

PSCI 2316: US and Texas Constitutions and Institutions

Spring, 2026

Monday & Wednesday, 9:30 - 10:50 AM
Wooten Hall 221

Instructor: Dr. Yu-hsien Sung (she/her/hers)
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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 11:30 - 13:00

Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces students to the political institutions, structures, and processes of American government, with particular emphasis on the Texas government. Course materials cover the U.S. and Texas Constitutions, the three branches of government, the separation of powers, federalism, and the protection of civil rights and civil liberties. In addition to learning how government functions, students will explore the importance of institutional rules and how public policy influences the issues and values they care about. By the end of the course, students will be equipped with analytical tools to understand better and actively engage with the political systems that shape their daily lives. This course fulfills the state's legislative requirement for instruction on the Texas Constitution.

Required Materials

This course will use an online textbook that combines both the textbook and workbook into one.

- U.S. and Texas Politics with 2306 Workbook (UNT 2306 Department Bundle), Soomo Publishing.

You must obtain this textbook **before January 14**, the second session of this class.

There are two ways to purchase this textbook:

- You can purchase the textbook directly from the publisher via a link in our Canvas shell (recommended).
- You can purchase an access code from the UNT Bookstore (either in person or online).

Course Format

For each week, you will complete the following tasks:

1. Read the assigned chapter from the webtext and answer the questions embedded within the chapter.
2. Consolidate, synthesize, and rewrite your notes on the material.
3. Review your notes and complete the **Investigation** and **Workbook** assignments.

Canvas

This course has a Canvas site accessible at <https://canvas.unt.edu>. The site includes administrative details, assignments, and student grades. I encourage you to check it regularly.

Course Expectation

To be successful in this class, you must complete the assigned readings and coursework on time. As the instructor, I am responsible for providing clear, well-structured course materials to help you meet the learning objectives. As a student, you are responsible for completing the assigned readings and assignments.

Office Hours

I will hold office hours on Monday and Wednesday from 11:30- 1:00 PM. **Please sign up for office hours in advance using the Calendly link:** <https://calendly.com/yhsien-sung/20min>

If you are unable to attend office hours or need additional time to talk, please email me, and we can arrange an alternate time. I am also available by email and am happy to answer any questions electronically. I will make every effort to respond to emails during weekdays.

Please note that we will **NOT** discuss grades over email. This policy is in accordance with federal laws protecting student information. You should regularly check your grades on the Canvas course site. If you need to discuss your grade, please schedule a meeting with me.

Changes to the Syllabus

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as needed throughout the semester. Any adjustments to course requirements will be announced in class and on Canvas with at least 48 hours' notice. It is your responsibility to stay informed of any updates during the semester.

Assignments & Grading Policy

Grades will be weighted in the following way:

- **20% Chapter-Based Multiple Choice & Investigation Homework Assignments**
 - The webtext chapters include questions embedded within the text, which will appear as "Multiple-Choice Questions." Be sure to answer these questions as you read through the textbook. Notably, you can attempt these questions multiple times until you get them all correct, so your goal should be to score 100% on the multiple-choice questions in all assigned chapters.
 - In the webtext, most chapters also include a section labeled "Investigation". Investigation assignments give students the opportunity to engage with the course material at a higher level through analysis and explanation. At the bottom of the Investigation section, there are also multiple-choice questions that you are required to submit. Investigation questions can only be submitted once.
- **10% Chapter-Based Workbook Assignments**

- Each workbook chapter is structured around the four core learning objectives established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: critical thinking, communication, personal responsibility, and social responsibility. Each chapter contains four essays that explore key course concepts and allow students to apply them. Students must complete the accompanying multiple-choice questions, which can be attempted multiple times until all answers are correct. Aim for a perfect score - 100% should be your goal.
- **60% Exams**
 - There will be three exams in this course: a **Exam 1 (20%)**, **Exam 2 (20%)**, and a non-cumulative **Exam 3 (20%)**. Exams will be based on content from the main chapters and consist of multiple-choice questions randomly selected from a test bank.
 - Exams will be held in person in the classroom.
- **5% Current Events Discussion**
 - Beginning in Week 2, students will take turns leading a short in-class discussion (approximately 10 minutes) on a current news event related to U.S. or Texas politics. Each student will select a noteworthy news story from the previous week and briefly explain what happened, why it matters, and how it connects to concepts discussed in class. The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to stay informed about ongoing political developments and to practice linking real-world events to course material.
- **10% Participation**
 - Regular attendance and active participation are essential components of this course. Students are expected to attend *all* scheduled class meetings, arrive on time, and remain engaged throughout the class session.
- **2% Student Introduction (Extra Credit Opportunity)**
 - During the first week of class, students have the opportunity to submit a one-paragraph written introduction of themselves on Canvas, along with a clear photo of themselves. The introduction should briefly describe your background, academic interests or major, and what you hope to gain from this course. The purpose of this assignment is to help the instructor become familiar with students early in the semester and gain a better understanding of the class. Including a photo helps the instructor match students' names with their faces more quickly.

Late Assignments

Assignments must be submitted on time. Work turned in late without prior notice will incur a penalty of 5 points per day. For example, if an assignment is due on August 18 but submitted on August 20, 10 points will be deducted.

In the event of extenuating circumstances (e.g., a family emergency, hospitalization), students may be eligible for a short extension. All such requests must be processed through the Dean of Students' Office (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/dean-of-students/contact.html>). That office is responsible for verifying the nature of the circumstances and will communicate directly with me if accommodations are warranted. I do not grant extensions or make-up opportunities unless I receive official notification from the Dean of Students.

Grading Scale

The grading scale is as follows:

- A = 90 - 100
- B = 80 - 89.99
- C = 70 - 79.99
- D = 60 - 69.99
- F = 59 and below

UNT Policies

Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity

In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools, e.g., Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini, is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the Student Academic Integrity policy.

Additionally, tools like ChatGPT are not allowed as they blur authorship and misrepresent your independent work. All work must be your own.

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.

<https://vpaa.unt.edu/ss/integrity>

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 at <http://disability.unt.edu/>.

Emergency Notification and 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 the UNT Learning Management System (LMS) 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 <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, and Assault

The University has procedures in place that aim to be aware of the needs of those who make an institutional report of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Procedures include informing individuals about their right to file criminal charges as well as the availability of counseling, health, mental health, victim advocacy, legal assistance, visa and immigration assistance and other services on and/or off campus, as well as additional remedies to prevent contact between a complainant and a respondent, such as housing, academic, transportation and working accommodations, if reasonably available. The University will make such accommodations, if the victim requests them and if they are reasonably available, regardless of whether the complainant chooses to report the crime to the UTPD or local law enforcement.

Anyone can report prohibited conduct by notifying the Dean of Students Office (940.565.2648), the Title IX Coordinator (940.565.2759) or the UNT Police Department (940.565.3000). The online reporting form is found at <http://report.unt.edu>.

Course Reading and Assignment Schedule:

Mon 1/12: Course Introduction

- Read the syllabus.
- Purchase the required *U.S. and Texas Politics with 2306 Workbook* (UNT 2316 Department Bundle), Soomo Publishing.

Wed 1/14: The Founding and the Constitution

- Course Introduction
- Chapter 1: The Founding and the Constitution

Mon 1/19: **Martin Luther King Jr Holiday, No Class**

Wed 1/21: Texas: The Constitution I

- Chapter 2: Texas: The Constitution

Mon 1/26: Texas: The Constitution II

- Chapter 2: Investigation "Public Opinion and Constitutional Amendments in Texas"
- Chapter 3: Workbook on the U.S. Constitution

Wed 1/28: Federalism I

- Chapter 4: Federalism, multiple-choice homework

Mon 2/2: Federalism II

- Chapter 4: Investigation "McCulloch v. Maryland" & "The Business of Weed" & "Federalist No. 10"

Wed 2/4: Review Day

- Chapter 5: Workbook on Federalism

Mon 2/9: Exam 1

Exam 1 will be held in class during the regular class period, 9:30 to 10:50 AM.

Wed 2/11: Congress I

- Return Exam 1
- Chapter 6: Congress, multiple-choice homework.

Mon 2/16: Congress II

- Chapter 6: Investigation "Drawing Political Lines" & "Setting the Legislative Agenda"
- Chapter 7: Workbook on Legislatures

Wed 2/18: The Presidency I

- Chapter 8: The Presidency, multiple-choice homework

Mon 2/23: The Presidency II

- Chapter 8: Investigation "The Broken Presidency" & "Eavesdropping on the Oval Office"
- Chapter 9: Workbook: The Presidency

Wed 2/25: Texas-The Legislature I

- Chapter 10: Texas: The Legislature

Mon 3/2: Texas-The Legislature II

- Chapter 10: Texas: The Legislature

Mon 3/9-13 Spring Break, no class**Mon 3/16, Texas: The Executive I**

- Chapter 11: Texas: The Executive Branch, multiple-choice homework

Wed 3/18, Texas: The Executive II

- Chapter 11: Texas: The Executive Branch

Mon 3/23, Review Day**Wed 3/25, Exam 2**

Exam 2 will be held in class during the regular class period, 9:30 to 10:50 AM.

Mon 3/30, Bureaucracy I

- Chapter 12: Bureaucracy; multiple-choice homework
- Chapter 12: Investigation "The USDA: An Agency for Farmers" & "Implementing the ACA"

Wed 4/1, The Bureaucracy II

- Chapter 13: Workbook: The Bureaucracy

Mon 4/6, The Judiciary I

- Chapter 14: The Judiciary, multiple-choice homework
- Chapter 14: Investigation "The Path to Marriage Equality" & "Marbury v. Madison"

Wed 4/8, The Courts

- Chapter 15: Workbook: The Courts

Mon 4/13, Civil Liberties I

- Chapter 16: Civil Liberties, multiple-choice homework
- Chapter 16: Investigation "Free Speech for Students" & "The Meaning of the Right to Privacy"

Wed 4/15, Civil Liberties II

- Chapter 17: Workbook: Civil Liberties

Mon 4/20, Civil Rights I

- Chapter 18: Civil Rights, multiple-choice homework
- Chapter 18: Investigation "Till We Have Suffrage: The Movement" & "Brown v. Board"

Wed 4/22, Civil Rights II

- Chapter 19: Workbook: Civil Rights

Mon 4/27, Review Day**Wed 5/6, Exam 3**