



GOVT 2305.01111 Federal Government Spring 2025 1st 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
- Author: Glen Krutz - OPENSTAX
- Edition: 3rd
- 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 of online lessons and discussions provided by the instructor. Additionally, videos and other supplementary articles may be used to emphasize key issues. The online lessons parallel and reinforce assigned textbook readings; therefore, students must keep up to date with their online work. A variety of means will be employed to evaluate student performance. The following sections explain the graded components of the course and the grading criteria to be used at the end of the semester.

Determination of Course Grade

Discussions

Discussions represent the interactive component of this course. The graded topics are related to the readings, presentations, and/or current events taking place in government today. These forums are a way of exchanging information with your fellow students. You will receive a grade for your thoughtful participation in the discussions associated with each of the topics. Remember: **unsupported opinions have no place in an academic environment**. You must be able to demonstrate your knowledge of the provided readings as well as any additional research on the assigned topic. "Participation" means that for each topic, you should post an Initial Post (a minimum of 250 words) as well as a Response Post to 2 other students (a minimum of 150 words each) for full credit. A grading rubric for the discussion forums will be provided in Brightspace. Although there will be two discussion topics for each unit of the course, you should **ONLY** post in **ONE** of those two topics per unit ...additional posts in other topics will not count. **DO NOT WAIT** until the end of the unit to begin posting. The initial post is due before the response posts. All response posts are due by 11:59pm on the last day of the unit. Pay close attention to due dates! Follow the discussion guidelines posted in the getting started section of the course. **Initial Posts and Response Posts have two DIFFERENT due dates – refer to the list of due dates posted on the course menu!**

Ground Rules for Online Discussion:

1. In the interest of promoting critical thinking, and serious discussion, students should be prepared to have their views challenged by the instructor and/or fellow students. Respect the right of others to have differing beliefs and attitudes. We do not all have to agree. However, we do need to be respectful in the way we disagree.
2. Disruptive behavior, which interferes with teaching and/or learning, will not be tolerated.

More guidelines for online discussion are provided in the Course Orientation document.

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 You must research the topic, citing sources from credible and reliable publications, websites, journals, books, etc. Formulate an argument based on evidence in

defense of this position and respond to the objections to this position. Additionally, you should explain how this position impacts personal and social responsibility issues. Additional details on the assignments, such as length, required elements, and format and citation requirements, will be detailed in the assignment file located in Brightspace. Detailed grading rubrics will also be posted to guide your research. You will need to submit a topic by the end of the first week of class.

Unit Exams

Each unit exam will cover only the chapters/lesson notes assigned for that unit and may consist of multiple choice, matching, and/or short essay questions. A study guide will be provided at the beginning of each unit so you can prepare for the exam.

Lesson Activities

There are 13 sets of lesson notes (4-5 per unit) assigned for the class. Throughout the lesson notes, there are practice activities to help you study. **These activities are ungraded and are for self-assessment purposes only but will greatly assist you with the exam.**

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 1% to your final average. Additionally, there are 2 unit extra credit assignments (unit 1 and 2). Each unit extra credit is worth up to 2% 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 flat 20% penalty. Not all work can be submitted late – see below. Pay careful attention to the list of due dates in the class. Do not solely rely on the Brightspace App or calendar as the dates do not always appear there.

- Exams 1-2 may be submitted up to 3 days late (Due Wednesday - can be submitted until Saturday). Exam 3 is due on the last day of class, so cannot be submitted late
- Extra Credit may not be submitted late.
- Discussions—The initial post can be submitted late (with a 20-point penalty), but all discussion posts (initial and responses) are due by the due date. Response posts cannot be submitted late.
- The Public Policy Paper may be submitted up to 3 days late (Due Wednesday - can be submitted until Saturday). Late Papers will have a 20% penalty.

Detailed Grading Formula:

Grading Weights

Graded Work	Weight
Unit Exams	45%
Discussions	30%
Written Assignment	25%

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. In an online environment, this means that you are **expected to log into the course a minimum of 3 times per week** and you should expect to spend at least 6-8 hours a week in the course reviewing lessons, and other course material, and completing assignments, exams, and discussions. The online material goes beyond the material presented in the text, and you will be held accountable for this material on the exams and course assignments. The discussion component of the course also requires you to engage your fellow students in "conversation," which requires you to read and respond to posts regularly. **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 (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

Any incident of academic dishonesty will be dealt with following college policy and the Student Handbook. Academic dishonesty is a severe offense and may result in a penalty up to and including a **grade of zero**.

forfeiture of any earned extra credit (and prohibited from submitting additional extra credit) on that exam/assignment/etc. and possible referral to the Office of Student Conduct for the appropriate disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the course. The instructor reserves the right to define “Academic Dishonesty.” Below are some examples of Academic Honesty (not an exhaustive list; academic dishonesty is not limited to only these types of incidences):

Plagiarism -

Plagiarism is using someone else’s words or ideas and claiming them as your own (Including Chat GPT or another AI). Plagiarism is a very serious offense. Plagiarism includes paraphrasing someone else’s words without giving a proper citation, copying directly from a website and pasting it into your paper, and using someone else’s words without quotation marks. Any assignment containing any plagiarized material will receive a **grade of zero, forfeiture of any earned extra credit (and prohibited from submitting additional extra credit)** and the student may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for the appropriate disciplinary action.

Links to Resources about Avoiding Plagiarism:

1. [Purdue OWL: Avoiding Plagiarism](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/) https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/
2. [Plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org/) http://www.plagiarism.org/
3. [eLearners How to Avoid Plagiarism](http://www.elearners.com/online-education-resources/online-learning/how-to-avoid-plagiarism/) http://www.elearners.com/online-education-resources/online-learning/how-to-avoid-plagiarism/

Cheating

Cheating includes looking at or copying from another student's exam, having another person take an exam or complete a project or assignment for you (This includes ChatGPT), bringing/accessing unauthorized notes, texts, audio/video recordings, electronic devices, or other materials to complete an online exam, and/or obtaining or distributing unauthorized copies of exams or any part of an exam.

Collusion

Collusion is inappropriately collaborating on assignments designed to be completed independently. This course is designed to be completed independently.

Please -- if you are having trouble of any kind, discuss it with me. The tiny advantage you would get from cheating is vastly outweighed by the risk you would be taking. I am willing to help you in any way I can, but I will NOT excuse academic dishonesty no matter how much I like you or feel sorry for you.

Technology Compliance Policy

This class uses a Learning Management System called Brightspace for lectures, assessments, and other course-related materials and links. 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 browsers,
- multiple (minimum of 2) browsers (recommended: Chrome & Firefox),
- appropriate and adequate computer hardware,
- a stable Internet connection,
- and other up-to-date software as required by the instructor.

The instructor is not required to consider lost/missing/unacceptable work from technical non-compliance and/or end-user technical issues. Failure to maintain Internet or computer access is not a valid excuse for missed work. Any student who cannot keep up with the coursework owing to a lack of computer or Internet access or functionality should refer to the [Library Computer Lab hours of operation](https://www.com.edu/computer-labs/library-computer-lab) (<https://www.com.edu/computer-labs/library-computer-lab>) and plan to complete all coursework during posted hours (including testing, as needed).

In short, if you fail to complete an assignment or exam because your computer crashes or loses internet access, forget to attach a file, attach a wrong/blank/empty file to an assignment, did not verify submission of the correct file/information/link/etc., or did not use the appropriate browser or operating system to access and complete course work, then you are not entitled to make up the course work. If the assignment, discussion, project, or exam was not completed or submitted on time due to your error or end-user technological issues, it cannot be made up beyond the stated late period for that assignment.

In the event you experience a technology problem or error, it is your responsibility to communicate **immediately** (not the next day, not 3 hours later) with your instructor using a working form of technology, via phone (see contact instructions in Brightspace) or email [at mbetancourt@com.edu](mailto:mbetancourt@com.edu). If you experience any technology problems or errors with *college* software (Brightspace, etc.), **immediately** notify the DE department at College of the Mainland (COM) by submitting a ticket through [Parature](http://com.parature.com) (<http://com.parature.com>). If possible, make a screenshot of the error and email it to your instructor as well as the Distance Education Helpdesk. Contacting COM's Distance Education department can be accomplished by submitting a ticket through [Parature](http://com.parature.com) (<http://com.parature.com>) or via live chat Monday to Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM whenever the college is open.

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

Course Introduction: January 13-15

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	All documents located in the Getting Started section	January 13 -15
Graded Assignment(s)	Introductory Tasks (Extra Credit 1)	Wednesday, January 15, by 11:59 pm

Unit 1- US Political Foundations: January 15-February 5

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 1 and Culture and Ideology Lesson Notes Chapter 2 and Constitution Lesson Notes Chapter 3 and Federalism Lesson Notes Chapter 4 and Civil Liberties Lesson Notes Chapter 5 and Civil Rights Lesson Notes	January 15 – February 5
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 1 - Initial Discussion Post	Wednesday, January 29 by 11:59 pm
Graded Assignment(s)	Topic Selection	Sunday, January 19, by 11:59 pm
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion Response Posts	Wednesday, February 5, by 11:59 pm
Extra Credit	Extra Credit 1 – Case Analysis	Sunday, February 9 by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 1 Exam	Opens: Sunday, February Due: Wednesday, February 5, by 11:59 pm

Unit 2-US Political Participation: February 5 – February 19

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 6 and Public Opinion Lesson Notes Chapter 7 and Voting and Elections Lesson Notes Chapter 9 and Political Parties Lesson Notes Chapter 10 and Interest Group Lesson Notes	February 5 - 19
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 2 - Initial Discussion Post	Wednesday, February 12, by 11:59 pm
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 2 - Response Posts	Wednesday, February 19, by 11:59 pm
Extra Credit	Extra Credit 2 – Current Events	Sunday, February 23 by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 2 Exam	Opens: Sunday, February 16 Due: Wednesday, February 19, by 11:59 pm

Unit 3-US Political Institutions: February 19 – March 5

Assignment Type	Assignment Name	Due Date/Date Range
Required Reading	Chapter 11 and Congress Lesson Notes Chapter 12 and Presidency Lesson Notes Chapter 13 and Judiciary Lesson Notes Chapter 16 and Policy Lesson Notes	February 19 – March 5
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 3 - Initial Discussion Post	Wednesday, February 26, by 11:59 pm
Graded Assignment(s)	Public Policy Paper	Wednesday, February 26, by 11:59 pm
Graded Discussion Post(s)	Discussion 3 Response Post	Wednesday, March 5, by 11:59 pm
Exam	Unit 3 Exam	Opens: Sunday, March 2 Due: Wednesday, March 5, by 11:59 pm

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_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, 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 February 26. The last date to withdraw from the 16-week session is April 21. The last date to withdraw for the 2nd 8-week session is April 30.

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.