



GOVT 2306.025IN – Spring 2022
Course Syllabus Federal Government
2nd 8-week – Online

Instructor Information:

- Name: Michele Betancourt
- E-mail: mbetancourt@com.edu
- Phone: 281-239-1590 (M-F 8-4)

Communicating with Your Instructor:

I make every effort to return messages (email, phone, discussion postings) within 36 hours (weekends and holidays excepted).

ALL electronic communication with the instructor (outside of Brightspace) 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 Hours and Location:

TU/TR 8:00 -8:30 am through the Brightspace course shell (during this time I will be immediately available via phone or course messages).

Course is accessible at: [COM Brightspace Login Page](https://com.brightspace.com) (Link Address: <https://com.brightspace.com>)

Required Textbook:

- Title: Lone Star Politics
- Author: Collier
- Edition: 6th
- ISBN: 9781544365220

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.

Course Description:

This course examines the origin and development of the Texas constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.

Course Requirements:

This course primarily consists of online lessons and discussions provided by the instructor. Additionally, videos and other supplementary articles may be used to emphasize key issues. The online lessons parallel and reinforce assigned textbook readings; therefore, it is essential that students keep up to date with their online work. A

variety of means will be employed to evaluate student performance. The following sections explain the graded components of the course, as well as the grading criteria to be used at the end of the semester.

Determination of Course Grade

Discussions:

Discussions represent the interactive component of this course. The graded topics are related to the readings, presentations, and/or current events taking place in government today. These forums are a way of exchanging information with your fellow students. You will receive a grade for your thoughtful participation in the discussions associated with each of the topics. Remember: **unsupported opinions have no place in an academic environment**. You must be able to demonstrate your knowledge of the provided readings as well as any additional research on the assigned topic. "Participation" means that for each topic, you should post an Initial Post (a minimum of 250 words) as well as a Response Post to 2 other students (a minimum of 150 words each) for full credit. A grading rubric for the discussion forums will be provided in Brightspace.

DO NOT WAIT until the end of the unit to begin posting. The initial post is due before the response posts. All response posts are due by 11:59pm on the last day of the unit. Late Posts will not be graded!! Pay close attention to due dates! Follow the discussion guidelines posted in the getting started section of the course.

Initial Posts and Response Posts have two DIFFERENT due dates – refer to the list of due dates posted on the course menu!

Ground Rules for Online Discussion:

1. In the interest of promoting critical thinking, and serious discussion, students should be prepared to have their views challenged by the instructor and/or fellow students. Respect the right of others to have differing beliefs and attitudes. We do not all have to agree. However, we do need to be respectful in the way we disagree.
2. Disruptive behavior, which interferes with teaching and/or learning, will not be tolerated.
 - **More guidelines for online discussion are provided in the Course Orientation document.**

Written Assignments

You will be assigned to write a position paper (yes/no; pro/con) on a current public policy controversy in the Texas (e.g., Should Private Businesses in Texas Have the Right to Deny Service Based on Their Religious Beliefs and Practices? Should Marijuana Be Legalized in Texas? Etc.).

You will need to research on the topic, citing at least three sources from credible and reliable publications, web sites, journals, books, etc. Formulate an argument based on evidence in defense of this position and respond to the objections to this position. Additionally you should explain how this position impacts the issues of personal responsibility and social responsibility. Additional details on the assignments such as length, required elements, and format and citation requirements will be detailed in the assignment file located in Brightspace. Detailed grading rubrics will also be posted to guide your research.

Unit Exams:

Each unit exam will cover only the chapters and lesson notes assigned for that unit and may consist of multiple choice, matching and occasionally short essay questions. A study guide will be provided at the beginning of each of the units so that you can prepare for the exam.

Lesson Activities

There are about 16 sets of lesson notes (4-5 per unit) assigned for the class. Throughout the lesson notes there are practice activities to help you study. These activities are ungraded and are for self-assessment purposes only

Extra Credit

In addition to the regularly assigned materials there are several opportunities to increase your grade through extra credit material. Extra credit will be announced via the announcements in Brightspace and will only be open for a limited amount of time. You can earn up to 3% points to your final average (1 grade point for every 10 extra credit points received – I do not round up so pay attention to instructions when completing these assignments)

Late work

I allow Unit Exams and assignments be submitted up to 5 days of 5% per day late. All discussion posts and extra credit MUST be completed by the due date. Please pay careful to the “List of Due Dates” document posted on the course menu (and listed above in this document). ALL due dates for the entire course are listed for the entire semester and regular reminders are posted on the announcements area. There should be no reason for missing deadlines.

Detailed Grading Formula:

Graded Course Work/Activity	Weight
Unit Exams	50%
Discussions	25%
Position Paper (5% proposal 20% paper)	25%

Grading Scale:

Percentage Range	Letter Grade
89.5% - 100%	A
79.5% - 89.4%	B
69.5% - 79.4%	C
59.5% - 69.4%	D
Below 59.4%	F

Grading Timeframe

I generally grade twice a week on Mondays and Fridays. Please feel free to call or email me if you are concerned about your progress in the course or if you do not see your grade posted within a week of submission. Please be aware that discussion grades may not appear until the end of the unit.

Disclaimers/Additional Policies:

Attendance Policy:

If you want to pass, come to class. In an online environment, this means that you are **expected to log into the course a minimum of 3 times per week** and you should expect to spend at least 6-8 hours a week in the course reviewing lessons, and other course material, and completing assignments, exams, and discussions. The online material goes beyond the material presented in the text, and you will be held accountable for this material on the exams and course assignments. The discussion component of the course also requires you to engage your fellow students in “conversation,” which requires you to regularly read and respond to posts.

NOTE: If for any reason the college closes, continue to work on the assignments spelled out in your syllabus and refer to Brightspace for further instructions.

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 only permitted to withdraw six times during their college career by State law. The last day to withdraw for the 2nd 8-week session is **April 24th**.

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.

Technology Compliance Policy

This class uses a Learning Management System called Brightspace for lectures, assessments, and other course-related materials and links. Each student must maintain Internet access throughout the duration of this course. Additionally, students are expected to maintain a state of technical compliance, including (but not limited to):

- up-to-date browsers,
- multiple (minimum of 2) browsers (recommended: Chrome & Firefox),
- appropriate and adequate computer hardware,
- a stable Internet connection,
- and other up-to-date software as required by the instructor.

The instructor is not required to give consideration for lost/missing/unacceptable work stemming from technical non-compliance and/or end-user technical issues. Failure to maintain Internet or computer access shall not constitute a valid excuse for missed work. Any student who cannot keep up with the coursework owing to a lack of computer or Internet access or functionality should refer to the [Library Computer Lab hours of operation](https://www.com.edu/computer-labs/library-computer-lab) (<https://www.com.edu/computer-labs/library-computer-lab>) and plan to complete any and all coursework during posted hours (including testing, as needed).

In short, if you fail to complete an assignment or exam because your computer crashes or loses internet access, forget to attach a file, attach a wrong/blank/empty file to an assignment, did not verify submission of the correct file/information/link/etc., or did not use the appropriate browser or operating system to access and complete course work, then you are not entitled to make up the course work. If the assignment, discussion, project, or exam was not completed or submitted in a timely manner due to your error or due to end-user technological issues of any kind, it cannot be made up.

In the event you experience a technology problem or error, it is your responsibility to communicate **immediately** (not the next day, not 3 hours later) with your instructor using a working form of technology, via Text (see contact instructions in Brightspace) or email at betancourt@com.edu. If you experience any technology problems or errors with *college* software (Brightspace, etc.), **immediately** notify the DE department at College of the Mainland (COM) by submitting a ticket through [Parature](http://com.parature.com) (<http://com.parature.com>). If possible, make a screenshot of the error and email it to your instructor as well as the Distance Education Helpdesk. Contacting COM's Distance Education department can be accomplished by submitting a ticket through [Parature](http://com.parature.com) (<http://com.parature.com>) or via live chat Monday to Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM whenever the college is open.

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 on-line [Student Handbook](http://www.com.edu/student-services/student-handbook.php). (<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.

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.

Academic Dishonesty:

Any incident of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with college policy and the Student Handbook. Academic dishonesty is an extremely serious offense and may result in a penalty up to, and including, a **grade of zero** on that exam/assignment/etc. and possible referral to the Office of Student Conduct for the appropriate disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the course. The instructor reserves the right to define "Academic Dishonesty." Below are some examples of Academic Dishonesty (not an exhaustive list; academic dishonesty is not limited to only these types of incidences):

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas and claiming them as your own. Plagiarism is a very 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 any plagiarized material will receive a **grade of zero** and the student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for the appropriate discipline action.

Links to Resources about Avoiding Plagiarism:

1. [Purdue OWL: Avoiding Plagiarism](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/) <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>
2. [Plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org/) (<http://www.plagiarism.org/>)
3. [eLearners How to Avoid Plagiarism](http://www.elearners.com/online-education-resources/online-learning/how-to-avoid-plagiarism/) (<http://www.elearners.com/online-education-resources/online-learning/how-to-avoid-plagiarism/>)

Cheating

Cheating includes looking at or copying from another student's exam, having another person take an exam or complete a project or assignment for you, bringing/accessing unauthorized notes, texts, audio/video recordings, electronic devices, or other materials to complete an online exam, and/or obtaining or distributing unauthorized copies of exams or any part of an exam.

Collusion

Collusion is inappropriately collaborating on assignments designed to be completed independently. This course is designed to be completed independently.

Please -- if you are having trouble of any kind, discuss it with me. The tiny advantage you would get from cheating is vastly outweighed by the risk you would be taking. I am willing to help you in any way I can, but I will NOT excuse academic dishonesty no matter how much I like you or feel sorry for you.

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 Stacey Henderson at 409-933-8212.

Course Schedule and Due Dates

Course Introduction: March 19-23

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	All documents located in the Getting Started section	March 19-23
Graded Assignment(s)	Introductory Tasks (Extra Credit 1)	Thursday, March 23 by 11:59 pm

Unit 1-TX Political Foundations: March 19 – April 2

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 1 and Culture and Ideology Lesson Notes Chapter 2 and Constitution Lesson Notes Chapter 12 and Local Government Lesson Notes	March 19 – April 2
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 1 - Initial Discussion Post	Sunday March 26 by 11:59 pm
Graded Assignment(s) Graded Discussion Post(s)	Paper Proposal, Extra Credit 1 Discussion 1 Response Posts	Sunday, April 2 by 11:59 pm Sunday, April 2 by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 1 Exam	Opens: Thursday, March 30 by 11:59 pm Due: Sunday, April 2 by 11:59 pm

Unit 2-TX Political Participation: April 2 - 16

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 9 and Campaigns and Elections Lesson Notes Chapter 10 and Political Parties Lesson Notes Chapter 11 and Interest Groups Lesson Notes	April 2-16
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 2 - Initial Discussion Post	Monday, April 10 by 11:59 pm
Graded Assignment(s)	Extra Credit 2	Sunday, April 16 by 11:59 pm
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 2 - Response Posts	Sunday, April 16 by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 2 Exam	Opens: Thursday, April 13 Due: Sunday, April 16 by 11:59 pm

Unit 3-TX Political Institutions: April 16 - 30

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 3-4 and Legislature Lesson Notes -2 Chapter 5 -6 and Governor & Bureaucracy Lesson Notes Chapter 7 and Texas Courts and Justice Lesson Notes -2	April 16-30
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 3 - Initial Discussion Post	Sunday, April 23 by 11:59 pm
Graded Assignment(s) Graded Discussion Post(s)	Final Paper, Extra Credit 3, Discussion 3 Response Post	Sunday April 30 by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 3 Exam	Opens: Thursday April 27 23 Due: Sunday April 30 by 11:59 pm

Unit 4-Local Government and Public Policy: April 30 – May 10

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 8 and Criminal Justice Notes Chapter 13 and Fiscal Policy Lesson Notes Chapter 14-15 and Social Policy Lesson Notes	April 30 – May 10
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 4 - Initial Discussion Post	Sunday May 7 by 11:59 pm
Graded Assignment(s)	Extra Credit 4 Discussion 2 - Response Posts	Wednesday May 10 by 11:59 pm
Exam	Exam 4	Opens: Sunday May 7 Due: Wednesday May 10 by 11:59 pm

Student Learner Outcomes & Associated Objectives:

Student Learner Outcome	Connects to Core Objective	Assessed via This Assignment
1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.	Critical Thinking (CT)	Exam
2. Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.		Exam
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.	Critical Thinking (CT)	Exam
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.		Exam
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas	Critical Thinking (CT) Personal Responsibility (PR) Communication Skills (CS1)	Exam/ Written Assignment
6. Analyze the state and local election process.	Critical Thinking (CT) Social Responsibility (SR)	Exam
7. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.	Social Responsibility (SR) Personal Responsibility (PR)	Exam
8. Analyze issues, policies and political culture of Texas.	Critical Thinking (CT)	Exam
9. Develop, interpret, and express ideas on a Government 2306-related topic through written communication.	Communication Skills (CS1) Critical Thinking (CT)	Written Assignment
10. Students will demonstrate intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.	Social Responsibility (SR) Communication Skills (CS1)	Written Assignment
11. Evaluate choices and actions of others or one's own and relate consequences to decision-making.	Personal Responsibility (PR) Communication Skills (CS1)	Written Assignment

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://build.com.edu/uploads/sitecontent/files/student-services/Student_Handbook_2019-2020v5.pdf). (https://build.com.edu/uploads/sitecontent/files/student-services/Student_Handbook_2019-2020v5.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 career. 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 Holly Bankston at 409-933-8520 or hbankston@com.edu. The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities is located

in the Student Success Center.

Counseling Statement:

Any student that is needing counseling services is requested to please contact Holly Bankston in the student success center at 409-933-8520 or hbankston@com.edu. Counseling services are available on campus in the student center for free and students can also email counseling@com.edu to setup their appointment. Appointments are strongly encouraged; however, some concerns may be addressed on a walk-in basis.