Instructor: Wendy Watson
153 Wooten Hall
wendy.watson@unt.edu
(this is the best way to reach me!)

Physical Office Hours: T/Th 12:30 – 3:00
and by appointment

Virtual Office Hours: T/Th 10:00 – 11:30
(via GotoMeeting)

Teaching Assistant:

Course Prerequisites: None

Course Description:

As you begin this course, you should keep two things in mind:

(1) Government matters to you. Regardless of your age, citizenship, race, religion, or gender, you value something in this world (your family, your education, money, faith … whatever!). Chances are very good that government policy affects those things you value in some way. For example, if you value education, government policy helps determine how you are educated in K-12, the availability and accessibility or higher education, and what rights you have as a student. If you want to protect the things you value, you need to understand what the government does, why the government does what it does, and what you (as a member of this community) can do to affect government policy. You may be taking this class because it is required, but the material we cover has real-world implications for your life, and mastering this material can give you the tools to protect the things you value.

(2) Rules matter. Institutional structure and the rules by which they operate shape the outcomes of the governmental process. This class will introduce you to the institutions of government, the logic behind their structure and operation, and the rules that constrain their behavior (with particular emphasis on the U.S. Constitution).

Course Objectives:

Students who master the content of this course will be able to:

1. Explain philosophical traditions that inform the U.S. and Texas constitutions (including classical liberalism, republicanism, federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances)

2. Evaluate the balance of power between the branches of government, state and national governments, and the people and the state

3. Evaluate constitutional and extra-constitutional powers of the three branches of government at both the Texas and national levels

4. Interpret the role of minority groups in U.S. politics

5. Evaluate the democratic nature and effectiveness of the U.S. and Texas institutions of government (including their constitutions)
Course Materials:

This course will use an online textbook: Evans & Michaud, *Central Ideas in American Government + 1040 Workbook*, Soomo (2014). You can purchase the book directly through the course Blackboard site OR you can purchase an access code from the UNT bookstore. If you are waiting for financial aid, you can sign up for a short free trial of the materials via Blackboard, but you will need to purchase the materials soon.

Assignments and Grading:

All assignments and exams in this course will be graded as either “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory,” with the specifications required for satisfactory completion stated on each assignment. To achieve a mark of “satisfactory,” you need to do more than scrape right over the bar. Rather, you need to show that you have met the learning objectives associated with the assignment. As assignment (or exam) either demonstrates that you have met the stated learning objectives or it does not; there are no plusses, minuses, or “almosts.”

The only letter grade you will receive in this class will be your final grade. That final letter grade will be based on satisfactory completion of “bundles” of assignments and thus will reflect the extent to which you demonstrate that you have met course learning objectives. Course grades should not be conflated with intelligence, effort, or personal worth. Rather, they are merely summary statements of your demonstration of learning in the course.

Note that this method of grading gives you significant latitude in choosing how much effort you want to put into the course (and, consequently, how much learning you wish to get out of the course). Given your particular interests, educational objectives, and other commitments on your time, you may opt to complete only the work necessary to achieve a grade of C. That’s a legitimate choice to make for some people, and I will not think less of you for making that choice. If you do strive for an A in the course (and I hope many of you will do that), the expectations of what it takes to get that A should be relatively clear. What you should not do is start the semester by taking this course lightly and then expect to earn an A at the end.

Grading Bundles

- **A Bundle**
  Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of A. Satisfactory completion of this bundle will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of course material as well as an ability to explain/analyze course concepts, evaluate institutions of government, and create a workable system of government.

  - Satisfactorily complete 3 exams
  - Satisfactorily complete 12 Get the Gist homework assignments by the assigned due dates
  - Satisfactorily complete 8 workbook assignments by their assigned due dates
  - Satisfactorily complete 12 investigation assignments by their assigned due dates
  - Satisfactorily complete 7 constitution design worksheets by their assigned due dates
  - Satisfactorily complete the Zombie Apocalypse group project
• **B Bundle**  
Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of B. Satisfactory completion of this bundle will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of course material as well as an ability to explain/analyze course concepts.

☐ Satisfactorily complete 3 exams  
☐ Satisfactorily complete 12 Get the Gist homework assignments by the assigned due dates  
☐ Satisfactorily complete 8 workbook assignments by the assigned due dates  
☐ Satisfactorily complete 12 investigation assignments by the assigned due dates

• **C Bundle**  
Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of C. Satisfactory completion of this bundle will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of course material.

☐ Satisfactorily complete 3 exams  
☐ Satisfactorily complete 12 Get the Gist homework assignments by the assigned due dates  
☐ Satisfactorily complete 8 workbook assignment by the assigned due dates

• **D Bundle**  
Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of D. Satisfactory completion of this bundle will demonstrate minimal knowledge and understanding of course material.

☐ Satisfactorily complete 2 exams  
☐ Satisfactorily complete 10 Get the Gist homework assignments by the assigned due dates  
☐ Satisfactorily complete 6 workbook assignments by the assigned due dates

• **F Bundle**  
Students failing to meet the requirements for the D bundle will receive a grade of F for the course.

**Tokens & Flexibility**

Every student starts the course with 6 virtual tokens that can be “exchanged” for some leniency or opportunity for revision. Using a token will allow a student to do the following:

- For 1 token: Revise and resubmit a workbook assignment or constitutional design worksheet
- For 1 token: Submit a workbook assignment, constitutional design worksheet, or investigation assignment up to 1 week late
- For 2 tokens: Be awarded “satisfactory” credit for one skipped workbook assignment, constitutional design worksheet, or investigation assignment

**Timing of Grading**

All work will be graded within one week of submission. In the event that you wish to revise and resubmit an unsatisfactory workbook assignment or constitutional design worksheet, you must do so within 2 weeks of the due date (i.e., one week after receiving feedback).

**Specifications for Grading**
• **Exams** *(required for all bundles)*

There will be four exams in this course: three unit exams and a cumulative final exam. Exams will cover material from the textbook and workbook readings (with the exception of the investigation assignments). If you struggle with one exam, you can make up for it by satisfactorily completing the final. If you have already satisfactorily completed the three unit exams, you do not need to take the final. Exams will consist of objective questions (multiple choice, true/false, and matching). In order to earn a “satisfactory” on an exam, students must:

- Earn 70% of the available points

• **Get the Gist Homework Assignments** *(required for all bundles)*

Some of the chapters in our online text are actual text chapters (the others are labeled “Workbook”). For all the regular text chapters (12 in total), there are multiple choice questions at the bottom of each page. These multiple choice questions can be answered repeatedly until you get them all correct. In order to earn a “satisfactory” on a Get the Gist homework assignment, students must:

- Complete the assignment by 5 PM on the due date
- Answer 90% of the questions correctly

• **Workbook Assignments** *(required for all bundles)*

There are eight workbook chapters. Each chapter is organized around the four learning objectives adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (critical thinking, communication, personal responsibility, and social responsibility). Each chapter includes four essays that expound upon course concepts and give students an opportunity to apply those concepts. In order to earn a “satisfactory” on a Workbook assignment, students must:

- Complete the assignment by 5 PM on the due date
- Answer 70% of the questions correctly

• **Investigation Assignments** *(required for A & B bundles)*

In each of the 12 regular textbook chapters there is a section labeled “Investigation.” Investigation assignments give students an opportunity to engage course material on a higher level, engaging in analysis and explanation. While Get the Gist questions can be answered repeatedly until a student gets them correct, the questions asked in Investigation assignments can only be submitted once. In order to earn a “satisfactory” on an Investigation assignment, students must:

- Complete the assignment by 5 PM on the due date
- Answer 70% of the questions correctly

• **Constitution Design Worksheets** *(required for A & B bundles)*
There are eight constitutional design worksheets in this course. Each includes some information and several questions about the components of a workable constitution. For those of you participating in the group project, these worksheets will provide a starting point for discussion. For others, these worksheets will give you an opportunity to analyze and explain course concepts. You will need to consider the possibility of different institutional rules and think about how you would prioritize competing goals. In order to earn a “satisfactory” on a constitutional design worksheet, students must:

- Complete the worksheet by 5 PM on the due date
- Include a thoughtful response to each question that is at least 100 words long
- Employ clear writing with no more than three spelling or grammatical errors

**Zombie Apocalypse Group Project** *(required for A bundle)*

To earn an A in the course, students must satisfactorily complete the Zombie Apocalypse Simulation. Working in a group, you will write a new constitution to govern the United States in the aftermath of a zombie apocalypse (more details about the outbreak and the current state of affairs are found on Blackboard). This project requires you to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of institutional structures and rules, explain your decisions in a thoughtful and thorough manner, evaluate potential alternatives, and express yourself clearly (using meaningful organization, clear grammar, and proper spelling/word choice).

Your participation in the simulation will be evaluated on four dimensions: (1) the content of the constitution itself; (2) adherence to instructions regarding formatting and submission; (3) your group’s explanations for the decisions you have made; and (4) your team members’ evaluation of your contributions to the group. In order to earn a “satisfactory” on this assignment, students must:

- Participate in drafting a constitution that
  - includes a preamble that articulates the key principles guiding the creation of your constitution;
  - addresses the mechanism for adopting and modifying the constitution;
  - addresses the relative powers of the states and the national government;
  - addresses the structure, powers, and selection mechanism for the institution(s) that will exercise legislative power;
  - addresses the structure, powers, and selection mechanism for the institution(s) that will exercise executive power;
  - addresses the structure, powers, and selection mechanism for the institution(s) that will exercise judicial power;
  - addresses protections of citizens from government power (including a definition of “citizens”)
- Participate in drafting a constitution that
  - is organized by Article, with each Article getting its own page in the group’s dedicated Blackboard wiki;
  - expresses ideas in students’ own words;
  - employs clear writing with no more than three spelling or grammatical errors per Article;
  - is complete and submitted in Blackboard by noon on the assigned due date
- Provide (as a group) a justification for the choices made in each Article that
  - is at least 150 words per Article
Communication: I won’t be seeing you every week, but I am definitely available to you. In addition to in-person office hours, I will host weekly office hours using “go to meeting” in Blackboard. You can also e-mail me at wendy.watson@unt.edu. If your question is general (not personal or private), I encourage you to post it on the class discussion board so that we can all answer your question and your classmates can take advantage of the foresight you had to ask the question. If you do e-mail me, I typically respond within 24 hours M-F and by the following Monday if contacted over the weekend.

Other 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 a “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 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**


The paragraph reads:

(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 offered 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) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.
## Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Notes/Due Dates/Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Read Syllabus\nWork through “Start Here” on Blackboard\nTake Syllabus Quiz on Blackboard\nIntroduce Yourself on Bb Discussion Board</td>
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<td><strong>Unit 1:</strong> Foundations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>U.S. Constitution Chap 1: Constitution</td>
<td>Get the Gist, Investigation\nChoose a Group (for A-level work)\nComplete Preamble Worksheet\nDiscuss Preamble in Group\nAll work DUE BY 5 PM 1/27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Texas Constitution Chap 2: Texas Constitution Chap 3: Workbook: Constitution</td>
<td>Get the Gist, Investigation, Workbook\nComplete Amendment Worksheet\nComplete Amendment Worksheet\nDiscuss Adoption and Amendment in Group\nAll work DUE BY 5 PM 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Federalism Chap 4: Federalism Chap 5: Workbook: Federalism</td>
<td>Get the Gist, Investigation, Workbook\nComplete Federalism Worksheet\nDiscuss Federalism in Group\nAll work DUE BY 5 PM 2/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>EXAM 1</td>
<td>Tuesday, 2/14, 6 AM to 9 PM\nNo Office Hours on Thursday\nGroups write preamble, adoption and amendment, and federalism procedures\nFirst Wiki review starts M, 2/20, 8 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 2:</strong> Elected Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Congress Chap 6: Congress Chap 7: Workbook: Congress</td>
<td>Get the Gist, Investigation, Workbook\nComplete Legislature Worksheet\nDiscuss Legislature in Groups\nAll work DUE BY 5 PM 2/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Presidency Chap 8: Presidency Chap 9: Workbook: Presidency</td>
<td>Get the Gist, Investigation, Workbook\nComplete Presidency Worksheet\nDiscuss Presidency/Executive in Groups\nAll work DUE BY 5 PM 3/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Week 8  Bureaucracy  Get the Gist, Investigation, Workbook
Chap 10: Bureaucracy  Groups write legislature and executive
Chap 11: Workbook: Bureaucracy provisions in Wiki
All work DUE BY 5 PM 3/10

SPRING BREAK

Week 9  Texas Legislature/Exec  Get the Gist (2), Investigation (2)
Chap 12: Texas Legislature  All work DUE BY 5 PM 3/24
Chap 13: Texas Exec

Week 10  EXAM 2  Tuesday, 3/28, 6 AM to 9 PM
No Office Hours on Thursday
Groups finish legislature and executive
articles
Second Wiki review starts M, 4/3, 8 AM

Unit 3:  Countermajoritarian Politics

Week 11  Courts  Get the Gist, Investigation, Workbook
Chap 14: Courts  Complete Courts Worksheet
Chap 15: Workbook: Courts  Discuss Courts in Groups
All work DUE BY 5 PM 4/7

Week 12  Texas Courts  Get the Gist, Investigation
Chapter 16: Texas Courts Groups write courts provisions in Wiki
All work DUE BY 5 PM 4/14

Week 13  Civil Liberties  Get the Gist, Investigation, Workbook
Chap 17: Civil Liberties  Complete Civil Liberties Worksheet
Chap 18: Workbook: Civil Liberties  Discuss Civil Liberties in Groups
All work DUE BY 5 PM 4/21

Week 14  Civil Rights  Get the Gist, Investigation, Workbook
Chap 19: Civil Rights  Complete Civil Rights Worksheet
Chap 20: Workbook: Civil Rights  Discuss Civil Rights in Groups
All work DUE BY 5 PM 4/28

Week 15  EXAM 3  Tuesday, 5/2, 6 AM to 9 PM
No Office Hours on Thursday
Groups write rights and liberties
provisions in Wiki
Review peers in groups

FINALS WEEK  FINAL EXAM  Peer evals and final Wiki due
8 AM, Monday, May 8
Final open, Monday 5/8, 6 AM
to Wednesday, 5/10, 9 PM
Political Science 1040 Syllabus – Page 9
Keeping Track of Your Grade

Print out this sheet and check off items you have completed as you have completed them. Remember that an extra check under “A” work will not compensate for a missed check under “D” work.

**D Work**

- □ Get the Gist 1
- □ Get the Gist 2
- □ Get the Gist 3
- □ Get the Gist 4
- □ Get the Gist 5
- □ Get the Gist 6
- □ Get the Gist 7
- □ Get the Gist 8
- □ Get the Gist 9
- □ Get the Gist 10
- □ Workbook 1
- □ Workbook 2
- □ Workbook 3
- □ Workbook 4
- □ Workbook 5
- □ Workbook 6
- □ Exam 1
- □ Exam 2

**C Work**

- □ Get the Gist 11
- □ Workbook 7
- □ Exam 3
- □ Get the Gist 12
- □ Workbook 8

**B Work**

- □ Investigation 1
- □ Investigation 2
- □ Investigation 3
- □ Investigation 4
- □ Investigation 5
- □ Investigation 6
- □ Investigation 7
- □ Investigation 8
- □ Worksheet 1
- □ Worksheet 2
- □ Worksheet 3
- □ Worksheet 4
- □ Worksheet 5
- □ Worksheet 6

**A Work**

- □ Investigation 9
- □ Investigation 10
- □ Investigation 11
- □ Investigation 12
- □ Worksheet 7
- □ Worksheet 8
- □ Group Wiki
- □ Peer Evaluation

**Tokens Used**

Check off tokens as you redeem them.

□ □ □ □ □ □ □