



**GOVT-2306-311H1
Texas Government
Spring 2025**

Tuesday & Thursday 7:10 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. League City Campus 116

Name: Shinya Wakao

Email: swakao@com.edu

Phone: 409-933-8107

Office Hours: TTH 6:55 a.m. – 7:10 a.m. at League City Campus 116, and by appointment

Required Textbook: *Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas*. Ken Collier, Steven Galatas, and Julie Harrelson-Stephens. CQ Press. <https://edge.sagepub.com/collier8e>

Course Description: This course is designed to provide you with a fundamental understanding of government and politics in Texas, but especially the following topics: Origin and development of the Texas Constitution, structure and powers and state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas. My goal for you in this class is to become an informed and critical thinker as well as a participant in American politics. You will also learn about current political debates, the 2024 elections, and the 2025 legislative session to understand the impact of Texas politics on your life.

Course Assignment: All assignments will be submitted via D2L <https://com.brightspace.com>

1) Homework (20%): The deadline:

- Assignments for Tuesday session: every Monday 11:59 p.m.
- Assignments for Thursday session: every Wednesday 11:59 p.m.

- Assignments include:
 - (1) Reading assignments: Besides the textbook, you must read all the reading materials in the content folder.
 - (2) Discussions: The instructor posts a thread on the Discussion Board. You are required to post your reaction and share it with your classmates. The minimum requirement is 100 words.
 - (3) Journal: After finishing the reading assignments, you must post your reaction in the Journal. The minimum requirement is 100 words.
 - (4) Other homework will be announced in class.
- Late homework will not be accepted (unless it results from an officially excused absence).
- Each homework assignment is worth 10 points.

2) Position Paper (15%) – Due: February 9 (Sunday)

Write a Position Paper on a current public policy controversy in Texas (e.g., Should Private Businesses Have the Right to Deny Service Based on Their Religious Beliefs and Practices?) except about legalization of marijuana.

- Write a paper taking a position (yes or no) on a current public policy controversy. Research the topic, citing at least four sources from credible and reliable publications. Formulate an argument based on evidence in defense of this position and respond to the objections to this position.
- The paper should be 1000 words, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and a 12-point font, Chicago Manual Style (CMS) - Author-Date.
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html
- See **the Paper Assignment Guidelines** on page 3 in this syllabus for more details.

3) Communication Skills (5%) – Due: February 9 (Sunday)

- (1) Make a reservation at the Tutoring Center: <https://www.com.edu/tutoring/index.html>
- (2) Attend a session (F2F, online, or e-tutoring)
- (3) Revise your paper after the session.
- (4) Upload a report (email from the Tutoring Center) to D2L

4) Exams (15% x 4 = 60%)

- You have four exams.
 - Part 1: Closed-book, multiple choice questions (45 questions * 2 points = 90 points). You have 45 minutes to complete.
 - Part 2: Open-book, short answer questions (2 questions * 5 points = 10 points)

Grading Scale

A: 100 – 90% average
B: 89.99 – 80% average
C: 79.99 – 70% average
D: 69.99 – 60% average
F: Below 60% average

Make-Up Policy:

Make-up exams will only be allowed at the discretion of the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to request permission from the instructor to take an early or make-up exam.

Paper Assignment Guidelines

- Format: [Chicago Manual Style \(CMS\) - Author-Date](#).
- Times New Roman
 - 12 points
 - Double-spaced
 - 1-inch margins
 - NO footnotes
 - Microsoft WORD file format (.doc or .docx)
- 1000 words (without a title or reference page)
- Include a title page and a reference page.
- When you cite, use a direct or indirect quote, but you can only use ONE direct quote per paper.
- Insert [in-text citations](#)
- Do not include subtitles.
- You can use the following sources as citations:
 - Academic journal articles
 - Newspaper articles
 - Data and articles from government websites or research institutes such as Pew Research Center
- You CANNOT use the following sources as citations:
 - Wikipedia
 - Procon.org
 - Any other blogs, non-academic websites
 - Editorial page in newspaper
 - Outcomes from AI software
- You CANNOT use or cite papers you wrote before.
- See the AI Policy on page 6 in this syllabus

- **Paper Grading Rubric**

Criteria	0%	50%	100%	Points
Formatting	Wholly fails to respond to the assignment (i.e., no title page, no reference page, font size, margin size).	Responds well to the assignment.	Responds fully and appropriately to the assignment.	20
Volume	Includes less than 250 words	Includes about 500 words	Includes about 1000 words	20
Argument	Wholly fails to relate evidence to the thesis statement.	The thesis is supported by logically competing assertions and appropriate connections.	The thesis is clear and logical.	30
Use of Evidence	Failures to use sources appropriately.	Sometimes weak use of source information inadequately supports the thesis.	Appropriate source information is used to support the thesis.	30

Course Schedule

The exact dates are tentative.

Week	Date	Topic	Chapter	Student Learner Outcome
1	01/14	Introduction		
1	01/16	U.S. Constitution; Federalism	1, 2	1, 2
2	01/21	Federalism, Texas Constitution	1, 2	1, 2
2	01/23	Exam 1 (in class)		
3	01/28	Texas Legislature	4	3, 4
3	01/30	Governors, Plural Executives	5, 6	3, 4
4	02/04	Judiciary	5, 6, 7	3, 4
4	02/06	Elections 101 Exam 2 (online)	9	5, 6
5	02/11	Elections in Texas	9	5, 6
5	02/13	Political Parties	10, 2	6, 7
6	02/18	Interest Groups	11	5, 6
6	02/20	Local Government; Exam 3 (online)	12	2, 3
7	02/25	Fiscal Policy	13	3
7	02/27	Education Policy	14	3
8	03/04	Social Policy	15	3
8	03/06	Exam 4 (in class)		

Exam 1. (Jan 23): U.S. Constitution, Federalism, Texas Constitution

Exam 2. (Feb 06): Texas Legislature, Governors, Plural Executives, Judiciary

Exam 3. (Feb 20): Elections, Political Parties, Interest Groups

Exam 4. (Mar 06): Local Government, Fiscal Policy, Education and Social Policy

Paper Assignments: Feb 9 (Sunday)

Student Learner Outcome	Maps to Core Objective	Assessed via this Assignment
1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.	None	Exam
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.	None	Exam
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.	None	Exam
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.	None	Exam
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and	Critical Thinking	Paper

political parties in the political system.		
6. Analyze election process.	None	Exam
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.	None	Exam
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. Politics.	Critical Thinking	Paper
9. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through written communication.	Critical Thinking	Paper
10. Evaluate choices and actions of others or one's own and relate consequences to decision-making.	Critical Thinking	Paper

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is recorded at all sessions. You are also expected to arrive on time. Students absent from a class four times may be dropped from the course by the instructor. Note that attendance does not mean sitting on a chair in a classroom. When the instructor notices you are doing unrelated activities (e.g., checking cellphone, websites, sleeping), the instructor may ask you to leave the class and you will be treated as an absence.

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 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 Rocky Barney rbarney@com.edu.

Technology Outage Policy:

This class includes a distance-education class using D2L for notes, lectures, and assessments. Each student must maintain Internet access throughout this course. Additionally, students are expected to maintain a state of technical compliance, including (but not limited to): up-to-date software as required by the instructor; a stable Internet connection, etc. The instructor is not required to give consideration for lost/missing/unacceptable work stemming from technical noncompliance and/or end-user technical issues. Failure to maintain Internet access shall not constitute a valid excuse for missed work. Any student who cannot keep up with the coursework owing to a lack of computers or the Internet must drop the course. In short, if you fail to complete an assignment because your computer crashes or loses internet access, you forget to attach a file or click submit on an assignment, or you did not use the appropriate browser or operating system you are not entitled to make up an assignment. If the assignment was not completed due to your error, it cannot be made up. If you find yourself encountering an error when submitting a written assignment via D2L your best bet would be to send that assignment to me via an email attachment and explain the situation. Note: If you cannot open PDF files on D2L, you must install Adobe Acrobat Reader and/or Plug-in on your computer. Please visit Adobe's websites below to install and/or solve problems:

- [Adobe Acrobat Reader DC](#)
- [Solutions to common issues viewing PDFs from a website](#)
- [Solve PDF issues by reconfiguring your browser to work with Acrobat or Reader plug-in](#)

Classroom Conduct Policy: College of the Mainland requires that students enrolled at COM be familiar with the Standards of Student Conduct, which can be found in the online Student Handbook. <http://www.com.edu/student-services/student-handbook.php> . Students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the Student Code of Conduct. Any violations of the Code of Conduct will result in a referral to the Dean of Students and may result in dismissal from this class.

Academic Dishonesty: Any incident of academic policy 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 and 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 and claiming them as your own. Plagiarism is a serious offense. Plagiarism includes paraphrasing someone else’s words without giving proper citation, copying directly from a website, and pasting it into your paper, using someone else’s words without quotation marks. Any assignment containing plagiarized material will receive zero, and the student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for appropriate disciplinary action. Please read the *Paper Assignment Guidelines*.

AI Policy: You may use AI programs as grammar checkers and search engines for brainstorming. However, you must not copy and paste (and edit) any AI program outcomes.

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_v6.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 1st 8-week session is February 26. The last date to withdraw from the 16-week session is April 21. The last date to withdraw for the 2nd 8-week session is April 30.

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 to 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 in 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.