



GOVT 2306.021I2 Texas Government Spring 2025 2nd 8-week Syllabus

Instructor Information:

- Name: Michele Betancourt
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- Phone: 281-239-1590 (M-Thur 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:

LONE STAR POLITICS

- **Author:** COLLIER
- **Edition:** 8TH 23
- **ISBN:** 9781071875605

Course Description: This course examines the origin and development of the Texas constitution, the 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 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 11:59 pm on the unit's last day. 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 in Brightspace.

Written Assignments: A departmental position paper is required for all government students. You will write a (yes/no; pro/con) on a current public policy controversy in the state of Texas (e.g., Should Texas enact a higher state minimum wage; Should recreational marijuana be legalized in Texas? Should Texas abolish the death penalty? Etc.). 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. The position paper will be submitted in multiple parts. First, you will develop an annotated bibliography with 4 sources (worth 15 % of your grade). Next, you must use these sources (and additional sources) to write your full position paper (worth 20%). The assignment files located in Brightspace will provide specific details on how to complete each assignment, such as length, required elements, format, and citation requirements. Specific grading criteria will also be posted to guide your research efforts.

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

Lesson Activities: There are 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 ungraded activities are for self-assessment purposes only but will greatly assist you with the exam.**

Detailed Grading Formula:

Graded Course Work/Activity	Weight
Unit Exams	40%
Discussions	25%
Written Assignments	35%
Bibliography	15%
Extra Credit Outline	Extra Credit
Final Paper	20%

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.

Extra Credit: Besides the regularly assigned materials, there are several opportunities to increase your grade through extra. The introductory tasks at the beginning of the course can add up to 1% to your final

average. Additionally, an optional part of the research project can be submitted. You can earn up to 4% on your final average by submitting a comprehensive outline for your paper. In total, you can add up to 5% to your final course average (1/2 letter grade).

Late Work: Late work will be penalized 20%. 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. ALWAYS refer to the comprehensive list of due dates posted in the getting started section of the course.

- Exams may be submitted up to 3 days late (Due Sunday - can be submitted until Wednesday).
- Extra Credit may not be submitted late.
- Discussions—The initial post can be submitted late with a 20-point deduction, but all discussion posts (initial and responses) are due by the Response post due date. Response posts can't be submitted late.
- The annotated bibliography and the Final Paper may be submitted up to 3 days late (Due Sunday - can be submitted until Wednesday).

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.

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 (course 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 Outcome	Connects to Core Objective	Assessed via This Assignment
Explain the origin and development of the Texas Constitution	Critical Thinking (CT)	Exam
Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.		Exam
Describe the separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.	Critical Thinking (CT)	Exam
Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the Texas government		Exam
Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.	Critical Thinking (CT) Personal Responsibility (PR) Communication Skills (CS1)	Exam/Policy Paper
Analyze the state and local 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 and political culture of Texas.	Critical Thinking (CT)	Exam/Policy Paper
Develop, interpret, and express ideas on a Government 2306 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 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:

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 **grade of zero on the assignment/exam/discussion etc.** Further, a student will also forfeit any extra credit earned to that point in the class and be disqualified from earning additional extra and possibly referred 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 Honesty (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 a proper citation, copying directly from a website and pasting it into your paper, and using someone else's words without quotation marks. **Simply changing one or two words from a text block is still plagiarism.** Any assignment

containing any plagiarized material will receive a **grade of zero. Further, a student will also forfeit any extra credit earned to that point in the class and be disqualified from earning additional extra credit.** For repeat or serious offenses (e.g., selling, providing, or soliciting exam questions), the student will receive an F for the course and be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for the appropriate disciplinary 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. **This includes using AI programs such as ChatGPT and submitting as your own.**

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 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 atmbetancourt@com.edu. If you experience any technology problems or errors with *college* software (Brightspace, etc.), **immediately** notify the DE department at the College of the Mainland (COM) by submitting a ticket through [Parature](#)

(<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.

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 Dr. Wakao at swakao@com.edu or 409-933-8107.

Course Outline

Course Introduction: March 10-13

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	All documents located in the Getting Started section	March 10-13
Graded Assignment(s)	Introductory Tasks (Extra Credit 1)	Thursday, March 13, by 11:59 pm

Unit 1-TX Political Foundations: March 13 – March 30

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 11 and Local Government Lesson Notes	March 13-30
Graded Discussion	Discussion 1 - Initial Discussion Post	Sunday, March 23, by 11:59 pm
Graded Assignment(s) Graded Discussion	Part 1 - Topic Selection Discussion Response Posts	Sunday, March 30, by 11:59 pm Sunday, March 30, by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 1 Exam	Opens: Thursday, March 27 Due: Sunday, March 30, by 11:59 pm

Unit 2-TX Political Participation: March 31 – April 13

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 8 and Campaigns and Elections Lesson Chapter 9 and Political Parties Lesson Notes Chapter 10 and Interest Group Lesson Notes	March 31 – April 13
Graded Discussion	Discussion 2 - Initial Discussion Post	Sunday, April 6, by 11:59 pm
Graded Assignment(s) Graded Discussion	Part 2 - Annotated Bibliography Discussion 2 - Response Posts	Sunday, April 13, by 11:59 pm Sunday, April 13, by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 2 Exam	Opens: Thursday, April 10 Due: Sunday, April 13, by 11:59 pm

Unit 3-TX Political Institutions: April 14 - 27

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 3 and Legislature Lesson Chapter 4-5 and Governor & Bureaucracy Notes Chapter 6 -7 and Texas Courts and Justice Notes	April 14 - 27
Graded Discussion Graded Assignment(s)	Discussion 3 - Initial Discussion Post Part 3 - Extra Credit Outline	Sunday, April 20, by 11:59 pm Sunday, April 20, by 11:59 pm
Graded Discussion	Discussion 3 Response Post	Sunday, April 27, by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 3 Exam	Opens: Thursday, April 24 Due: Sunday, April 27, by 11:59 pm

Unit 4-Local Government and Public Policy: April 28 - May 7

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 12 and Fiscal Policy Lesson Notes Chapter 13-14 and Social Policy Lesson	April 28 - May 7
Graded Discussion Graded Assignment(s)	Discussion 4 - Initial Discussion Post Part 4- Final Paper	Sunday, May 4, by 11:59 pm
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 4 - Response Posts	Wednesday, May 7 by 11:59pm
Exam	Exam 4	Opens: Monday, May 5 Due: Thursday, December 8 by NOON

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 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.