**PSCI 1040.002**

**American Government: Structure and Institutions**

Spring 2015 - ESSC 255 - Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 – 10:50

Instructor: Wendy Watson Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2-4;

153 Wooten Hall Wednesdays, 1-4;

wendy.watson@unt.edu and by appointment

940.565.4413

Teaching Assistants:

Evan Lowe Alisa Cameron Craig Carpenter

T/Th 11-12:30 T/Th 8:30-9:15, M 9-10:30 M/W 10-12

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**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. More about this in class.

**Assignments and Grading:**

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

Three Unit Exams (15% each) 45%

Cumulative Final (25%) 25%

Homework 20%

Paper 10%

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 on 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. Incompletes will be given at the discretion of the instructor, so do not skip an assignment before you have my permission for an incomplete IN WRITING.

**Exams:**

There are four exams in this course: one after each unit of material and one cumulative final during the final exam period. The three unit exams (worth 15% each) and cumulative final (worth 25%) will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and matching questions. You will take your unit exams on Blackboard on your own time; each exam will be open for a 48 hour window (more for the final). You will have 60 minutes to complete each exam; questions will be presented one at a time; and you cannot go backwards in the test. Make sure you use a computer with a “hard” internet connection (not wi-fi) and save your work after every question.

The cumulative final will be IN CLASS on Thursday, May 14, from 8:30 – 9:30 AM (you will only 60 minutes to complete the exam).

I will only give extensions for completing the exams in the case of serious illness (requiring a doctor’s note) or a death in the family (requiring an obituary or funeral program). You must notify me IN WRITING of your inability to complete the exam in a timely fashion BEFORE the exam period closes. If you do not have written documentation of your excuse then you MUST complete the exam during the scheduled hours.

**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 U.S. 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. Together, they are worth 20% of your final grade.

Note that the deadlines for turning in homework are nonnegotiable. However, if you turn in a homework late but before the next unit exam, you can receive 50% credit.

**Paper**

You will write a short (4 – 6 page) paper in this class. The topic will be posted during the third week of class and the paper will be due by noon on May 5. You will submit the paper through “Turn it in” in Blackboard; this is plagiarism detection software, so do not plagiarize in your paper. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, just ask. The paper is worth 10% of your 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**

1/20 n/a Welcome and Introduction to Online Resources

1/22 Text Chapters 1 U.S. Constitution

1/27 n/a U.S. Constitution cont.

Get the Gist (Chap 1) due

1/29 n/a U.S. Constitution cont.

2/3 Text Chapter 2 & 3 Texas Constitution

Get the Gist (Chap 2) due

Workbook (Chap 3) due

2/5 n/a Texas Constitution cont.

2/10 Text Chapters 4 & 5 Federalism

Get the Gist (Chap 4) due

Workbook (Chap 5) due

2/12 n/a Federalism cont.

2/17 n/a First Exam Review

First Unit Exam Opens at Noon

Partial Credit for Homework Ends at Noon

2/19 n/a First Unit Exam Closes at Noon

2/24 Text Chapters 6 & 7 Congress

Get the Gist (Chap 6) due

Workbook (Chap 7) due

2/26 n/a Congress cont.

3/3 Text Chapters 8 & 9 Presidency

Get the Gist (Chap 8) due

Workbook (Chap 9) due

3/5 n/a Presidency cont.

3/10 Text Chapter 10 & 11 Bureaucracy

Get the Gist (Chap 10) due

Workbook (Chap 11) due

3/12 n/a Bureaucracy cont.

3/17 – 3/19 n/a SPRING BREAK

3/24 n/a Texas Legislature

3/26 n/a Texas Executive

3/31 n/a Second Unit Exam Review

Second Unit Exam Opens at Noon

Partial Credit for Homework Ends at Noon

4/2 n/a Second Unit Exam Closes at Noon

4/7 Text Chapters 12 & 13 Courts

Get the Gist (Chap 12) due

Workbook (Chap 13) due

4/9 n/a Courts cont.

4/14 Text Chapters 14 & 15 Civil Liberties

Get the Gist (Chap 14) due

Workbook (Chap 15) due

4/16 n/a Civil Liberties cont.

4/21 n/a Civil Liberties cont.

4/23 n/a Civil Liberties cont.

4/28 Text Chapters 16 & 17 Civil Rights

Get the Gist (Chap 16) due

Workbook (Chap 17) due

4/30 n/a Civil Rights cont.

5/5 n/a Third Unit Exam Review

Third Unit Exam Opens at Noon

Partial Credit for Homework Ends at Noon

Paper Due at Noon

5/7 n/a Third Unit Exam Closes at Noon

5/14 n/a FINAL EXAM

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8:30 – 9:30 AM