Political Science: US and Texas Constitutions and Institutions
PSCI 2306.701 | Spring 2020
Department of Political Science, University of North Texas
Dr. Melissa McKay

Instructor information:
Melissa McKay, Ph.D.
Office: Wooten Hall Room 154
Office Hours: T/Th 2:00-3:30pm, and by appointment
Political Science Main Office: Wooten 125
Email: melissa.mckay@unt.edu
(I will only email you on your university account)

Class Information:
Meeting times: Online
Meeting place: Canvas
Online classroom: https://unt.instructure.com

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 is delivered completely online so all readings, assignments, and auxiliary resources will be made available via specific modules in our online classroom via Canvas. Students need to make the commitment to dedicate at least 3+ hours per week to accessing the course content and doing all online assignments.

Class Communications:
I have listed my office hours above. If you have any questions about the course, or anything else you want to talk about, please feel free to stop by and chat during those hours. If those aren’t convenient times, send me an email and I’ll do my best to accommodate – even if that means an online meeting via Zoom.
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,

*Dr. McKay reserves the right to change the terms and planned materials contained in this document at her discretion*
so my off-hours vary throughout the week. If you send a note on Friday-Sunday, please expect that I most likely will not write you back until Monday afternoon (I have classes Monday).

**Required Materials:**
Central Ideas in American Government 2306 + Workbook. Soomo Publishing. 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. Both are the same product, and the price is around $79 for both (not each).

Access to a popular and reliable podcast app (Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Play, etc.):
Consistent and reliable access to the internet.

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

- **Exams:** 20% each (60% of total grade)
  Three exams will be online via Canvas, closed book/resources, consisting of a combination of questions, essays, and/or problems.

- **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).*

- **Investigation Assignments** – 15% of total grade
  In the CIAG chapters, you will also find some breakout assignments called “Investigations.” These assignments allow you to dig deep and apply what you know to tougher problems. You only get one crack at investigation questions; you cannot repeat them to try to do better. There are a total of 19 investigations. The lowest four grades get dropped, so the highest 15 grades will constitute 20% of your final grade.
Workbook Assignments: 15% 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. Also included in the “Workbook Assignments” Module are quizzes that cover the Texas content we learned about that week. The lowest grade of each workbook and quiz will be dropped at the end of the semester and together they will make up 15% of your total grade.

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 Spring 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 Reading</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 13-19</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Political Cultures – Federal and State</td>
<td>Canvas readings, audio lecture</td>
<td>No assignment due, but read the Canvas links (for possible exam questions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Jan 20-26</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 Investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Jan 27 – Feb 2</td>
<td>Texas Constitution</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 2 Canvas resources</td>
<td>• Get the Gist, chapter 2 • Propping up the Constitution Investigation • Texas Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Feb 3 - 9</td>
<td>Federalism</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 4 Workbook Chapter 5 Canvas resources</td>
<td>• Get the Gist Chapter 4 • Workbook Chapter #5 • Half Baked Investigation • McCulloch v Maryland Investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Feb 10-16</td>
<td>Review &amp; Exam 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Feb 17-23</td>
<td>US Congress</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 6 Workbook Chapter 8 Canvas resources</td>
<td>• Get the Gist Chapter 5 • Workbook Chapter 8 • Setting the Legislative Agenda Investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Feb 24-Mar 1</td>
<td>Texas Legislature</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 7 Canvas lecture, videos, and readings</td>
<td>• Get the Gist Chapter 7 • The Terms of a Term Investigation • Texas Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 March 2 - 8</td>
<td>United States Executive</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 9 Workbook Chapter 11 Canvas resources</td>
<td>• Get the Gist Chapter 9 • Workbook Chapter 10 • The Broken Presidency Investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 16-22</td>
<td>Texas Governor and Texas Plural Executive</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 10 Canvas resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 23-29</td>
<td>Federal Bureaucracy</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 12 Workbook Chapter 13 Canvas resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 30-Apr 5</td>
<td>Review &amp; Exam 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 6-12</td>
<td>Federal Judiciary</td>
<td>CIAG Chapter 14 Workbook Chapter 15 Canvas resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 13-19</td>
<td>Texas Courts and Criminal Justice</td>
<td>Canvas lecture, videos, and readings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 20–26</td>
<td>Civil Right and Liberties</td>
<td>CIAG Chapters 16, 18 Workbook Chapters 17, 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 27- May 3</td>
<td>National and State Policies</td>
<td>Canvas resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Eavesdropping on the Oval Office Investigation
- Get the Gist Chapter 10
- The Sun Also Sets Investigation
- Texas Quiz
- Get the Gist Chapter 12
- Workbook Chapter 13
- Old McDonald Had an Agency Investigation
- Implementing the ACA Investigation
- Texas Quiz

Final Exam Wednesday May 5