



GOVT 2305.221H2 Federal Government

Hybrid Lecture Monday 06:00PM - 08:50PM, Learning Resource, Bldg. #8, Room 255

Fall 2025 2nd 8-week Syllabus

Instructor Information:

- **Name:** Michele Betancourt
- **E-mail:** mbetancourt@com.edu
- **Phone:** 281-239-1590(M-R 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:

- Title: American Government 3rd edition
- Author: Glen Krutz - OPENSTAX
- The textbook can be accessed **free of charge** online and downloaded as a PDF file at: [American Government 3e - Openstax Online Textbook](#)

The textbook is mandatory, but if you don't like using an online version, you can print it out yourself or purchase a hard copy from any retailer, but that is optional.

Course Description: This course examines the origin and development of the U.S. Constitution, the structure and powers of the national government, including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, federalism, political participation, the national election process, public policy, civil liberties, and civil rights.

Course Requirements: This course primarily consists instructor led lessons online and face to face lectures and discussions. Notes and other supplementary articles will also be placed online to assist students and emphasize key ideas. The classroom lectures parallel and reinforce assigned textbook readings; therefore, it is essential that students keep up to date with their assigned readings.

Determination of Course Grade

Written Assignments: You will be assigned to write a position paper (yes/no; pro/con) on a current public policy controversy in the United States (e.g., Should Private Businesses Have the Right to Deny Service Based on Their Religious Beliefs and Practices? Should Marijuana Be Legalized? Etc.) This assignment will be submitted in 4 parts (one part in each unit. Part one is to sign-up for your topic; part 2 is an annotated bibliography, Part 3 is an outline, and Part 4 is your final paper project. You will need to research the topic, citing sources from credible and reliable publications, web sites, journals, books, etc. Formulate an argument based on evidence in defense of this position and explain how this position impacts the issues of personal

responsibility and social responsibility. Additionally, you will incorporate a variety of political elements such as political opinion, interest groups and political parties as well. Specific details on the assignments such as length, required elements, and format and citation requirements will be detailed in the assignment files located in Brightspace. Detailed grading rubrics and student samples will also be posted to guide your efforts.

Unit Exams: Each exam covers only the chapters and lesson notes from its unit and includes multiple-choice and matching questions and short essay questions. A study guide is provided at the start of each unit — print it and use it while attending lectures and reviewing online lesson notes.

You may use **two pages of handwritten notes** (front and back) on the exam. Notes must be shown at the start and end of the exam (typewritten notes will result in a 25% penalty).

Testing Requirements

All exams use Respondus LockDown Browser with Monitor and webcam. You must:

- Present an approved photo ID (driver's license, government ID, passport, military ID, or school ID) with **name and photo clearly visible** – feel free to cover other info with tape
- Complete a full environment scan, showing your desk/table, the entire testing area, and your handwritten notes. Poor scans may result in a retake and/or up to a 10% penalty.

Testing Environment Rules

- Sit at a desk, counter, or table — not on a bed or couch.
- Choose a quiet, well-lit space with no backlighting.
- Remain in view and avoid leaving your seat until finished.
- Wear appropriate attire; no hats, sunglasses, or items covering your eyes.
- Do not talk to others during the exam unless unavoidable.

Failure to follow these procedures may result in a retake with a 20% deduction. Attempts at cheating will be dealt with according to my academic dishonesty policies below.

Lesson Activities: As this is a hybrid course, a portion of the course materials will be presented online. There are eight online lessons and eight face-to-face lectures. Each set of online lesson notes will include a series of embedded videos and activities that must be completed. The activities may be re-done for a higher grade up until the due date listed on the course outline below.

Extra Credit: In addition to the regularly assigned materials, there are several opportunities to increase your grade through extra credit material. The introductory tasks at the beginning of the course can add up to 2% to your final average. Additionally, there are 3 unit extra credit assignments. Each unit extra credit is worth up to 1% toward your final average. Please pay attention to due dates, as late extra credit will not be accepted. If you complete all extra credit work, you can add up to 5% to your final course average.

Late work: Late work will have a 20% penalty. Only the Policy Project and Exams can be submitted late. Late work will only be accepted up to 3 days late. The Unit 3 exam cannot be submitted late as it is the end of the course. Lecture quizzes, extra credit and the online lesson activities cannot be submitted after the due date.

Detailed Grading Formula:

Grading Weights

Graded Work	Weight
Unit Exams	30%
Policy Project • Part 1-Topic Select • Part 2 - Outline	30% • 10 • 20%
Lesson Notes Activities	20 %
Lecture Quizzes	15 %

Final Grade 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.

Attendance Policy: If you want to pass, come to class. As this is a hybrid course, attendance is expected in BOTH the face to face component and the in the online environment. In an online environment, this means that you are expected to log into the course a minimum of 2 times per week and you should expect to spend at least 2-3 hours a week in the course reviewing lessons, and other course material, and completing assignments. The online material goes beyond the material presented in the text and face to face components, and you will be held accountable for this material on the exams and course assignments. NOTE: If, for any reason, the college closes, continue to work on the assignments spelled out in your syllabus and refer to Brightspace for further instructions.

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 Outcomes & Associated Objectives Outcomes Assessment

Student Learner Outcome	Connects to Core Objective	Assessed via Assignment
Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.	Critical Thinking (CT)	Exam
Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.		Exam
Describe the separation of powers and checks and balances in theory and practice.		Exam
Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the federal government		Exam
Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.	Critical Thinking (CT) Personal Responsibility (PR) Communication Skills (CS1)	Exam/Policy Paper
Analyze the 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 in the US.	Critical Thinking (CT) Social Responsibility (SR)	Exam/Policy Paper
Develop, interpret, and express ideas on a Government 2305-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 the 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

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense and will be addressed in accordance with college policy and the Student Handbook. Penalties may include a grade of zero on the assignment/exam, loss of any earned extra credit (and ineligibility for additional extra credit), referral to the Office of Student Conduct, and possible dismissal from the course.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Plagiarism:** Using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation, including material generated by AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT). This includes paraphrasing without credit, copying from websites, or using direct quotes without quotation marks.
- **Source Misuse / Citation Fraud:** Fabricating sources, falsifying publication details, quoting material not found in the cited source, or providing false page/paragraph numbers. All assignments require close reading citations with page or paragraph numbers for all in-text citations.
- **AI Use:** AI tools may be used only for brainstorming or outlining. They may not be used to write your semester paper or discussion postings. Any AI use must be acknowledged. Misuse will be treated as

plagiarism. I do not rely solely on AI detection scores but will review the body of your work and may require a meeting to explain your process.

- **Cheating:** Copying from another student, having someone else complete work for you, bringing/accessing unauthorized materials during exams, or attempting to bypass Respondus proctoring.
- **Collusion:** Inappropriately collaborating on assignments meant to be completed independently.

Resources for Avoiding Plagiarism: **Purdue OWL:** [Avoiding Plagiarism](#); [Plagiarism.org](#)

Technology Compliance Policy

This course uses Brightspace for all lectures, assessments, and materials. You are responsible for maintaining reliable computer hardware, stable internet access, and at least two updated browsers (Chrome & Firefox recommended), along with any required software. Technical problems are not an excuse for late or missing work. If your personal setup is unreliable, you must plan to use the [Library Computer Lab](#).

If you experience a tech issue, contact me immediately by phone or email, and report Brightspace or other college software problems to the COM Distance Education Helpdesk ([Submit a Ticket](#) or live chat, M–F, 8 AM–5 PM). Provide a screenshot of the error when possible. Work missed due to your own technical issues cannot be made up beyond the stated late period.

Student Concerns: If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of this course, please use the provided contact information. 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

Week / Dates	Monday In-Class Lecture (6–8:50 PM)	Tuesday–Sunday Online Work	Work Due (by SUN 11:59 PM)
Week 1 Oct 13–19	<i>Intro to Politics & the U.S. Constitution</i>	Read Ch. 1–3; Complete Culture & Ideology and Federalism Lesson Notes	Policy Project Part 1 – Topic Selection
Week 2 Oct 20–26	<i>Civil Liberties</i>	Read Ch. 4–5; Complete Civil Rights Lesson Notes	Unit 1 Lesson Notes Activities Unit 1 Exam: Opens Thu Oct 23 → Closes Sun Oct 26 @ 11:59 PM
Week 3 Oct 27–Nov 2	<i>Socialization & Public Opinion</i>	Read Ch. 6–7; Complete Elections & Campaigning Lesson Notes	Extra Credit #1
Week 4 Nov 3–9	<i>Media & Media Literacy</i>	Read Ch. 8–9; Complete Political Parties Lesson Notes	Extra Credit #2
Week 5 Nov 10–16	<i>Interest Groups</i>	Read Ch. 10	Unit 2 Lesson Notes Activities Unit 2 Exam: Opens Thu Nov 13 → Closes Sun Nov 16 @ 11:59 PM
Week 6 Nov 17–23	<i>Congress</i>	Read Ch. 11–12; Complete Legislative Process Notes	Extra Credit #3
Week 7 Nov 24–30	<i>The Presidency</i>	Read Ch. 13 & 15; Complete Bureaucracy Notes	Policy Project Part 2– Research Outline
Week 8 Dec 1–4	<i>Courts</i>	Read Ch. 16–17; Complete Policy Notes	Unit 3 Exam: Opens Sun Nov 30 → Closes Thu Dec 4 @ 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/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.