GOVERNMENT 2306 014 IN
Texas Government
Fall 2023
ONLINE

Instructor Information: Karina M. Lovas
Instructor Email: klovas@com.edu

Student hours and location: On campus or virtually by appointment

Required Textbook/Materials:

- *Lone Star Politics Tradition and Transformation in Texas* by Collier, 8th edition, ISBN: 9781071875605 (an older edition is fine too)
- I recommend downloading the Brightspace D2L App and/or the Outlook app (set up with your COM e-mail) so you can keep up with class announcements.

Course Description: This course covers 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.

> Remember that this is a **self-paced** online course.
> You are expected to be keeping up with reading, lectures, notes, and turning in assignments weekly.
> Keep this in mind before the semester drop deadline, November 28th, 2023.
>
> Each week, I recommend listening to the lecture and looking at the corresponding notes, and then skimming the chapter. Students who do that generally do well in the course.

- This is an online class, but I know lectures can sometimes be helpful. I post recorded lectures for most chapters we cover; I highly encourage listening to those. I recommend listening to the lecture and looking at the corresponding notes and skimming the provided chapter. Some students fill out their study guide as they listen to the lectures. Students who listen to the lectures, skim the chapters, and look at the notes do well on the exams and assignments.
- I don't grade assignments via email! So please be sure you submit your work on D2L.

- I don't do make-ups/ re-grade assignments. If you don't follow the instructions for an assignment and it gets a 0 or miss a participation assignment and get a 0, that grade is final- but I do offer extra credit to make up points.

- **You are expected to write your assignments in your own words- assignments that are obviously generated by AI[1] will receive no credit. After one 0 and a warning, I ==will== submit an academic dishonesty report to the College. *Please* don't do that!**

Course requirements:

Requirement	Points
Syllabus Quiz	5
Exam 1	15
Exam 2	15
Participation Activities (3 x 10)	30
Topic Assignment	10
Position Paper	20
Current Event Paper	5
Total	100

Syllabus Quiz (5 points)

Students will take a brief quiz on D2L to demonstrate they are familiar with the class policies and have read the syllabus. It is 10 questions, and it should not take long to complete.
The syllabus quiz needs to be taken on time; I will not reopen it.
Syllabus Quiz due Sunday September 3rd by 11:59pm!

Exams (2 x15 points)

2 exams will be given throughout the semester. They will be multiple-choice questions with 5 short answer questions. I usually add 2-4 extra credit short answer questions.
You will take the exam on D2L with Lockdown Browser anytime during the day they are assigned. The tests will be worth 15 points each.
They will encompass only material presented from the last examination. The exams will **not** be cumulative.

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[1] includes tools like ChatGPT and Bing and other similar things, as well paraphrasing generators/translators. I have graded thousands of assignments in the last 12 years, I assure you- I can tell!

The exams will be taken with Lockdown Browser! Please be sure you are prepared to do that with a suitable connection, computer, and camera before the exams close. You will not be able to use any materials to take the tests. Referencing a study guide, notes, books, phone, or written material while taking the exam will result in a 0 for cheating. However, to help you prepare for the exams- study guides will be provided on D2L

- Exam 1 will be available September 29-October 1st. Exam 1 will close October 1st at 11:59pm.
- Exam 2 will be available December 10-December 13th. Exam 2 will close December 13th at 11:59pm.

Participation Activities (10 x 3 points)

Up to 30 points will be awarded for class participation and response to 10 prompts. These weekly writings should reflect an understanding of the material and demonstrate that the student has read the notes/skimmed the chapter/listened to the lecture as well as conducted additional research, if applicable.

Participation activities will be **due on Sunday evenings** throughout the course, and worth 3 points each (towards 30 total participation points). These assignments will close after 11:59pm the day after they are due (so at Monday nights at 11:59pm) and I will not accept them late after that. However, I will offer an optional extra activity towards the end of the semester to earn back some of lost points if a week's activity is missed. Participation activities are found on D2L in the weekly folders under Content. Please follow the instructions for submission. Each activity will have different requirements as to accepted length.

Topic Assignment and Position Paper (30 points total, 10 for topic assignment, 20 for position paper)

Students will complete a topic assignment and write a position paper on one of the following public policy controversies in Texas:
- Should marijuana be legalized in Texas?
- Should capital punishment be abolished in Texas?
- Should the criminal justice system in Texas be reformed?
- Should the Texas legislature be altered?
- Should the funding apparatus of Texas K-12 schools be changed?
- Should education be voluntary for children in Texas?

Topic Assignment (10 points) DUE: September 24th , 2023 at 11:59pm on D2L
To ensure that students will be successful for the position paper, they will first complete a topic assignment. Students will fill out the topic assignment worksheet to submit their chosen topic and at least THREE sources (on works cited in MLA, APA, or Chicago style) with a brief explanation on which topic they have chosen, which side they intend to take.

There is a worksheet on D2L that has every component you need for the topic assignment. It will be graded with comments, use these comments for the paper.

Position Paper (20 points) <mark>Due November 19th at 11:59pm on D2L</mark>

Write a paper taking a position (yes or no) on your chosen issue. Conduct research on the topic, citing at least <u>FOUR</u> sources (adding at least 1 from the topic assignment) 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. Explain how this position impacts the issues of personal responsibility and social responsibility.

The paper should be 1000 words (approximately 4 pages), double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, and a 12-point Times New Roman Font, with a works cited page with correctly formatted MLA, APA, or Chicago style citations. There should be a works cited (not included in word count) and in-text citations throughout the paper.

Please use the template provided on D2L with the correct formatting and header.

Paper Guidelines:

- Format
  - **Template on D2L**, citation style on the works cited page can be MLA, APA, or Chicago (as long as it is consistent)
  - Times New Roman
  - 12 Point font
  - Correct header from the template that does not take up half the page.
  - Double-spaced
  - 1-inch margins
  - No end notes
  - Microsoft Word doc or PDF file
- 1000 words (aim for 4 pages) not including the works cited page
- Be sure to cite both paraphrased and quoted information. Do not use more than two direct quotes.
- You can use the following sources for topic assignment and paper:
  - Academic journal articles from library databases
  - Newspaper articles (not from editorial section) preferably from print media (like *The Houston Chronicle, The Austin American Statesman, Texas Monthly, Texas Tribune, The Economist, The Washington Post*, etc. As far as non-print journalism goes local news is usually acceptable, and NPR, AP, Reuters, C-Span, CBS News, and ABC News generally have decent reporting)
  - Government sites (the Texas government websites are regularly updated and maintained)
  - Research and polling institutes like Pew
- **You may <u>NOT</u> use the following sources**:
  - Wikipedia (good starting point to read about your topic, just go to the sources that it links)

- o Pro-Con.org
- o Editorials
- o Blogs (including posts on Medium, Thought Catalog, etc)
- o Random lawyers' websites
- o Avoid the lower tier news publications. This means NO Huffington Post, the Federalist, New York Post, CNN, Buzzfeed, The Daily Beast, Daily Mail, MSNBC, Fox News, OAN, The Blaze, Epoch Times, InfoWars, Occupy Democrats, Breitbart, Drudge Report, etc. etc.
- o Avoid interest group websites (e.g. ACLU, Planned Parenthood, NRA, etc) as they have an agenda in providing information.
- o You may **not** use papers you wrote in other classes.
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Rubric for Final Position Paper:

	7-10 points Notes from the topic assignment were taken, content of the paper is topical to the assignment, correct and well presented, conveys understanding of the topic choice, a coherent argument is being made, with strong supporting points, and the overall point of the paper is well thought out and overall well done. Demonstrated importance of social and personal responsibility. Care was taken to proof-read.	3-6 points Not all of the content is relevant to the assignment, writing was not proof-read/lack of effort was put forth, there are obvious points to the argument that are left out, not enough elaboration/paper does not meet length requirements, some information is erroneous or factually wrong, no point is being made. Not enough discussion of responsibility.	0 -2 points The paper does follow the assignment, information is overwhelmingly wrong, no point is being made
Content (10)			
Sources (5 points)	5 points Sources are reputable and scholarly, works cited page is correctly done, there are in-text citations in the paper	2-4 points Sources are not all from reputable places, citations have some problems, some errors within works cited page with formatting, notes not taken on the sources from topic assignment	0 points Citations are not used correctly or are missing, works cited page is incomplete or absent/has major errors
Formatting (5 points)	5 points Paper is double spaced, correct margins, header is correct and does not take up half the page, etc	0 points Directions not followed	

Current Event Paper (5 points)

Students will find a news article about a topic relevant to the class material on Texas or local government from a reputable news source (such as *Texas Monthly, the Houston Chronicle, Texas Tribune,* or other newspaper) and read it and consider how it applies to concepts they have learned in the course. The article should also be recent (within a **month** of the due date

of the paper). The article must focus on news that is pertinent to Texas or local governments actions and/or the interaction between the state or local government and people.

For the paper, students will submit a 1-2 (at least 1 full page) page analysis of the article. Your paper should be a brief summary and then an analysis of the article you have chosen. Analysis within the context of political science means that you are putting an action or a topic in the broader scope of Texas government and of its interaction with citizens. You will relate the article to what you have learned in class. For instance, if you pick an article about an upcoming execution you will relate it to what we learned about the criminal justice system, if you pick an article about something the Texas governor is doing you will relate to what you learned about the powers of the governor, etc etc.

Please provide in-text citations when you are summarizing the article and a properly composed citation (MLA or APA is acceptable) of the article. There should be in-text citations as well as a works cited entry for your article at the end of the paper.

For formatting, there is also a template provided. Please use the correct formatting that is already on the template, meaning the paper should not have a huge header to make it seem longer.

==Current Event Paper Due December 3rd, 2023 on D2L .==

Determination of Course Grade/Detailed Grading Formula:

Requirement	Points
Syllabus Quiz	5
Exam 1	15
Exam 2	15
Participation Activities (3 x 10)	30
Topic Assignment	10
Position Paper	20
Current Event Paper	5
Total	100

LETTER GRADE ASSIGNMENT:

I will add up all your points earned over the semester to find your final grade.

Letter Grade	Final Score
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	0-59

Late Work, Make-Up, and Extra-Credit Policy:
- The syllabus quiz and 2 exams cannot be taken late, please plan on taking them during the time they are open. Give yourself a little time just in case you have technical difficulties.

- The weekly participation activities will be accepted the day after they were due and not accepted after that. If you miss one, later in the semester there is an opportunity to complete an optional activity to earn back some missing points.

- I will accept the other written assignments (topic assignments, paper, and current event paper) late with a 24-hour grace period with no points lost, no need to inform me. Anything after 24 hours late will incur a penalty (starting with 2 points). Please inform me if you are having trouble so I can try and assist. I will not accept written assignments more than 7 days after they are due and I cannot accept anything after December 13th as the semester ends.

- I do **not** re-grade assignments. If you submit something and it earns a poor grade or a 0, there is not a make-up. However, I do offer extra credit opportunities.

- **You are expected to write your assignments in your own words- assignments that are obviously generated by AI (or a paraphrasing generator or similar device) will receive no credit. After one time, I will submit an academic dishonesty report to the College. *Please* don't do that!**

- Extra Credit: There will be several opportunities to earn extra credit over the course of the semester. Opportunities to earn extra credit will include sporadic written assignments, exam questions, and possible events outside of class. I will not offer extra credit on an individual basis, so coming to me at the end of the semester hoping to earn several extra points will not be possible.

Attendance Policy:
You are expected to be logging into class on D2L regularly and submitting assignments weekly! Not logging in participating can result in being dropped from the course.

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.

Core objectives:
  1. Critical Thinking Skills: Students will demonstrate creative thinking, innovation, and the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information.
  2. Communication Skills: Develop, interpret, and express ideas through written, oral, and visual communication

3. Social Responsibility: Students will demonstrate intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities

4. Personal Responsibility: Evaluate choices and actions of others or one's own, and relate consequences to ethical decision-making.

Student Learner Outcome	Maps to Core Objective	Assessed via this Assignment
Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.	Critical thinking and communication skills	Exams and participation assignments
Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.	Critical thinking and communication skills	Exams and participation assignments
Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas	Critical thinking and communication skills	Exams and participation assignments
Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.	Personal responsibility, critical thinking, and communication skills	Exams, current event paper, position paper, and participation assignments
Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.	Social and personal responsibility and communication skills	Topic assignment and position paper
Analyze the state and local election process.	Social and personal responsibility	Exam, position paper, participation assignments
Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.	Social and personal responsibility	Exams, current event paper, participation assignments, position paper
Analyze issues, policies, and political culture of Texas	Social and personal responsibility, critical thinking, communication skills	Written assignments
Develop, interpret, and express ideas through written communication	Communication skills	Written assignments
Evaluate choices and actions of others or one's own, and relate	Social and personal responsibility	Position Paper

consequences to decision-making.		

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 the appropriate discipline action.

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.
You are expected to write your assignments in your own words- assignments that are obviously generated by AI will receive no credit. After one time, I will submit an academic dishonesty report to the College.

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.

Course outline:

This is the tentative schedule for the course. Please keep an eye on your COM email incase changes need to be made.

Date	Chapters	Topic
Week 1 August 28- September 3	1	Welcome Texas History and Politics <mark>September 3: Syllabus Quiz due on D2L</mark>
Week 2 September 4- September 10	1 2	Texas Political Culture Texas Constitutions
Week 3 September 11- September 17		Texas in the Federal System
Week 4 September 18- September 24	3	Texas Legislature September 24th: Topic Assignment Due on D2L
Week 5 September 25- October 1		**Exam 1 on D2L, open September 29-October 1st** **Closes October 1 at 11:59pm**
Week 6 October 2- October 8	4 and 5	Texas Governors and Executive Branch
Week 7 October 9- October 15	6	Texas Judicial System
Week 8 October 16- October 22	7	Civil Liberties and Civil Rights in Texas and Criminal Justice in Texas
Week 9 October 23 October 29	8	Campaigns and Elections in Texas
Week 10 October 30- November 5	9	Political Parties
Week 11 November 6- November 12	10	Organized Interests

Week 12 November 13- November 19	11 12	Local Government in Texas Fiscal Policy in Texas November 19: Position Paper due on D2L
Week 13 November 20- November 26		Thanksgiving! Enjoy Be safe!
Week 14 November 27 December 3	13 and 14	Transforming Texas and Public Policy in Texas November 28: LAST DAY TO DROP FALL 2023 CLASSES December 3rd: Current Event paper due on D2L
Week 15 December 4- December 10	14	Education Policy in Texas
"Week" 16 December 11- December 13th		Exam 2 open December 10-13th (Closes December 13th at 11:59pm)

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_2023-2024_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 at 409-933-8919 or klachney@com.edu. The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities is located in the 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 October 11. The last date to withdraw from the 16-week session is November 28. The last date to withdraw for the 2nd 8-week session is December 7.

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.