



**Government 2305-315C3
Federal Government
Fall 2025
TTH 8:05-9:25 AM
Friendswood High School**

Instructor Information

Name: Mr. John Presnall

Email: jpresnall@com.edu

Phone: 409.933.8126 (Leave Message)

Student/Office Hours: 1st 8 Weeks-MW 10:00 AM-12:30 PM; TTH 10:00-11:00 AM; M 3:00-3:30 PM (online); 2nd 8 Weeks-MW 10:00-11:00 AM; TTH 10:00-11:00 AM; 1:30-3:00 PM; M 3:00-3:30 PM (online)

Office Location: Learning Resource Center (Building # 8), 215C

Required Textbook: Glen Krutz, *American Government 3e* (Houston: Openstax, 2019.)
<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-3e>

Course Description: Government 2305 is an introduction to politics and government of the United States. The purpose of this introduction is to acquire knowledge of the basic principles and practices of the federal government.

This semester we will study the origins and development of the federal government; the political science of the Declaration of Independence and the Federalist Papers; the origin and development of the U.S. Constitution; the idea of constitutionalism, separation of powers and checks and balances; the idea of federalism; the institutions of Congress, the Presidency, the public administration, and the Judiciary; civil rights and civil liberties; public opinion, political parties, and elections; and issues in public policy.

This introductory course will also attempt to understand some of the basic questions and problems encountered in political science and political philosophy. For an introduction to these questions, we will read the essay "In Defense of Politics" by Steven B. Smith and explore the basic concepts of political science.

Course Requirements

Course Exams: There are 4 Unit Exams. Each exam will cover the required textbook chapter readings, lecture notes, and additional readings. The exams will consist of multiple-choice questions. The exams are take-home exams.

Short Papers: There are 4 short papers (2 pages at a minimum) over a specific topic. Additional information on grading rubric, submission, format, citations, etc. will be provided in the assignment file. Submit on Brightspace D2L.

Research Paper: Write a Position Paper on a specific controversy in current public policy discourse and debate in the United States. Pick an issue and find a specific policy or proposed policy related to that issue (e.g., Should private businesses in the US have the right to deny service based on their religious beliefs and practices?; Should marijuana be legalized in the US?; Should the United States place strict limitations on immigration, whether legal or illegal?; What should US policy be in regard to China and Taiwan?; Or Russia and Ukraine?; Should Medicare be expanded to all US citizens?; Should the US adopt the “Green New Deal?”; Should Congress pass the “John Lewis Voting Rights Act?”; etc.).

Make sure that your paper is on a topic that is national in scope, and not an issue and policy that is specific to state government and politics. The paper can cover either an already existing policy or a proposed policy.

In your paper you must—Describe the issue and explain it in detail (what is the question or controversy at hand?). Explain and describe the policy or proposed policy (what is the law, the executive action, the administrative regulation, or the judicial ruling that has determined or could determine the policy?). Explain and describe how the policy or proposed policy relates to and deals with the issue. (What does the policy do or intend to do?) Take a position on the policy or proposed policy (whether in favor of it or against it) and make an argument in defense of the position. Also, respond to the most common objections to this position. Formulate an argument based on evidence found in the research.

Conduct research on the topic, citing at least three sources from credible and reliable publications, web sites, journals, books, etc. The COM Library has a database to assist in research on many topics.

Explain how this position impacts the issues of personal responsibility and social responsibility.

The paper should be around 1250 words (approximately 5 pages), double-space, with one-inch margins, and a 12-point font. Use a standard style for references, citations, and the list of sources (e.g., MLA, Chicago, or APA). Submit on Brightspace D2L.

Emergency Assignment: If for any reason the college closes, continue to work on the assignments spelled out in your syllabus and refer to Brightspace D2L for any possible further instructions regarding any possible Emergency Closing Assignments.

Determination of Grade

Unit Exams— 60% (15% each) toward final grade.

Papers— 20% (5% each) toward final grade.

Research Paper— 20% toward final grade.

A 100-90

B 89-80

C 79-70

D 69-60

F 59-0

Late Work, Make-Up, and Extra Credit Policy: Late and make-up work will be accepted on a case-by-case basis. Students need to notify the instructor via email of any problems in this regard. Extra Credit assignments may be offered toward the end of the semester.

Attendance: Attendance is required for every class. Roll is taken every day. In case of an absence, it is the student's responsibility to get missing class materials.

Tardiness: Tardiness disrupts the class. Students must be on time. Frequent tardiness will adversely affect the student's overall learning.

Communicating with your instructor: All electronic communication with the instructor must be through your COM email. Due to FERPA restrictions, faculty cannot share any information about performance in the class through other electronic means.

Student Learner Outcome (SLO)	Maps to Core Objective	Assessed via this Assignment
1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.		Exam
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.		Exam
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.		Exam
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.		Exam

5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties.	Communication	Paper
6. Analyze the election process.		Exam
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.		Exam
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.	Communication	Paper
9. Complete a required paper on a selected writing pertaining to issues in American government and politics.	Communication	Paper
10. Evaluate choices and actions of others or one's own and relate consequences to decision-making.	Communication	Paper

Academic Dishonesty: Any incident of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with college policy and the Student Handbook. Academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams, is an extremely serious offense and will result in a grade of zero on that exam. The student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for appropriate disciplinary action.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas in a written assignment without giving proper citation. Without citation, it includes paraphrasing someone else's words, copying directly from a website and pasting it into a written assignment, and using someone else's words without quotation marks. Any written assignment containing any plagiarized material will receive a grade of zero and the student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for appropriate discipline action.

AI Policy: Do not use AI, ChatGTP, LLMs, etc. for writing assignments.

Student Concerns: If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of this course, please contact me using the contact information previously provided. If, after discussing your concern with me, you continue to have questions, please contact Department Chair, Shinya Wakao at 409-933-8107 or swakao@com.edu.

Federal Government Course Outline

Unit 1—Political Science and the Declaration of Independence—Weeks 1-3

Readings:

Steven B. Smith, “In Defense of Politics”
The Declaration of Independence
Textbook Chapter 1—Political Science

Assignments:

Paper 1: On “Steven B. Smith, “In Defense of Politics”

Unit 1 Exam

Research Paper Due Thursday, November 20, 2025

Unit 2—The U.S. Constitution and *The Federalist Papers*—Weeks 4-8

Readings:

Textbook Chapter 2 and Notes—U.S. Constitution
Text of the Constitution of the United States (with amendments)
The Federalist Papers, nos. 10 & 51

Assignments:

Paper 2 On the Principles of the U.S. Constitutional

Unit 2 Exam

Unit 3—Political Participation in the United States—Weeks 9-12

Readings:

Textbook Chapter 7 and Notes—Voting and Elections in the United States
Textbook Chapter 9 and Notes—Political Parties in the United States
Textbook Chapter 10 and Notes—Organized Interests
Textbook Chapters 6 & 8 and Notes—Public Opinion and Media

Assignments:

Paper 3 On Political Parties

Unit 3 Exam

Unit 4—Political Institutions—Weeks 13-16

Readings:

Textbook Chapter 11 and Notes--Congress

Textbook Chapter 12 and Notes—Presidency

Textbook Chapter 13 and Notes—United States Judiciary

Textbook Chapter 15 and Notes—United States Bureaucracy

Textbook Chapters 4 & 5 and Notes—Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Assignments:

Paper 4 On the Congress & Presidency

Unit 4 Exam

Research Paper Due Thursday, November 20, 2025

Institutional Policies and Guidelines

Grade Appeal Process: Concerns about the accuracy of grades should first be discussed with the instructor. A request for a change of grade is a formal request and must be made within six months of the grade assignment. Directions for filing an appeal can be found in the student handbook https://www.com.edu/student-services/docs/Student_Handbook_2024-2025_v2.pdf, *An appeal will not be considered because of general dissatisfaction with a grade, penalty, or outcome of a course. Disagreement with the instructor's professional judgment of the quality of the student's work and performance is also not an admissible basis for a grade appeal.*

Academic Success & Support Services: College of the Mainland is committed to providing students the necessary support and tools for success in their college careers. Support is offered through our Tutoring Services, Library, Counseling, and through Student Services. Please discuss any concerns with your faculty or an advisor.

ADA Statement: Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to contact:

Kimberly Lachney, Student Accessibility Services Coordinator

Phone: 409-933-8919

Email: AccessibilityServices@com.edu

Location: COM Doyle Family Administration Building, Student Success Center

Textbook Purchasing Statement: A student attending College of the Mainland is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from the college-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.

Withdrawal Policy: Students may withdraw from this course for any reason prior to the last eligible day for a "W" grade. Before withdrawing students should speak with the instructor and consult an advisor. Students are permitted to withdraw only six times during their college career by state law. The last date to withdraw from the 16-week session is November 14.

FN Grading: The FN grade is issued in cases of *failure due to a lack of attendance*, as determined by the instructor. The FN grade may be issued for cases in which the student ceases or fails to attend class, submit assignments, or participate in required capacities, and for which the student has failed to withdraw. The issuing of the FN grade is at the discretion of the instructor. The last date of attendance should be documented for submission of an FN grade.

Early Alert Program: The Student Success Center at College of the Mainland has implemented an Early Alert Program because student success and retention are very important for us. I have been asked to refer students to the program throughout the semester if they are having difficulty completing assignments or have poor attendance. If you are referred to the Early Alert Program you will be contacted by someone in the Student Success Center who will schedule a meeting with you to see what assistance they can offer on order for you to meet your academic goals.

Resources to Help with Stress:

If you are experiencing stress or anxiety about your daily living needs including food, housing or just feel you could benefit from free resources to help you through a difficult time, please click here <https://www.com.edu/community-resource-center/>. College of the Mainland has partnered with free community resources to help you stay on track with your schoolwork, by addressing life issues that get in the way of doing your best in school. All services are private and confidential. You may also contact the Dean of Students office at deanofstudents@com.edu or communityresources@com.edu.

Nondiscrimination Statement: The College District prohibits discrimination, including harassment, against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, veteran status, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), or any other basis prohibited by law. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of College District policy.