



GOVT 2306.024I2
Texas Government
Fall 2, 2025
October 13, 2025 – December 4, 2025
Online

Instructor Information:

Will Geisler, wgeisler@com.edu, 972.983.1816

Office hours and location:

M-F 9:00am-10:00am, online or via Zoom by appointment.

Class Section Meeting Time: Online

Alternate Operations During Campus Closure: In the event of an emergency or announced campus closure due to a natural disaster or pandemic, it may be necessary for Panola College to move to altered operations. During this time, Panola College may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include, but are not limited to: online learning management system (CANVAS), online conferencing, email messaging, and/or an alternate schedule. It is the responsibility of the student to monitor Panola College's website (www.panola.edu [Links to an external site.](#)) for instructions about continuing courses remotely, CANVAS for each class for course-specific communication, and Panola College email for important general information.

Core Components and Related College Student Learning Outcomes

This course counts as part of the academic requirements of the Panola College Core Curriculum and an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree. Yes No: If no, skip to Instructional Goals.

The items below marked with an X reflect the state-mandated outcomes for this course **IF this is a CORE course:**

Critical Thinking Skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry and analysis, evaluation and syntheses of information

CT1: Generate and communicate ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information

CT2: Gather and assess information relevant to a question

CT3: Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information

Communication Skills – to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication

CS1: Develop, interpret, and express ideas through written communication

CS2: Develop, interpret, and express ideas through oral communication

CS3: Develop, interpret, and express ideas through visual communication

Empirical and Quantitative Skills – to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions

EQS1: Manipulate and analyze numerical data and arrive at an informed conclusion
EQS2: Manipulate and analyze observable facts and arrive at an informed conclusion

Teamwork – to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal

— TW1: Integrate different viewpoints as a member of a team

TW2: Work with others to support and accomplish a shared goal

Personal Responsibility – to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

— PR1: Evaluate choices and actions and relate consequences to decision-making

Social Responsibility – to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities

— SR1: Demonstrate intercultural competence

SR2: Identify civic responsibility

SR3: Engage in regional, national, and global communities

Instructional Goals and Purposes:

The purpose of this course is to serve as an introduction into the Texas political system.

Learning Outcomes: [from the ACGM catalog]

After studying all materials and resources presented in the course, the student will be able to:

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.
 2. Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.
 3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.
 4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.
 5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.
 6. Analyze the state and local election process.
 7. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
 8. Analyze issues, policies and political culture of Texas.
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Course Content:

A general description of lecture/discussion topics included in this course are listed in the Learning Objectives section of this syllabus.

Students in all sections of this course will learn the following content:

1. Texas Geography, Demographics, and Public Opinion
2. Foundations of Texas Government
3. Federalism and State Governance
4. The Texas Constitution
5. The Texas State Legislature
6. Texas Governors and Executive Branch
7. The Texas Court System
8. Local Government in Texas
9. The Criminal Justice System in Texas
10. Public Policy in Texas

11. The Texas Economy and Fiscal Policy
 12. Elections and Campaigns in Texas
 13. Political Parties in Texas
 14. Voting and Political Participation in Texas
 15. Interest Groups and the Media in Texas
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Methods of Instruction/Course Format/Delivery:

This class will convey the course material through lectures, discussions, primary/secondary documents, guest speakers, instructional videos and PowerPoint presentations. Reciprocally, students are expected to take notes, listen proactively, ask questions, conduct service learning, and read the textbook.

Major Assignments / Assessments:

The following items will be assigned and assessed during the semester and used to calculate the student's final grade.

Assignments

1. Unit exams will be administered over textbook chapters, assigned readings, and lecture material. The number and style of the exams may vary based upon the instructor and the length of the course. The exams will measure the students' comprehension of the course material.
 2. Civics exercises, which are a form of service learning, will constitute a portion of the class grade. The purpose of civic exercises is to bring a practical application of the course material into daily life. The full extent of service-learning assignments may be determined by the instructor and vary based upon the length of the course.
 3. Weekly assignments will be administered during the semester. The assignments will cover the textbook chapters, assigned readings, and lecture material. The number and style of assignments will vary based upon the length of the semester and the individual instructor. Collectively, the assignments make up a main portion of the final grade as they ensure students are engaging the material and preparing for the exams.
 4. All students will be assigned with an attendance grade. The means by which the grade is calculated shall be determined by the individual instructor and vary based upon the method of course delivery (i.e. face-to-face or internet class). This grade is given as an incentive for students to attend class on a regular basis.
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Assessment(s):

1. Students must demonstrate their dedication to being responsible citizens by passing a quiz on the essentials of Texas government.
 2. Students must demonstrate their ability to think critically about government participating in a class discussion on a modern political issue.
 3. Students must demonstrate their ability to reasonably communicate ideas about current political issues by writing a letter to an elected official.
 4. Students must demonstrate their personal responsibility by regularly attending class throughout the semester.
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Assessment and Assignment Rules

1. **Instructor Academic Discretion:** The government department recognizes the necessity of academic freedom. As such, each instructor maintains the right to stipulate rules in addition to this syllabus concerning assignments, make-up work, grading rubrics, classroom recordings, excused absences, extra credit, and any other matters within the individual course offerings. All of the supplemental rules will be made available to the students at the start of the semester or in advance of the completion dates for individual assignments.
 2. **Academic Freedom:** The government department recognizes the right of the instructor and the students to address controversial subjects. Academic freedom is in essence the freedom of speech in the classroom through which ideas may be challenged and truth may be pursued. Consequently, the department firmly upholds the right of instructors and students to express in writing, speech, or symbolism their understanding, opinions, and knowledge on controversial subjects. The US Supreme Court has consistently upheld that the freedom of speech “concerning public affairs is more than self-expression; it is the essence of self-government.” ([Garrison v. LouisianaLinks to an external site.](#)): that “speech on public issues occupies the highest rung of the hierarchy of First Amendment values and is entitled to special protection” ([Connick v. MyersLinks to an external site.](#)); and “that Government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable” ([Texas v. JohnsonLinks to an external site.](#)). Therefore, academic freedom in this public, government funded course protects the instructor and students who express opinions on public issues which some may deem offensive.
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Academic freedom does not protect the libel or slander of *private persons*. Libel and slander consist of written and verbal defamation of a person’s character through the *intentional* disbursement of *patently false* information. ([New York Times v. SullivanLinks to an external site.](#) and [Gertz v. Robert WelchLinks to an external site.](#)). Furthermore, academic freedom does not protect **obscenity** as it is possible to freely discuss controversial issues without being obscene. Obscenity follows three basic guidelines: (a) whether "the average person, applying contemporary community standards" would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest, (b) whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and (c) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. ([Miller v. CaliforniaLinks to an external site.](#)). In an appeal to the “community standards” of the classroom, students are required to wear modest clothing and maintain a standard of behavior consistent with the college code of conduct so as not to disrupt the learning environment. The instructor and the college reserve the right to remove students from the class, fail students, and hold disciplinary actions in accord with college policy for issues of libel, slander, and obscenity.

Finally, academic freedom and free speech are not excusatory protections for the violation of the student code of conduct, for the poor performance on graded materials, or for the failure to submit graded materials.

3. **Academic Honesty:** The central theme of education is the enlightenment of the mind. This can only be achieved by hard, honest work. Consequently, cheating and plagiarism are strictly prohibited in the course. A student must not receive from or give to any other student information, answers, or help during an exam. A student must not "steal" the answers from an unsuspecting student during an exam. A student must not use any sources for answers during an exam (including, but not limited to notes, books, or electronic devices) without

prior authorization from the professor. A student must not obtain exam questions illegally, tamper with the exam questions, nor change the results of an exam after it has been graded.

Students are prohibited from plagiarizing any assignments. Plagiarism consists in the taking of another person's ideas, words, or information and claiming those properties as one's own. Properly quoting and citing borrowed information is NOT plagiarism. However, since academic integrity is based on the originality of a student's work, no student may submit an assignment that contains an excessive amount of properly cited material. The standards and violations of academic honesty shall be further defined by the individual instructor (in accord with college policy). Individual instructors reserve the right to employ any means for proving academic dishonesty. Students have the right to contest a plagiarism or cheating claim through the college appeals process

Course

Grade:

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

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- Exams: 60%
 - Civics Exercises: 20%
 - Weekly Assignments: 20%
 - Attendance: Students must attend/complete 80% of the course to receive a passing grade.
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Grade Distribution

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- A = 90-100
 - B = 80-89
 - C = 70-79
 - D = 60-69
 - F = 59 or below
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Texts, Materials, and Supplies:

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- This course uses an Open Educational Resource Textbook. The book is provided to the students for free within their Canvas shells.
 - Other Reading Articles may be distributed at the instructor's discretion
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Required Readings:

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- The textbook
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Recommended Readings:

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- The Texas Constitution (1876)
 - The Texas Declaration of Independence
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Other:

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- Courses conducted via video conferencing may be recorded and shared for instructional purposes by the instructor.
 - For current texts and materials, use the following link to access bookstore listings: <http://www.panolacollegestore.com> [Links to an external site.](#)
 - For testing services, use the following link: <http://www.panola.edu/elearning/testing.html> [Links to an external site.](#)

- If any student in this class has special classroom or testing needs because of a physical learning or emotional condition, please contact the ADA Student Coordinator in Support Services located in the Administration Building or go to <http://www.panola.edu/student-success/disability-support-services/Links to an external site.> for more information.
 - Withdrawing from a course is the student's responsibility. Students who do not attend class and who do not withdraw will receive the grade earned for the course.
 - Student Handbook, *The Pathfinder*: <http://www.panola.edu/student-success/documents/pathfinder.pdf> [Links to an external site.](#) Open this document with ReadSpeaker docReader [Links to an external site.](#)
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Course Schedule/Calendar

Course Tutorial

Read all documents in course tutorial

Profile Picture (due by 10-15)

Take Class Policies Quiz (due by 10-15)

Do Civics Exercise Tutorial (due by 10-15)

Introduction Discussion Forum (due by 10-15)

Join Facebook Group (due by 10-15)

Unit 1

Chapter 1: Texas Demographics, Culture, and Public Opinion

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, and Written Assignments (due by 10-20)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 2: Texas History and Politics

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, and Written Assignments (due by 10-22)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 3: Federalism and State Governance

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, and Written Assignments (due by 10-24)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 4: The Texas State Constitution

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, and Written Assignments (due by 10-26)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Read the Unit Exam 1 Study Guide

Take Unit Exam 1 (due by 10-28)

Unit 2

Chapter 5: The Texas Legislature

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, Civic Exercises, and Written Assignments (due by 10-28)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 6: Texas Governors and the Executive Branch

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, and Written Assignments (due by 11-2)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 7: The Texas Court System

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, Civic Exercises, and Written Assignments (due by 11-5)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 8: Local Government in Texas

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, Civic Exercises, and Written Assignments (due by 11-7)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Unit 3

Read the Unit Exam 2 Study Guide

Take Unit Exam 2 (due by 11-8)

Chapter 9: The Criminal Justice System

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, and Written Assignments (due by 11-10)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 10: Public Policy

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, Civic Exercises, and Written Assignments (due by 11-12)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 11: Economy and Fiscal Policy

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, and Written Assignments (due by 11-14)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Read the Unit Exam 3 Study Guide

Take Unit Exam 3 (requires Honorlock or must be taken at testing center) (due by 11-16)

Unit 4

Chapter 12: Elections and Campaigns

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, and Written Assignments (due by 11-18)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 13: Political Parties

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, and Written Assignments (due by 11-20)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 14: Voting and Political Participation

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, Civic Exercises, and Written Assignments (due by 11-22)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Chapter 15: Interest Groups and the Media

Read the Chapter in the Textbook

All Quizzes, Video Quizzes, Scavenger Hunts, Discussions, and Written Assignments (due by 12-2)

Facebook Group: Two Posts/Two Comments per week

Read the Unit Exam 4 Study Guide

Take Unit Exam 4 (due by 12-4)

Do the Concluding Discussion Forum (due by 12-5)

Do the Alternate Film Project (for those who did not do Facebook) (due by 12-5)

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

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 October 1. The last date to withdraw from the 16-week session is November 14. The last date to withdraw for the 2nd 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 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.