction Policy: Remote Instruction
This class is a blended class format which means of the two class times we have per week, only one of those days is currently planned to be conducted in-person, or face-to-face. For the sake of consistency with other classes, the in-person weekly class will be held on Tuesday of each week. Thus, our Thursday classes will all be held online via Zoom or other remote platform (the only reason that will change is if I ask you all to conduct individual work on your own during that class period, but we’d still most likely meet for a few minutes first, via Zoom).

Students will need access to a webcam and microphone to participate in fully remote portions of the class.

The UNT fall schedule requires this course to have fully remote instruction beginning November 28th. Additional remote instruction may be necessary if community health conditions change or you need to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19. Learn more about how to be successful in a remote learning environment.

Class Recordings
Synchronous (live) sessions in this course will be recorded for students enrolled in this class section to refer to throughout the semester. Class recordings are the intellectual property of the university or instructor and are reserved for use only by students in this class and only for educational purposes. Students may not post or otherwise share the recordings outside the class, or outside the Canvas Learning Management System, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

Academic Support Services

Mental Health
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)
- Counseling and Testing Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
- UNT Care Team (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care)
- Individual Counseling (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling)

Chosen Names
A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. Below is a list of resources for updating your chosen name at UNT.

- UNT Records
- UNT ID Card
- UNT Email Address
- Legal Name

*UNT euIDs cannot be changed at this time. The collaborating offices are working on a process to make this option accessible to UNT community members.

Pronouns
Pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc.) are a public way for people to address you, much like your name, and can be shared with a name when making an introduction, both virtually and in-person. Just as we ask and don’t assume someone’s name, we should also ask and not assume someone’s pronouns.

You can add your pronouns to your Canvas account so that they follow your name when posting to discussion boards, submitting assignments, etc.

Below is a list of additional resources regarding pronouns and their usage:

- What are pronouns and why are they important?
- How do I use pronouns?
• How do I share my pronouns?
• How do I ask for another person’s pronouns?
• How do I correct myself or others when the wrong pronoun is used?

Additional Student Support Services
• Registrar (https://registrar.unt.edu/registration)
• Financial Aid (https://financialaid.unt.edu/)
• Student Legal Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services)
• Career Center (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center)
• Multicultural Center (https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center)
• Counseling and Testing Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
• Pride Alliance (https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance)
• UNT Food Pantry (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry)

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

Grading Policies: Final grades are numerically based on the number of points achieved on the following weighted assignment types:

Exams: 15% each (45% of total grade)
Three unit-specific exams will be online via Canvas, closed book/resources, consisting of a combination of questions, essays, and/or problems. Lockdown Browser is required for all online exams. The final exam is not cumulative. The exam format for each will be at the instructor’s discretion.

Get the Gist Assignments – 10% of total grade
Your online textbook has two types of chapters: (1) Central Ideas in American Government (CIAG) chapters and (2) Workbook chapters. The CIAG chapters have “study questions” or “Get the Gist” questions at the end of each page. You need to complete these questions for each chapter. You can reset and repeat the questions until you get them all correct, so you should aim to get a perfect score! Once the due date passes, though, don’t reset the questions because it will override your good score with a late score. (Please note: If you attempt to game the system and enter gibberish or one-word responses to these questions, I will change your grade for the entire chapter to 0).

Workbook Assignments - 10% of total grade
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). An “assignment” involves completing all of the questions for all four essays. The lowest two workbook grades will be dropped at the end of the semester and together they will make up 10% of your total grade.

**Packback Questions -- 15% of total grade**
Participation is a requirement for this course, and the Packback Questions platform will be used for online discussion about class topics. Packback Questions is an online community where you can be fearlessly curious and ask open-ended questions to build on top of what we are covering in class and relate topics to real-world applications. Your participation on Packback will count toward 15% of your overall course grade. In order to receive your points per week, you should submit the following per each deadline period:

- 1 open-ended Question per week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 50, each worth 33.33% of each assignment grade
- 2 Responses per week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 50, each worth 66.67% of each assignment grade

**Investigation Assignments – 15% of total grade**
In the CIAG chapters, you will also find breakout assignments called “Investigations.” These assignments allow you to dig deep and apply what you know to different problems or issues. You only get one crack at investigation questions; you cannot repeat them to try to do better. The lowest five grades will be dropped, and the remaining will constitute 10% of your final grade.

**Writing Assignment – 5% of total grade**
This signature assignment is required of all PSCI 2306 students each year. This is a writing assignment that requires students to select a policy that is important to them and write a letter to an elected representative with policy-making authority. The goal is to articulate your position on the chosen policy with the intent to persuade the policymaker to agree with you. This is a must-complete assignment that will be due no later than November 29 – but can be turned in prior. Complete writing and submission details are found in Canvas.

**Letter grades are assigned based on standard grade scales:**
A – 90-100%
B – 80-89%
C – 70-79%
D – 60-69%
F – 59 - under

**Grading Notes:**
- Final grades will be based on the weighted outcomes of the assignments above. I use standard mathematical rounding if necessary.
- Please do not request extra credit. If there is an activity that I feel would be relevant I will offer it to the entire class. I cannot and definitely will not provide extra credit opportunities for individual students.
- If you feel like your grades are slipping or you are falling behind, please reach out to me immediately. Too many students wait until their semester progress...
is a lost cause, but if we catch it early enough we can most likely work together on a plan of action.
# Class Schedule Fall 2020*

*All assignments are due in the appropriate Canvas module by Sunday at 11:59pm unless otherwise noted.*

*Subject to change at instructor’s discretion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assigned Resources</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Political Cultures – Federal and State</td>
<td>Canvas readings Podcasts (link in Canvas)</td>
<td>In-class discussion – Social Contract</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 24 - 30</td>
<td>The Founding and the US Constitution</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 1 Workbook Chapter 3 Podcast (link in Canvas)</td>
<td>Get the Gist Chapter 1 Workbook Chapter 3 Comparing Constitutions Investigation Till We Have Suffrage, The Amendment Investigation Packback Question #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Texas Constitution</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 2 Canvas resources</td>
<td>Get the Gist, chapter 2 Propping up the Constitution Investigation Packback Question #2</td>
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<td>Aug 31 - Sep 6</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Federalism</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 4,5 Workbook 6 Canvas resources</td>
<td>Get the Gist, chapter 4,5 Workbook 6 McColloch v Maryland Investigation Half Baked Investigation Take the Money and Fund Investigation Packback Question #3</td>
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<td>Sep 7 - 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exam 1 Project Work</td>
<td>Exam 1 will cover Modules 1 – 4</td>
<td>Packback Question #4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 21 - 27</td>
<td>U.S. Congress</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 7 Workbook Chapter 9 Canvas resources</td>
<td>Get the Gist Chapter 7 Workbook Chapter 9 Drawing Political Lines Investigation Setting the Legislative Agenda Investigation Packback Question #5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Texas Legislature</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 8 Canvas lecture, videos, and readings</td>
<td>Get the Gist Chapter 10,11 The Terms of a Term Investigation Packback Question #6</td>
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<td>Sep 28 – Oct 4</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>U.S. Presidency</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 10 Workbook Chapter 12 Canvas resources</td>
<td>Get the Gist Chapter 10 Workbook Chapter 12 The Broken Presidency Investigation Eavesdropping on the Oval Office Investigation Packback Question #7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 5 - 11</td>
<td>The U.S. Bureaucracy</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 13</td>
<td>Get the Gist Chapters 13</td>
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<td>Oct 12 - 18</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 19 - 25</td>
<td>Workbook Chapter 14</td>
<td>Old MacDonald Had an Agency Investigation</td>
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<td>Canvas resources</td>
<td>Implementing the ACA Investigation</td>
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<td>Packback Question #8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 26 – Nov 1</td>
<td><strong>Texas Governor &amp; Plural Executive</strong></td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 11, 15</td>
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<td>Exam 2 will cover modules 6-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 1 – 8</td>
<td><strong>Presidential Election Week - in-class &amp; Canvas resources</strong></td>
<td>Get the Gist Chapters 11, 15 Whose Emergency? The Sun Also Sets Investigation Packback Question #9</td>
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<td>Nov 9 - 15</td>
<td><strong>Federal Courts and Texas Courts</strong></td>
<td>CIAG Chapters 16,17</td>
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<td>Workbook Chapter 18</td>
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<td>Canvas resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 16 – 22</td>
<td><strong>Civil Rights and Civil Liberties</strong></td>
<td>CIAG Chapters 19,21</td>
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<td>Workbook Chapters 20,22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 23 - 29</td>
<td><strong>Local Government (no class meeting on 11/26)</strong></td>
<td>Canvas lecture, videos, and readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 30 – Dec 6</td>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>Canvas resources</td>
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<td>The 26th Amendment</td>
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<td>Packback Question #13</td>
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*Dr. McKay reserves the right to change the terms and materials contained in this document at her discretion*