



**GOVT-2306-101CL
Texas Government
Fall 2023**

Tuesday & Thursday 9:30 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. LRC 258

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 11:00am - 12:30pm; Wednesday 9:30 - 10:30am

Required Textbook: *Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas*. Ken Collier, Steven Galatas, and Julie Harrelson-Stephens. CQ Press. <https://edge.sagepub.com/collier8e>

Course Description: This course is designed to provide you with a fundamental understanding of government and politics in Texas, but especially the following topics: Origin and development of the Texas Constitution, structure and powers and state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas. Ultimately, my goal for you in this class is to become an informed and critical thinker as well as a participant in American politics. You will also learn about current political debates, the 2022 elections, and the 2023 legislative session in order to understand the impact of Texas politics on your life.

Course Assignment: All assignments will be submitted via [D2L](#)

1) Attendance and Participation (5%)

- Attendance and participation will be measured based on the following criteria:
 - Submitting assignments on time.

2) Homework (15%): The deadline is every Sunday 11:59 p.m.

- Homework includes:
 - (1) Reading assignments: In addition to the textbook, you must read all the reading materials in the content folder every week.
 - (2) Discussions (**D**): The instructor posts a thread on the Discussion Board every week. You are required to post your reaction (click “Reply”) to share with your classmates. There is no minimum word requirement, but you must post at least one comment each week. Read your classmates’ comments as well.
 - (3) Journal (**J**): After finishing the reading assignments, you are required to post your reaction on the Weekly Journal. The minimum requirement is one paragraph, about 200 words.
 - (4) Other homework will be announced in class (**HW**)

- Late homework will not be accepted (unless it is the result of an officially excused absence).
- Each homework assignment (D, J, and HW) is worth 10 points.

3) Position Paper (15%) – Due: November 18 (Saturday)

- Write a Position Paper on a current public policy controversy in Texas (e.g., Should Private Businesses Have the Right to Deny Service Based on Their Religious Beliefs and Practices?) except about legalization of marijuana.
- Write a paper taking a position (yes or no) on a current public policy controversy. Conduct research on the topic, citing at least three 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.
- The paper should be 1000 words (approximately 5 pages), double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and a 12-point font, Chicago Manual Style (CMS) - Author-Date.

4) Communication Skills (5%) – Due: November 18 (Saturday)

- (1) Make a reservation at the Tutoring Center: <https://www.com.edu/tutoring/index.html>
- (2) Attend a session (f2f, online, or e-tutoring)
- (3) Revise your paper after the session.
- (4) Upload a report (email from the Tutoring Center) to D2L

5) Exams (15% x 4 = 60%)

- You have four exams.
 - Part 1: Closed-book, multiple choice questions (45 questions * 2 points = 90 points).
 - Part 2: Open-book, short answer questions (2 questions * 5 points = 10 points)

Grading Scale

A: 100 – 90% average
 B: 89.99 – 80% average
 C: 79.99 – 70% average
 D: 69.99 – 60% average
 F: Below 60% average

Make-Up Policy:

Make-up exams will only be allowed at the discretion of the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to request permission from the instructor to take an early or make-up exam.

Paper Assignment Guidelines

- Format: Chicago Manual Style (CMS) - Author-Date.
- Times New Roman
 - 12-point
 - Double-spaced
 - 1-inch margins
 - NO footnotes
 - Microsoft WORD file format (.doc or .docx)
- 1000 words (without a title or reference page)
- Include a title page and a reference page.
- When you cite, use a direct or indirect quote, but you can only use ONE direct quote per paper.
- Insert [citations](#)
- Do not use subtitles.
- You can use the following sources as citations:
 - Academic journal articles
 - Newspaper articles
 - Data and articles from government websites or research institutes such as Pew Research Center
- You CANNOT use the following sources as citations:
 - Wikipedia
 - Procon.org
 - Any other blogs, non-academic websites
 - Editorial page in newspaper
- You CANNOT use or cite papers you wrote before.

• Paper Grading Rubric

Criteria	0%	50%	100%	Points
Formatting	Wholly fails to respond to assignment (i.e., no title page, no reference page, font size, margin size).	Responds reasonably well to assignment.	Responds fully and appropriately to the assignment.	20
Volume	Includes less than 250 words	Includes about 500 words	Includes about 1000 words	20
Argument	Wholly fails to relate evidence to thesis statement.	Thesis is generally supported by logically competing assertions and appropriate connections.	Thesis is clear and logical.	30
Use of Evidence	Wholly failures to use sources appropriately.	Sometimes weak use of source information, inadequately supports thesis.	Appropriate source information used to support thesis.	30

Course Schedule

The exact dates are tentative.

Week	Date	Topic	Chapter	Student Learner Outcome
1	08/29, 31	Introduction	1	
2	09/05, 07	U.S. Constitution	2, 7	1, 2
3	09/12, 14	Federalism	1, 2, 7	1, 2
4	09/19 09/21	Texas Constitution, Exam 1	1, 2, 7	1, 2
5	09/26, 28	Texas Legislature 1	3	3, 4
6	10/03, 05	Texas Legislature 2	3	3, 4
7	10/10, 12	Governors; Plural Executive	4, 5	3, 4
8	10/17 10/19	Judiciary Exam 2	6	3, 4
9	10/24, 26	Elections	7,8	6, 7
10	10/31, 11/02	Political Parties	9	6, 7
11	11/07, 09	Interest Groups	10	5, 6
12	11/14 11/16	Local Government Exam 3	11	2, 3
13	11/21 11/23	TBA No class		
14	11/28, 30	Fiscal Policy, Education Policy	12, 14	3
15	12/05, 07	Social Policy	14	3
16	12/12 12/14	Exam 4 TBA		

Exam 1. (Sep 21): U.S. Constitution, Federalism, Texas Constitution

Exam 2. (Oct 19): Texas Legislature, Governors, Plural Executives, Judiciary

Exam 3. (Nov 16): Elections, Political Parties, Interest Groups

Exam 4. (Dec 12): Local Government, Fiscal Policy, Education and Social Policy

Paper Assignment: Nov 18 (Saturday)

Student Learner Outcome	Connects to Core Objective	Assessed via this Assignment
1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.		Exam
2. Demonstrate an understanding of state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.		Exam
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.		Exam
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.		Exam

5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties.	Critical Thinking	Paper
6. Analyze the state and local election process.		Exam
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.		Exam
8. Analyze issues, policies, and political culture of Texas.	Critical Thinking	Paper
9. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through written communication	Critical Thinking	Paper
10. Evaluate choices and actions of others or one's own and relate consequences to decision-making.	Critical Thinking	Paper

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is recorded at all sessions. You are also expected to arrive on time. Students who have been absent from a class four times may be dropped from the course by the instructor. Note that attendance does not mean sitting on a chair in a classroom. When the instructor notices you are doing unrelated activities (e.g. checking cellphone, websites, sleeping), the instructor may ask you to leave the class and you will be treated as an absence.

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.

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 Rocky Barney rbarney@com.edu.

Technology Outage Policy:

This class includes a distance-education class using D2L for notes, lectures, and assessments. 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 software as required by the instructor; a stable Internet connection, etc. The instructor is not required to give consideration for lost/missing/unacceptable work stemming from technical noncompliance and/or end-user technical issues. Failure to maintain Internet access shall not constitute a valid excuse for missed work. Any student who cannot keep up with the coursework owing to a lack of computers or Internet must drop the course. In short, if you fail to complete an assignment because your computer crashes or loses internet access, you forget to attach a file or click submit on an assignment, or you did not use the appropriate browser or operating system you are not entitled to make up an assignment. If the assignment was not completed due to your error, it cannot be made up. If you find yourself encountering an error when submitting a written assignment via D2L your best bet would be to send that assignment to me via an email attachment and explain the situation.

Note: If you cannot open PDF files on D2L, you have to install Adobe Acrobat Reader and/or Plug-in on your computer. Please visit Adobe's websites below to install and/or solve problems:

- [Adobe Acrobat Reader DC](#)
- [Solutions to common issues viewing PDFs from a website](#)
- [Solve PDF issues by reconfiguring your browser to work with Acrobat or Reader plug-in](#)

Classroom Conduct Policy: College of the Mainland requires that students enrolled at COM be familiar with the Standards of Student Conduct, which can be found in the on-line Student Handbook. <http://www.com.edu/student-services/student-handbook.php>. Students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the Student Code of Conduct. Any violations of the Code of Conduct will result in a referral to the Dean of Students and may result in dismissal from this class.

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 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 appropriate discipline action. Please read *Paper Assignment Guidelines*.

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.