Political Science: US and Texas Constitutions and Institutions
PSCI 2306.501 Summer 2021
New College, University of North Texas at Frisco
Dr. Melissa McKay

Instructor information: Melissa McKay, Ph.D.
Office: Hall Park A #125C
Office Hours: Thursday 12-1:00pm and via Zoom as needed
Email: melissa.mckay@unt.edu
(I will only email you on your university account)

Class Information: Meeting times: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00pm-3:50pm, Thursday
Meeting place: Hall Park A #107
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.¹

Course Structure: This class will be completed in a blended format. Because this is an abbreviated
semester of only 5 weeks, we will utilize every day of the week for our course
materials, even though we will only meet in person twice per week. Students will

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.

PSCI 2306 US & Texas Constitutions & Institutions | Summer 2021 |
*Dr. McKay reserves the right to change the terms and materials contained in this document at her discretion
be expected to complete reading and assignments outside of our scheduled in-person class time.

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. If you send a note on Friday-Sunday, please expect that I will not write you back until Monday.

**Required Materials:**
  - 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...)
- Consistent and reliable access to the internet
- 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.*

**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.

*Please do not rely on me for technical support – I am not the person for that.*

**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

**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.
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).

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.

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 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 PRIOR 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.

**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:

- 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))
- Individual Counseling ([https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/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](https://canvas.unt.edu) 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](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/))

**Grading Policies:** Final grades are numerically based on the following weighted assignment types:

**Essays:** **40% of total grade.** In lieu of unit exams each student will be expected to submit an essay each week/unit that applies the content we covered together that week. You will be given an essay prompt that includes all of the expectations for each response. Submissions are expected to be a well thought out, thoroughly articulated response to all aspects of the prompt using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Each essay should be no less than 400 words. Specific information is included in each week’s essay assignment on Canvas.

**Get the Gist Assignments** – Your online textbook has two types of chapters: (1) Central Ideas in American Government (CIAG) chapters and (2) Workbook chapters. The CIAG chapters are considered our ‘webtext’ or the readings for each topic and have “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. These questions are not directly graded for your overall grade.

Although Get the Gist assignments do not count toward the final overall grade, students who compete these questions embedded in the reading chapters and receive at least 90% correct can choose to replace the lowest essay grade with their Get the Gist average.

**Workbook Assignments:** **20% of total grade.** The other type of chapter in your online textbook is a workbook chapter. Each workbook chapter consists of 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). The lowest two workbook grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.
Investigation Assignments – 25% 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 different problems. There are a total of 22 available investigations, the lowest six grades will be dropped.

Engagement - 10% of total grade. This is an interactive class and it requires commitment and engagement from everyone involved. Because this is a fast-paced summer course, attendance and engagement is a must. Your class attendance as well as in-class participation will be noted and contribute to your overall grade. You will begin the semester with 100 points for your participation grade. Points will be deducted when student fails to meet expectations for participation in this class. This includes but is not limited to the following: participating in class discussions, arriving to class on time, remaining in class for the entire class period, abiding by classroom policies, treating others with respect, approaching assignments with a serious effort, etc...

Core Assessment Writing Assignment – 5% of total grade. The required assignment for all students enrolled in PSCI 2306. You will draft a letter to your legislative or executive-branch policymaker in which you identify yourself as one of the politician’s constituents, identify the political issue about which you are concerned, clearly state a position on that issue (what should the policymaker do or not do); and provide an explanation for your position that will persuade the policymaker to agree with you. You will submit the letter as the body of an e-mail addressed to your policymaker.

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

Important 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 Summer 2021*
All assignments are due in the appropriate Canvas module by Sunday at 11:59pm unless otherwise noted. *Subject to change at instructor’s discretion

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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| Week #1 – Introduction, Political Cultures, Founding, and Constitutions | Tuesday June 1  
Thurday June 3  | • Introduction to the course  
• Political Cultures  
• Founding of American government | • In-class discussions  
• Podcast (Canvas)  
• CIAG Chapter 1 | Essay #1 due Friday by 11:59pm |
| Week #2 – Constitutions, Amendments, and Federalism | Tuesday June 8  
Thurday June 10  | • The U.S. Constitution and its Amendments  
• Texas Constitution  
• Federalism | • In class discussions  
• Podcast (Canvas)  
• CIAG Chapter 2, 4, 5 | • Workbook Chapters 3  
• Comparing Constitutions Investigation  
• Till We Have Suffrage, The Amendment Investigation  
• Propping Up the Constitution Investigation  
• McCulloch v Maryland Investigation  
• Half Baked Investigation  
• Take the Money and Fund Investigation  
• Workbook Chapter 6 | Essay #2 due Friday by 11:59pm |
| Week #3 – Legislative and Executive Institutions | Tuesday June 15  
Thurday June 17  | • US Congress  
• Texas Legislature  
• US Presidency  
• Texas Governor | • In class discussions  
• Podcast episodes (Canvas)  
• CIAG Chapters 7,8,10,11 | • Workbook Chapter 9  
• Setting the Legislative Agenda Investigation  
• Drawing Political Lines Investigation  
• The Terms of a Term Investigation  
• Workbook 12, 14  
• Whose Emergency? Investigation  
• The Broken Presidency Investigation | Essay #3 due Friday by 11:59pm |
| Week #4 – Bureaucracy and Judicial institutions | Tuesday June 22  
Thurday June 24  | • Bureaucracy  
• Texas Plural Executive  
• Federal Courts  
• Texas Judicial System | • In class discussions  
• CIAG Chapters 13,15,16,17 | • Workbook Chapter 14  
• Implementing the ACA Investigation  
• Old MacDonald Had an Agency Investigation  
• Workbook Chapter 18  
• The Path to Marriage Equality Investigation  
• Marbury v. Madison Investigation  
• Judge for Sale? Investigation | Essay #4 due Friday by 11:59pm |
| Week #5 – Local Government, Civil liberties, and Civil rights | Tuesday June 29  
Thurday July 1  | • Civil Liberties  
• Civil Rights  
• Local Government | • In-class discussions  
• CIAG Chapters 19, 21 | • Workbook 20  
• Older than the Bill of Rights Investigation  
• Bong Hits 4 Jesus Investigation  
• Workbook 22  
• Brown v. Board Investigation  
• Till We Have Suffrage: The Movement Investigation | Essay #5 due Friday by 11:59pm |