

# PSCI 2306.501 US and Texas Constitutions and Institutions Spring 2022

Instructor of Record: Gabriela Okundaye

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## **Instructor**

Gabriela Okundaye

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Office: Wooten Hall 132

Office Hours: Available by appointment on Zoom.

## **Class Information**

Frisco Hall Park B 130

01/18/2022 - 05/13/2022

Tuesday 11:00 AM to 1:50 PM

## **Course Access**

This course is conducted in-person with group tasks to be completed for participation credit. Workbook assignments and exams are to be completed online

Canvas: <https://unt.instructure.com/>

Packback: <https://www.packback.co/>

## **Course Description**

An introduction to the institutions of government, with particular emphasis on the U.S. and Texas Constitutions. Focus on the structure and powers of the three branches of government (both national and Texas); the division of power between those branches (separation of powers); the division of power between the national and state governments (federalism); and issues related to civil rights and civil liberties. Satisfies the legislative requirement for a course emphasizing the Texas constitution.

## **Course Objectives**

In this class the main objective for students is to understand the following:

“Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you.”

Pericles

Politics relates to your life in many ways that you may not even be aware of. Your race, ethnicity, age, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, and many other facets of your life are affected by politics. There are government policies that affect your everyday life and it is important to understand how these policies, when applied, affect you and the things you value.

Outside of understanding the “why” of politics, it is also important to understand what are the components of government, it is also important to understand what the components of government are, such as the Constitution (both in the United States and Texas), the powers it has, how the branches of government work based on checks and balances, and how this has an effect on your lives.

### **Required Materials**

*Soomo.* Soomo webtext and workbook is the required webtext for students in this class. Each week you will be assigned course work that is to be completed in Soomo which can be purchased and accessed through the Canvas webpage.

*Packback.* Packback is a discussion board that utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) in order to help students craft questions about the world around them. This tool is useful in helping students craft well-constructed, open-ended questions that can be applied to this class and beyond. Additionally we will also use the polling option in Packback (in-class polling and homework polling). See below on the syllabus for more information regarding Packback.

### **Communication**

This course is conducted in-person. Contact me (email or Canvas) and I will get back to you within 48 hours. Please note that all correspondence **must** be conducted using your UNT system email or through Canvas’ messaging service. When you email ,me please be sure to include “PSCI 2306” in the message subject.

*Announcements.* Be sure to check your MyUNT email, as this is how information for this class will be distributed. Announcements will be posted on Canvas and will be sent to the email linked to Canvas, which is more likely than not your UNT system email. In the event of inclement weather in Texas and how treacherous the highways can be, I will let you know ahead of time if class will be held up (at least two hours in advance).

*Virtual Office Hours.* Office hours will be conducted via Zoom. In order to set up office hours, please email or message me on Canvas.

### **Grading**

Below is how grades are assigned in this class.

A	90% - 100%
B	80% - 89%
C	70% - 79%
D	60% - 69%
F	Below 60%

## **Grade Distribution**

*Exams.* 60% of final grade. This class will have three (3) exams total, but only two (2) of the exams will count towards your final grade. Each of the exams is worth 30% of your grade and will cover the material from each chapter in the Soomo webtext. There will be one (1) final exam which will be a makeup exam in the event you miss an exam or you are unsatisfied with one of the grades you received on an exam. However, the optional final exam is cumulative and will contain material from each of the previous exams. Exams will open at 12:01 AM and will close at 11:59 PM on the designated Fridays located further down in the syllabus.

*Packback Discussion Board.* 15% of final grade. The Packback discussion board will require students to ask questions and reply to questions in order to facilitate discussion throughout the course and to connect what is learned in class to current events. For each Packback assignment, I ask you to create one discussion post and reply twice to another student's discussion post.

*Workbook Assignments (Soomo).* 15% of final grade. The Soomo workbook assignments will require students to answer the chapter questions that are within the Soomo workbook. The workbook questions can be completed multiple times if you are not satisfied with your grade.

*Signature Assignment.* 10% of final grade. This portion of the class asks students to apply what they have learned in class to the world around them. The signature assignment asks students to write a letter to a policymaker of their choosing to bring up a policy that they should be concerned about. More information on this assignment is located in the Canvas website.

*Extra Credit.* This class will have limited extra credit opportunities. These extra credit opportunities will be announced via Canvas. The type of extra credit opportunities that may be given during the course may come from a podcast, a documentary, or a current event.

## **Course Calendar**

### **Week 1 - (01/18/2022 - 01/21/2022)**

Subject Matter: Hello and welcome to PSCI 2306! US and Texas Constitutions and Institutions. For the first class we will discuss how this class will work by going over the syllabus. As for the subject that I will lecture on, we will discuss the founding of the U.S. Constitution to give some background on this subject.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 1: The Founding and the Constitution
    - Chapter 1: Till We Have Suffrage
  - Packback Week 1

### **Week 2 (01/24/2022 - 01/28/2022)**

Subject Matter: This week we will focus on the US and Texas Constitutions. How did the US Constitution come about? How has it changed as time went on in the United States? What exactly is the Bill of Rights and how does that affect me on a personal level? Make sure you have

access to Packback via computer/tablet/phone in class as we will utilize the in-class polling option.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 2: The US Constitution
    - Chapter 3: The Texas Constitution
  - Packback Week 2

### **Week 3 (01/31/2022 - 02/04/2022)**

Subject Matter: This week we will wrap up discussing the Constitution at the state and federal levels. After this week, you will have an understanding of the Texas and US Constitution. You will be able to identify which amendments based on the year they were ratified and how that has impacted your world.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 3: Propping Up the Constitution
  - Packback Week 3

### **Week 4 (02/07/2022 - 02/11/2022)**

Subject Matter: This week we will discuss federalism. What is federalism? How has federalism changed through the years, and what are the types of federalism that the United States has gone through?

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 4: Federalism
    - Chapter 4: Federalist No. 10
  - Packback Week 4

### **Week 5 (02/14/2022 - 02/18/2022)**

Subject Matter: In this week, we will wrap up discussing federalism right before we move on to another crucial institution of the US and Texas government.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 5: Federalism
  - Packback Week 5

### **Week 6 (02/21/2022 - 02/25/2022)**

Subject Matter: The topic for the week is Congress! How many members of Congress are there? What do the members of Congress do and what can you as citizens do to *influence* Congress?

- Assignments

- Webtext
  - Chapter 6: Congress
  - Chapter 6: Drawing Political Lines
- Packback Week 6

**Week 7 (02/28/2022 - 03/04/2022)**

Subject Matter: This week we dive deeper to understand the legislative branch of the U.S. government and its inner workings. By the end of this week, you will understand how this branch of government functions and identify who your Congressperson is and how to contact them.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 7: U.S. Legislatures
  - Packback Week 7

**Week 8 (03/07/2022 - 03/11/2022)**

Subject Matter: By this point we know that Texas has its own functioning government, but this week we take a much closer look at the Texas Legislature! I will also have a brief review for this class to get you all prepared for the first exam this Friday. The exam opens on Friday at 12:01 AM and closes at 11:59 PM.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 8: Texas Legislatures
  - Packback Week 8
  - **Exam 1 DUE at 11:59 PM.**

**BYE! Week (03/14/2022 - 03/18/2022)**

Subject Matter: Spring break! You made it halfway through the semester. You deserve a break, so relax and enjoy the week off.

**Week 9 (03/21/2022 - 03/25/2022)**

Subject Matter: We're back and we're (hopefully) refreshed from Spring Break and ready to tackle the rest of the semester! This week's topic is the Presidency –an important part of the executive branch. This week, you will learn what the president does beyond what the media portrays the president doing.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 9: The Presidency
    - Chapter 9: The Broken Presidency
    - Chapter 10: The Presidency
  - Packback Week 9

**Week 10 (03/28/2022 - 04/01/2022)**

Subject Matter: This week we continue by going beyond the Presidency to learn about the other actors in the executive branch. What is the State Department? Who runs the Department of the Interior? What do they do? All of those questions will be answered by the end of this week.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 10: The Executive Branch
  - Packback Week 10

**Week 11 (04/05/2022 - 04/08/2022)**

Subject Matter: The bureaucracy! Another crucial part of government that often gets forgotten. This week's topic of discussion will leave you with an understanding of how this body of government works.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 12: Bureaucracy
    - Chapter 12: Old MacDonald Had an Agency
    - Chapter 13: The Bureaucracy
  - Packback Week 11

**Week 12 (04/11/2022 - 04/15/2022)**

Subject Matter: The topic of this week is the judiciary. What is the court structure of the US and Texas? Why do we need different types of courts, and what do these types of court do?

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 14: The Judiciary
    - Chapter 14: The Path to Marriage Equality
  - Packback Week 12

**Week 13 (04/19/2022 - 04/22/2022)**

Subject Matter: This week, we wrap up the US and Texas court systems. By the end of the week, you will be able to identify members of the US Supreme Court, important court cases that have changed the trajectory of the US, and also identify the current court cases being heard by the US Supreme Court. The Policymaker letter is due at the end of this week if you have not completed this assignment. Please expect a two (2) week turnaround for grades to be put into Canvas.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 15: The Courts
  - Packback Week 13
  - Signature Assignment: Policymaker Letter DUE at 11:59 PM.

**Week 14 (04/25/2022 - 04/29/2022)**

Subject Matter: This topic for the next two weeks are civil rights and civil liberties. What are civil liberties? What do these liberties mean to us in the larger context? You will find the answers to these questions by the end of the week. As a reminder, extra credit assignments will be due by the end of the week.

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 16: Civil Liberties
    - Chapter 16: Older than the Bill of Rights
    - Chapter 17: Civil Liberties
  - Packback Week 14
  - Extra Credit assignments are due on April 29<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM.

### **Week 15 - (05/02/2022 - 05/06/2022)**

Subject Matter: The second half of an important function of government is civil rights. What are civil rights? What do they do? How have they helped us? These questions (and more) will be answered by the end of this week. Exam 2 will open on Friday at 12:01 AM and close at 11:59 PM. If you are happy with your overall grade after Exam 2 then congratulations, you are finished with PSCI 2306!

- Assignments
  - Webtext
    - Chapter 18: Civil Rights
    - Chapter 18: Brown v. Board of Education
    - Chapter 19: Civil Rights
  - Packback Week 15
  - **Exam 2 DUE at 11:59 PM.**

### **FINALS WEEK (05/09/2022 - 05/13/2022)**

Subject Matter: You did it! You finished the semester strong! If you would like, you can take the optional final. The final is cumulative and will feature questions from previous exams.

- Assignments (Opens on Monday and closes on Tuesday)
  - **OPTIONAL Final Exam DUE at 11:59 PM.**

### **Packback Questions**

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.

### **Packback Requirements:**

Your participation on Packback will count toward 15% of your overall course grade.

There will be a Weekly Friday at 11:59PM CST deadline for submissions. In order to receive full credit, you should submit the following per each deadline period:

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

\*\*\*Half credit will be provided for questions and responses that do not meet the minimum curiosity score.

### **How to Register on Packback:**

Note: Only access Packback through Canvas in order to ensure your grades sync properly

1. Click the Packback assignment link within Canvas to access the community
2. Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.
3. **In order for your grade to be visible in Canvas**, make sure to click each Packback assignment link as you post your Packback submissions.

Packback may require a paid subscription. Refer to [www.packback.co/product/pricing](http://www.packback.co/product/pricing) for more information.

### **How to Get Help from the Packback Team:**

If you have any questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please read their FAQ at [help.packback.co](http://help.packback.co). If you need more help, contact their customer support team directly at [help@packback.co](mailto:help@packback.co).

For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV7QmikrD68>

### **Class Policies**

**ADA Statement:** The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Cheating and Plagiarism: Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an “unsatisfactory” for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, which may impose a further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or 5 resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic 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. Disruptive/abusive online comments will be deleted, and the student will receive a warning about inappropriate behavior. After receiving a warning about inappropriate behavior (or in the case of behavior deemed harmful or threatening to any member of the UNT community), 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](http://www.unt.edu/csrr)

#### Important 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 at <http://www.ecfr.gov/>. The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

(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 ordered 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.

#### University of North Texas 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](mailto:internationaladvising@unt.edu)) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.