**PSCI 1040.011/806**

**American Government: Structure and Institutions**

Fall 2014; Matthews 311; Monday/Wednesday 3:30 – 4:50

Instructor: Wendy Watson Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-4;

 153 Wooten Hall Wednesdays, 12 – 3;

 wendy.watson@unt.edu and by appointment

 940.565.4413

**Course Description:**

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). Students who complete this course should be knowledgeable about the structure and powers of the three branches of government (both national and Texas); understand the division of power between those branches (separation of powers) as well as the division of power between the national and state governments (federalism); recognize the limits placed on the powers of the government; and understand the role of compromise in creating our system of laws and institutions.

**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.

**Assignments and Grading:**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

Three Exams (25% each) 75%

Homework 25%

Total 100%

There is no curve in this class. It is thus possible that everyone in the class will receive an A. It is also possible that no one will receive an A. Grades will be based upon the following scale:

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: anything below 60

Incompletes will only be given to students who provide documentation of a serious illness or family emergency that prevents them from completing course requirements in a timely fashion.

**Attendance:**

While there are no points specifically associated with attendance, it is critical that you come to class on time, prepared, and ready to participate. Students who have taken courses with me in the past can attest that much of my test material comes from the material we cover in class (some of which is not in the textbook). Moreover, there may be opportunities to earn extra credit in class; if you are not present, you will miss those opportunities.

**Exams:**

Technically, there are four exams in this course: one after each unit of material and one cumulative final during the final exam period. I will, however, drop your lowest exam grade. Thus, if you miss a test for any reason, bomb a test, etc., you will have the final exam to back you up. Because I only count three of the four tests, I do not offer make-ups.

The three unit exams and cumulative final will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, matching, and two short answer questions (taken from the homework). The exams will be taken on a computer (through Blackboard). You will need to take the unit exams in the UNT computer testing center (330C Sage Hall) at the designated time. The final exam will be taken in our classroom, so you must bring a laptop. The exams are password protected, so you will not be able to access them from other sites.

Once one student leaves, no more students will be admitted to the testing center. That means you need to show up on time so you do not miss the opportunity to take the test.

**Homework**

There are a total of 9 homework assignments this term. As you will quickly learn, some of the chapters in your online text are real “text” chapters, while others are labeled workbook chapters. Each text chapter includes a series of “Get the Gist” questions that are sprinkled throughout the chapter; they can be reset and repeated until you get them right. Each workbook chapter contains four essays, each followed by a number of questions.

A homework assignment will consist of the “Get the Gist” questions from one chapter and the four sets of questions from a workbook chapter. [Exception: when we cover the Texas Constitution, your full homework grade will come from the “Get the Gist” questions … it is still worth the same as all the other homework grades.]

Again, there are 9 of these “clusters” of homework. I will drop your lowest grade. The remaining 8 homework assignments will collectively account for 25% of your course grade.

***ADA Statement***: The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) as amended, pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations can be found at [www.unt.edu/oda](http://www.unt.edu/oda). Also, you may visit the Office of Disability Accommodation in the University Union (room 321) or call (940) 565-4323.

***Cheating and Plagiarism***: Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" 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. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and 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)

**Course Schedule**

**Date Reading Notes/Due Dates/Activities**

8/25 n/a Welcome and Preliminaries

8/27 n/a Using Online Resources

9/3 Text Chapters 1 & 2 U.S. Constitution

 Get the Gist (Chap 1) due

 Workbook (Chap 2) due

9/8 n/a U.S. Constitution cont.

9/10 Text Chapter 3 Texas Constitution

 Get the Gist (Chap 3) due

9/15 Text Chapters 4 & 5 Federalism

 Get the Gist (Chap 4) due

 Workbook (Chap 5) due

9/17 n/a Federalism cont.

9/22 n/a First Exam Review

9/24 n/a First Exam – in 330C Sage

9/29 Text Chapters 6 & 7 Congress

 Get the Gist (Chap 6) due

 Workbook (Chap 7) due

10/1 n/a Congress cont.

10/6 Text Chapters 8 & 9 Presidency

 Get the Gist (Chap 8) due

 Workbook (Chap 9) due

10/8 n/a Presidency cont.

10/13 Text Chapter 10 & 11 Bureaucracy

 Get the Gist (Chap 10) due

 Workbook (Chap 11) due

10/15 n/a Bureaucracy cont.

10/20 n/a Texas Legislature

10/22 n/a Texas Executive

10/27 n/a Second Exam Review

10/29 n/a Second Exam – in 330C Sage

11/3 Text Chapters 12 & 13 Courts

 Get the Gist (Chap 12) due

 Workbook (Chap 13) due

11/5 n/a Courts cont.

11/10 Text Chapters 14 & 15 Civil Liberties

 Get the Gist (Chap 14) due

 Workbook (Chap 15) due

11/12 n/a Civil Liberties cont.

11/17 Text Chapters 16 & 17 Civil Rights

 Get the Gist (Chap 16) due

 Workbook (Chap 17) due

11/19 n/a Civil Rights cont.

11/24 n/a Exam Three Review

12/1 n/a Exam Three – TBD

12/3 n/a Course Summary and Review

December 10, 1:30 – 3:30, FINAL EXAM – 311 Matthews Hall