



## **GOVT 2305.01111 Federal Government Fall 2025 1st 8-week Syllabus**

### **Instructor Information:**

- **Name:** Michele Betancourt
- **E-mail:** [mbetancourt@com.edu](mailto:mbetancourt@com.edu)
- **Phone:** 281-239-1590(M-TH 8-3)

### **Student Hours and Location:**

TU/TR 8:00 -8:30 am via Brightspace instant messages (during this time, I will also be immediately available via phone or email). The course is accessible at [COM Brightspace Login Page](https://com.brightspace.com) (Link Address: <https://com.brightspace.com>)

### **Required Textbook:**

- Title: American Government
- Author: Glen Krutz - OPENSTAX
- Edition: 3rd
- The textbook can be accessed **free of charge** online and downloaded as a PDF file at: [American Government 3e - Openstax Online Textbook](#)

The textbook is mandatory, but if you don't like using an online version, you can print it out yourself or purchase a hard copy from any retailer, but that is optional.

### **Course Description:**

This course examines the origin and development of the U.S. Constitution, the structure and powers of the national government, including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, federalism, political participation, the national election process, public policy, civil liberties, and civil rights.

### **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, students must 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 and 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. You must be able to demonstrate your knowledge of the provided readings on the assigned topic. For each topic, you should:

- Post an Initial Post responding to the topic prompts
  - contains a minimum of 250 words
  - **contains at least 3 close reading citations from the ASSIGNED material.**
  - Follow APA 7 in-text citation guidelines AND must contain page or paragraph numbers from the text regardless of if it is a direct quote)
- Two response posts responding to two other students
  - a minimum of 150 words each -
  - each response post must contain a minimum of one close reading citation from course materials for full credit.

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 11:59 pm on the unit's last day. 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 in the Getting Started module.**

### Written Assignments

You will be assigned to write a position paper (yes/no; pro/con) on a current public policy controversy in the United States (e.g., Should Private Businesses Have the Right to Deny Service Based on Their Religious Beliefs and Practices? Should Marijuana Be Legalized? Etc.). This You must research the topic, citing sources from credible and reliable publications, websites, 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 personal and social responsibility issues. 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. You will need to submit a topic by the end of the first week of class.

### Unit Exams

Each exam covers only the chapters and lesson notes from its unit and includes multiple-choice and matching questions. A study guide is provided at the start of each unit — print it and use it while reviewing lesson notes.

You may bring **two pages of handwritten notes** (front and back) to the exam. Notes must be shown at the start and end of the exam (typewritten notes will result in a 25% penalty).

## Testing Requirements

All exams use Respondus LockDown Browser with Monitor and webcam. You must:

- Present an approved photo ID (driver's license, government ID, passport, military ID, or school ID) with **name and photo clearly visible** – feel free to cover other info with tape
- Complete a full environment scan, showing your desk/table, the entire testing area, and your handwritten notes. Poor scans may result in a retake and/or up to a 10% penalty.

## Testing Environment Rules

- Sit at a desk, counter, or table — not on a bed or couch.
- Choose a quiet, well-lit space with no backlighting.
- Remain in view and avoid leaving your seat until finished.
- Wear appropriate attire; no hats, sunglasses, or items covering your eyes.
- Do not talk to others during the exam unless unavoidable.

Failure to follow these procedures may result in a retake and/or up to a 10% deduction.

## Lesson Activities

There are 13 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 but will greatly assist you with the exam.**

## Extra Credit

In addition to the regularly assigned materials, there are several opportunities to increase your grade through extra credit material. The introductory tasks at the beginning of the course can add up to 2% to your final average. Additionally, there are 3 unit extra credit assignments. Each unit extra credit is worth up to 1% toward your final average. Please pay attention to due dates, as late extra credit will not be accepted. If you complete all extra credit work, you can add up to 5% to your final course average.

## Late work

Late work will have a flat 20% penalty. Not all work can be submitted late – see below. Pay careful attention to the list of due dates in the class. Do not solely rely on the Brightspace App or calendar as the dates do not always appear there.

- **Discussions – (see above)** You will lose 20% on a late initial post. Response posts cannot be submitted late; the forum will be locked on the response post's due date.
- **Extra Credit** -This is only open for the unit it is associated with and cannot be submitted late.
- **Exams** - Exams can be submitted up to 3 days late -- (20% penalty)
- **Paper Topic and Final Draft**—can be submitted up to 3 days late (20% penalty)
- **NO LATE WORK accepted after the official end of classes**

- The course schedule details the exact cut-off date for late work for each graded item in the course.

#### Detailed Grading Formula:

##### Grading Weights

Graded Work	Weight
Unit Exams	35%
Discussions	30%
Written Assignment	35%

##### Final Grade 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.

#### 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 read and respond to posts regularly. **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.

## 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 class performance through other electronic means. I try to return messages (email, phone, discussion postings) within 36 hours (weekends and holidays excepted). For detailed information, see the “Instructor” section of the syllabus above.

## State Required SLOs

### Student Learner Outcomes & Associated Objectives Outcomes Assessment

Student Learner Outcome	Connects to Core Objective	Assessed via Assignment
Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.	Critical Thinking (CT)	Exam
Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.		Exam
Describe the separation of powers and checks and balances in theory and practice.		Exam
Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the federal government		Exam
Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.	Critical Thinking (CT) Personal Responsibility (PR) Communication Skills (CS1)	Exam/Policy Paper
Analyze the election process.	Critical Thinking (CT) Social Responsibility (SR)	Exam/Policy Paper
Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.	Personal Responsibility (PR) Social Responsibility (SR)	Exam
Analyze issues and policies in the US.	Critical Thinking (CT) Social Responsibility (SR)	Exam/Policy Paper
Develop, interpret, and express ideas on a Government 2305-related topic through written communication.	Communication Skills (CS1) Critical Thinking (CT)	Policy Paper
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)	Policy Paper
Evaluate the choices and actions of others or one’s own and relate consequences to decision-making.	Personal Responsibility (PR) Communication Skills (CS1)	Policy Paper

## Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense and will be addressed in accordance with college policy and the Student Handbook. Penalties may include a grade of zero on the assignment, loss of any earned extra credit (and ineligibility for additional extra credit), referral to the Office of Student Conduct, and possible dismissal from the course.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Plagiarism:** Using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation, including material generated by AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT). This includes paraphrasing without credit, copying from websites, or using direct quotes without quotation marks.
- **Source Misuse / Citation Fraud:** Fabricating sources, falsifying publication details, quoting material not found in the cited source, or providing false page/paragraph numbers. All assignments require close reading citations with page or paragraph numbers for all in-text citations.
- **AI Use:** AI tools may be used only for brainstorming or outlining. They may not be used to write your semester paper or discussion postings. Any AI use must be acknowledged. Misuse will be treated as plagiarism. I do not rely solely on AI detection scores but will review the body of your work and may require a meeting to explain your process.
- **Cheating:** Copying from another student, having someone else complete work for you, bringing/accessing unauthorized materials during exams, or attempting to bypass Respondus proctoring.
- **Collusion:** Inappropriately collaborating on assignments meant to be completed independently.

## Resources for Avoiding Plagiarism:

- Purdue OWL: [Avoiding Plagiarism](#)
- [Plagiarism.org](#)
- eLearners: How to Avoid Plagiarism

## Technology Compliance Policy

This course uses Brightspace for all lectures, assessments, and materials. You are responsible for maintaining reliable computer hardware, stable internet access, and at least two updated browsers (Chrome & Firefox recommended), along with any required software.

Technical problems are not an excuse for late or missing work. If your personal setup is unreliable, you must plan to use the [Library Computer Lab](#).

If you experience a tech issue, contact me immediately by phone or email, and report Brightspace or other college software problems to the COM Distance Education Helpdesk ([Submit a Ticket](#) or live chat, M–F, 8 AM–5 PM). Provide a screenshot of the error when possible. Work missed due to your own technical issues cannot be made up beyond the stated late period.

## Student Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of this course, please use the provided contact information. If, after discussing your concern with me, you continue to have questions, please contact Dr. Wakao at [swakao@com.edu](mailto:swakao@com.edu) or 409-933-8107.

## Course Outline – Fall 2025

### Course Introduction: August 18 – August 20

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	All documents located in the Getting Started section	August 18 – August 20
Assignment(s)	Introductory Tasks	Wednesday, August 20, by 11:59 pm

### Unit 1 – US Political Foundations: August 20 – September 10

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 1 and Culture & Ideology Lesson Notes Chapter 2 and Constitution Lesson Notes Chapter 3 and Federalism Lesson Notes Chapter 4 and Civil Liberties Lesson Notes Chapter 5 and Civil Rights Lesson Notes	August 20 – September 10
Discussion Post	<b>Discussion 1 – Initial Discussion Post</b>	Wednesday, September 3, by 11:59 pm
Assignment/ Disc. Responses Extra Credit	<b>Topic Selection</b> <b>Discussion Response Posts</b> Extra Credit 1	Sunday, August 24, by 11:59 pm Wednesday, September 10, by 11:59 pm Sunday, September 14, by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 1 Exam	Opens: Sunday, September 7 Due: Wednesday, September 10, by 11:59 pm

### Unit 2 – US Political Participation: September 10 – September 24

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 6 and Public Opinion Lesson Notes Chapter 7 and Voting and Elections Lesson Notes Chapter 9 and Political Parties Lesson Notes Chapter 10 and Interest Group Lesson Notes	September 10 – September 24
Discussion Post	<b>Discussion 2 – Initial Discussion Post</b>	Wednesday, September 17, by 11:59 pm
Disc. Responses Extra Credit	<b>Discussion 2 – Response Posts</b> Extra Credit 2	Wednesday, September 24, by 11:59 pm Sunday, September 28, by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 2 Exam	Opens: Sunday, September 21 Due: Wednesday, September 24, by 11:59 pm

### Unit 3 – US Political Institutions: September 24 – October 8

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 11 and Congress Lesson Notes Chapter 12 and Presidency Lesson Notes Chapter 13 and Judiciary Lesson Notes Chapter 16 and Policy Lesson Notes	September 24 – October 8
Discussion Post Assignment Extra Credit	<b>Discussion 3 – Initial Discussion Post</b> <b>Public Policy Paper</b> Extra Credit 3	Wednesday, October 1, by 11:59 pm Wednesday, October 1, by 11:59 pm Sunday, October 5, by 11:59 pm
Disc. Responses	<b>Discussion 3 – Response Posts</b>	Wednesday, October 8, by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 3 Exam	Opens: Sunday, October 5 Due: Wednesday, October 8, by 11:59 pm

## 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/student-handbook.html>

*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](mailto: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 1<sup>st</sup> 8-week session is October 1. The last date to withdraw from the 16-week session is November 14. The last date to withdraw for the 2<sup>nd</sup> 8-week session is November 25.

**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](mailto:deanofstudents@com.edu) or [communityresources@com.edu](mailto: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.