



**GOVT-2306-331IN
Texas Government
Spring 2023
Online Course**

FACULTY: Karina M. Lovas

E-MAIL: klovas@com.edu

STUDENT HOURS: Tuesdays 5:30pm-6:00pm and 9:00-9:30pm Building 8, rm 255
Virtual hours: Mondays 2:30pm-3:30pm
Can also meet by appointment

Communicating with Instructor: ALL electronic communication with the instructor must be through your COM email. Due to federal law, faculty cannot share any information about performance in the class through other electronic means.

Required Textbook/Materials: *Lone Star Politics* 7th Ed. Sage CQ Press. 2022 Collier. ISBN 978-1071808900

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, April 24th, 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.

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.

Course Assignments:

Requirement	Points
Syllabus Quiz	5
Test #1	15
Test #2	15
Participation Activities (10 x2 pts)	30
Paper Topic Assignment	10
Position Paper	20
Current Event Paper	5
Total	100

Syllabus Quiz (5 points)

Students will take a brief quiz on Blackboard to demonstrate they are familiar with the class policies and have read the syllabus.

The syllabus quiz cannot be taken late.

Syllabus Quiz will be due by Sunday January 22 at 11:59pm.

Tests (2 x15 points):

Tests will be comprised of multiple short answer questions. Answers for the short answer questions should be 2-3 paragraphs in length. You may use only your book and the notes I provide to complete this exam. **YOU ARE NOT TO USE RANDOM INTERNET SOURCES TO ANSWER QUESTIONS.** Points will be deducted should there appear to be information taken from sources outside of the book or notes. The exams are NOT group work. I check for plagiarism and do not take plagiarism lightly. I include a few extra credit questions as well.

It is important to follow the instructions on the exam document, failure to do that will result in a loss of points.

Test 1 due February 19 by 11:59pm.

Test 2 due May 10, 2023 by 11:59pm.

Participation Activities (10 x3 – 30 points)

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

Participation activities will be due weekly on Sunday evenings throughout the course, and worth 3 points each (towards 30 total participation points). The assignments will close after 11:59pm each Sunday and they will **not** be accepted late. However, I will offer extra activities towards the end of the semester to make up for any lost points.

Participation activities are found on D2L. Please follow the instructions for submission.

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

Students will 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 Texas legislature be altered?
- Should the funding apparatus of Texas K-12 schools be changed?

Topic Assignment (10 points) Due on D2L Sunday February 26 by 11:59pm

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 (in proper MLA, APA, or Chicago style) with explanation on which topic they have chosen.

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) Due on D2L Sunday April 9 by 11:59pm

Write a paper taking a position (yes or no) on your chosen issue. Conduct research on the topic, citing at least **FOUR** 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. Explain how this position impacts the issues of personal responsibility and social responsibility.

The paper should be 1000 words (approximately 5 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 can be MLA, APA, or Chicago (as long as it is consistent)
 - Times New Roman
 - 12 Point
 - Double-spaced
 - 1-inch margins
 - No footnotes
 - Microsoft Word or PDF files
- 1000 words (aim for 5 pages) not including 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
- Newspaper articles (not from editorial section) preferably from print media (like The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Houston Chronicle, Texas Tribune, The Economist, The Washington Post, etc. As far as non-print journalism goes NPR, AP, Reuters, C-Span, CBS News, and ABC News generally have decent reporting)
- Government sites
- Research and polling institutes like Pew
- You may NOT use the following sources:
 - Wikipedia
 - Pro-Con.org
 - Editorials
 - Blogs (including posts on Medium, Thought Catalog, etc)
 - Random lawyers' websites
 - 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.
 - Avoid interest group websites (e.g ACLU, Planned Parenthood, NRA, etc) as they have an agenda in providing information.
- You may not use papers you wrote in other classes.

Current Event Paper (5 Points) Due on D2L May 7 by 11:59pm.

Students will find a news article about a topic relevant to the class from a reputable news source (such as *The Washington Post*, *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 date you submit the assignment). The article must focus on news that is pertinent to Texas or local governments actions and/or the interaction between 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, 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.

Please use the correct formatting on the template, meaning it should not have a huge header to make it seem longer.

Current Event Paper Due Sunday May 7.

Determination of Course Grade/Detailed Grading Formula:

Requirement	Points
Syllabus Quiz	5
Test #1	15
Test #2	15
Participation Activities (10 x3 pts)	30
Paper 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 needs to be taken on time; it will not be reopened.

Participation activities will not be accepted late. If you miss one, later in the semester there will one or two opportunities to complete an optional activity to make those points up.

I will accept the other written assignments (topic assignment, position paper, exams, and current event paper) with a 24 hours grace period with no points lost, no need to inform me. Anything later 24 hours late than that will incur a penalty.

Please inform me if you are having trouble so I can try and assist. I will not accept written assignments more than 7 days late.

Extra Credit: There will 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.

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	Reference Chapters	Topics
January 17-January 22	1	Welcome Texas History and Politics January 22: Syllabus Quiz due on D2L
January 23- January 29	1 & 2	Texas Political Culture & Texas Constitution
January 30- February 5		Texas in the Federal System
February 6-- February 12	3	Texas Legislature
February 13 -February 19		February 19: Exam 1 Due on Blackboard
February 20- February 26	4& 5	Texas Governors and Executive Branch February 26: Topic Assignment due on D2L
February 27 -March 5	6	Texas Judicial System
March 6 --March 12	7	Criminal Justice in Texas
March 13-- March 19	SPRING BREAK	Enjoy! Be safe!
March 20 -March 26	8	Campaigns and Elections
March 27 - April 2	9	Political Parties
April 3 -- April 9	10	Organized Interests April 9: Position Paper due On D2L
April 10- April 16	11	Local Government in Texas
April 17- April 23	12	Fiscal Policy
April 24- April 30	13 and 14	Energy, Environment, Transportation and Trade Policies and Social Policy

May 1- May 7	14	Education Policy May 7: Current Event Paper due on D2L
May 8- May 12		May 10: Exam 2 due on D2L

Attendance Policy: You are expected to be logging into class 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 consequences to decision-making.	Social and personal responsibility	Position Paper

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.

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. Shinya Wakao at swakao@com.edu

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

[Student Handbook 2022-2023 v4.pdf \(com.edu\)](#). *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 March 1. The last date to withdraw from the 16-week session is April 24. The last date to withdraw for the 2nd 8-week session is May 3.

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.