



**Government 2306-122C4
Texas Government
Fall 2025
MTWTH 11:00 AM-12:20 PM
Learning Resources Center (Bldg. # 8), Rm. 252**

Instructor Information

Name: Mr. John Presnall

Email: jpresnall@com.edu

Phone: 409.933.8126

Student/Office Hours: MW 10:00-11:00; TTH 10:00-11:00 AM; TTH 1:30-3:00 PM; M 3:00-3:30 (online)

Office Location: Learning Resource Center (Building # 8), 215C

Required Textbook: Andrew Teas, et al., Texas Government (Davis, CA: LibreTexts, 2025).

<https://commons.libretexts.org/book/socialsci-129117>

Course Description: Government 2306 is an introduction to politics and government in the state of Texas. The purpose of this introduction is to acquire knowledge of the basic principles and practices of state politics.

This semester we will study federalism and inter-governmental relations, the political culture of Texas, the origin and development of the Texas Constitution, the structure and powers of state government, political participation, the election process, and issues in public policy.

This introductory course will also attempt to understand some of the basic questions and problems encountered in political science and political philosophy. For an introduction to these questions, we will read an essay "The Five Conceptions of American Liberty" by Carl Eric Scott to explore some of the basic concepts of political science.

Course Requirements

Course Exams: There are three (3) Unit Exams. Each exam will cover the required textbook chapter readings, lecture notes, and additional readings. The exams will consist of multiple-choice questions.

Short Papers: There are (4) short papers (2 pages at a minimum) over a selected topic. Additional information on grading rubric, submission, format, citations, etc. will be provided in the assignment file. Submit in class.

Research Paper: Write a Position Paper on a specific controversy in current public policy discourse and debate in the state of Texas (e.g., Should marijuana be legalized in Texas?; Should Texas legalize casino gambling?; Should Texas prohibit “sanctuary cities?”; Should Texas prohibit the teaching of “Critical Race Theory” in public primary and secondary schools?; Should Texas reverse its voting laws requiring a government issue photo ID and prohibiting mail in ballots?; Should Texas introduce Covid vaccine mandates?; etc.).

Make sure that your paper is on a topic that is statewide in Texas in scope, and not an issue that pertains to the entire nation. The paper can cover an already existing policy or a proposed policy.

Write a paper on an issue in public policy. Explain and describe it in detail (what is the question of controversy at hand. Explain and describe the policy or proposed policy (what is the law, the executive action, the administrative regulation, or the judicial ruling) that has determined or could determine the policy? What is current policy and what is being changed? What does the policy do or intend to do?). Take a position on the policy or proposed policy (whether in favor of it or against it) and make an argument in defense of the position.

Conduct research on the topic, citing at least three sources from credible and reliable publications, web sites, journals, books, etc. The COM Library has a database to assist in research on many topics. Formulate an argument based on evidence in defense of the position you are taking. Also, respond to the most common objections to this position.

Explain how this position is related to the issues of personal responsibility and social responsibility.

The paper should be 1300 words (approximately 5 pages), double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and a 12-point font. Use a standard style for references, citations, and the list of sources (e.g., MLA, Chicago, or APA). Submit in class.

Emergency Assignment: If for any reason the college closes, continue to work on the assignments spelled out in your syllabus and refer to Brightspace D2L for and possible further instruction regarding any possible Emergency Closing Assignments.

Determination of Grade

Unit Exams— 45% (15% each) toward final grade.

Papers— 40% (10% each) toward final grade.

Research Paper— 15% toward final grade.

A 100-90

B 89-80

C 79-70

D 69-60

F 59-0

Late Work, Make-Up, and Extra Credit Policy: Late and make-up work will be accepted on a case-by-case basis. Students need to notify the instructor via email of any problems in this regard. Extra Credit assignments will be offered toward the end of the semester.

Attendance: Attendance is required for every class. Roll is taken every day. In case of an absence, it is the student's responsibility to get missing class materials.

Tardiness: Tardiness disrupts the class. Students must be on time. Frequent tardiness will adversely affect the student's overall learning.

Withdrawal: It is the student's responsibility to acquire and complete the drop form before the semester deadline. Any student who ceases to attend the class and fails to withdraw will receive an "F" for the course. The instructor also reserves the right to withdraw any student due to insufficient academic progress in the class.

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 Learner Outcome (SLO)	Maps 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,		Exam

executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.		
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties.	Communication	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.	Communication	Paper
9. Complete a required paper on a selected writing pertaining to issues in Texas government and politics	Communication	Paper
10. Evaluate choices and actions of others or one's own and relate consequences to decision-making.	Communication	Paper

Academic Dishonesty: Any incident of academic dishonesty 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. The student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for appropriate disciplinary action.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas in a written assignment without giving proper citation. Without citation, it includes paraphrasing someone else's words, copying directly from a website and pasting it into a written assignment, and using someone else's words without quotation marks. Any written 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 disciplinary 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 Department Chair, Shinya Wakao at 409-933-8107 or swakao@com.edu.

Texas Government Course Outline

Unit 1—Political Science, Federalism, Texas Political Culture—Weeks 1, 2 & 3

Readings:

Carl Eric Scott, “The Five Conceptions of American Liberty”

The Federalist Papers, no. 39

Martin Diamond, “What the Framers Meant by Federalism”

Textbook Chapter 2—Federalism

Textbook Chapter 1—Texas Political History and Political Culture

Assignments:

Paper 1: On Carl Eric Scott, “The Five Conceptions of Liberty”

Paper 2: On Federalism

Unit 1 Exam

Research Paper Due Sunday, November 30, 2025

Unit 2—Constitution of the State of Texas, Political Parties, Elections, and Interest Groups—Weeks 3, 4 & 5

Readings:

The Constitution of the State of Texas

<http://www.constitution.legis.state.tx.us/>

Textbook Chapter 3—The Constitution of the State of Texas

Textbook Chapter 4—Political Parties in Texas

Textbook Chapter 5—Voting, Campaigns, and Elections in Texas

Textbook Chapter 6—Organized Interests in Texas

Assignments:

Paper 3: On the Texas Constitution

Unit 2 Exam

Unit 3—Texas Political Institutions and Public Policy—Weeks 6, 7 & 8

Readings:

Textbook Chapter 7—Texas State Legislature

Textbook Chapters 8—Texas State Executive Branch

Textbook Chapters 9 & 12—Texas State Judiciary and Criminal Justice System

Textbook Chapter 11—Public Policy in Texas

Assignments:

Paper 4: Institutions of Texas Government
Unit 3 Exam

Research Paper Due Tuesday, Sunday. November 30, 2025

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_v6.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.

Success & Support Services: College of the Mainland is committed to providing students the necessary support and tools for success in their college career. 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 only permitted to withdraw six times during their college career according to state law. The last day to withdraw 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 for 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 the 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 need 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.