

McLennan
C O M M U N I T Y
COLLEGE

WACO, TEXAS

COURSE SYLLABUS
AND
INSTRUCTOR PLAN

TEXAS GOVERNMENT
GOVT 2306.F80

LARRY G. SALAZAR

NOTE: This is an 8-week course.

COVID-19 Notice:

McLennan Community College is committed to providing you with every resource you need to reach your academic goals. We are also concerned for your safety. We are working through COVID-19 guidelines to make sure we offer a safe environment for you and our faculty. This will include smaller class sizes to manage social distancing and proper cleaning techniques. You will have the advantage of a physical classroom experience but may also need to work part of the time online as we adjust to limited classroom capacity. This will also allow us the flexibility to move online, if so directed by federal, state and/or local COVID-19 guidelines. Faculty and staff are preparing now to ensure that you have the best experience in the midst of these uncertain times.

Course Description: Texas Government (Texas constitution & topics)

Origin and development of the Texas Constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.

Prerequisites and/or Corequisites:

Prerequisite: Must have passed the reading portion of the TSI or credit for INRW 0402.

Recommended: Sophomore standing or completion of HIST 1301 and 1302 recommended.

Corequisite: May be taken before or after GOVT 2305 (or simultaneously).

Course Notes and Instructor Recommendations:

This course will be taught as indicated in the MCC Course Catalog. Therefore, you do not have to have any prior knowledge of government, but the course will be taught as if the student has successfully completed HIST 1301 and 1302. This will not be required, however. Also, students should have basic computer knowledge and skills in order to successfully navigate online.

Instructor Information:

Instructor Name: Larry G. Salazar

MCC E-mail: lsalazar@mclennan.edu

Office Phone Number: (254) 299-8958

Office Location: MAC 311

Office/Teacher Conference Hours: MTWR 7:00-8:00, F 7:00-11:00 (virtual), & by appointment

Other Instruction Information: <https://mclennan.zoom.us/j/2542998958>

Required Text & Materials:

Title: *The State of Texas: Government, Politics, and Policy*

Author: Sherri Mora {hereinafter Mora}

Edition: 4th

Publisher: McGraw Hill

ISBN: 978-1-260-16724-5

MCC Bookstore Website: <http://www.mclennan.edu/bookstore/>

Student Support/Resources:

MCC provides a variety of services to support student success in the classroom and in your academic pursuits to include counseling, tutors, technology help desk, advising, financial aid, etc. A listing of these and the many other services available to our students is available at <http://www.mclennan.edu/campus-resource-guide/>

College personnel recognize that food, housing, and transportation are essential for student success. If you are having trouble securing these resources, we encourage you to contact a success coach by calling (254) 299-8226. Students can visit the Completion Center Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. to meet with a success coach and receive additional resources and support to help reach academic and personal goals. Paulanne's Pantry (MCC's food pantry) is open 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, without an appointment. The Completion Center and pantry are located on the Second Floor of the Student Services Center (SSC).

MCC Foundation Emergency Grant Fund

Unanticipated expenses, such as car repairs, medical bills, housing, or job loss can affect us all. Should an unexpected expense arise, the MCC Foundation has an emergency grant fund that may be able to assist you. Please go to <https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/scholarships-and-resources/emergencygrant.html> to find out more about the emergency grant. The application can be found [here](https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/docs/Emergency_Grant_Application.pdf) (https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/docs/Emergency_Grant_Application.pdf).

Minimum Technical Skills:

Students should have basic computer skills, knowledge of word processing software, and a basic understanding of how to use search engines and common web browsers.

Backup Plan for Technology:

In the event MCC's technology systems are down, you will be contacted/notified through your MCC student email address. Please note that all assignments and activities will be due on the date specified in the Instructor Plan, unless otherwise noted by the instructor.

* [Click Here for the Minimum System Requirements to Utilize MCC's D2L/Brightspace](https://www.mclennan.edu/center-for-teaching-and-learning/Faculty%20and%20Staff%20Commons/requirements.html)

(<https://www.mclennan.edu/center-for-teaching-and-learning/Faculty%20and%20Staff%20Commons/requirements.html>)

Click on the link above for information on the minimum system requirements needed to reliably access your courses in MCC's D2L|Brightspace learning management system.

Email Policy:

McLennan Community College would like to remind you of the policy (<http://www.mclennan.edu/employees/policy-manual/docs/E-XXXI-B.pdf>) regarding college email. All students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to use their McLennan email addresses when conducting college business.

A student's McLennan email address is the preferred email address that college employees should use for official college information or business. Students are expected to read and, if needed, respond in a timely manner to college emails.

Instructional Uses of Email:

Faculty members can determine classroom use of email or electronic communications. Faculty should expect and encourage students to check the college email on a regular basis. Faculty should inform students in the course syllabus if another communication method is to be used and of any special or unusual expectations for electronic communications.

If a faculty member prefers not to communicate by email with her/his students, it should be reflected in the course syllabus and information should be provided for the preferred form of communication.

Email on Mobile Devices:

The College recommends that you set up your mobile device to receive McLennan emails.

Forwarding Emails:

You may forward the emails that come to your McLennan address to alternate email addresses; however, the College will not be held responsible for emails forwarded to an alternate address that may become lost or placed in junk or spam filters.

Methods of Teaching and Learning:

Information from the instructor will be provided each week that we will be covering a chapter online through the weekly learning units. Learning units will be comprised of instructor's information of text along with various web links that students may examine for further information. Each week will end with some type of "assignment," whether it be a discussion board posting, a quiz, or an examination. The discussion boards provide an opportunity for students to provide personal input into the subject matter discussed that week. Quizzes will cover only the chapter covered for that particular week and are designed to assess learning. Examinations will be administered online through Brightspace's testing center.

Course Objectives and/or Competencies:

This course is designed to examine the key elements and components of the Texas political system. To begin the course, we will highlight the state of Texas' unique historical, cultural, and economic importance. This will provide the framework for evaluating our unique state structure regarding the players of the political game who have access and influence over the political decision-making process in the state including: Texas legislature/executive/judicial branches and interest groups/lobbyists within the state of Texas. Lastly, we will examine the impact of elections, political parties, and important public policies.

Courses in this category focus on consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas. Courses involve the analysis of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations.

- **Critical Thinking Skills (CT):** "to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information."
- **Communication Skills (COMM):** "to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication."
- **Social Responsibility (SR):** "to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities."
- **Personal Responsibility (PR):** "to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making."

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

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.

Technical Support:

For technical support, please do one of the following:

- contact the Information Systems and Services Help Desk at (254) 299-8077
- e-mail the Information Systems and Services Help Desk at helpdesk@mclennan.edu

Other Links of Possible Interest:

- MCC Library: <http://www.mclennan.edu/library>
- Student Support Services: <http://www.mclennan.edu/students/sss>

Course Outline or Schedule:

This course outline is subject to change. Instructor will notify students during class and will attempt to make an announcement on Brightspace upon any changes necessary during the course semester. Students are responsible for staying up-to-date with any changes made.

Brief Course Outline:

Exam# 1 (Overview & Background: 40 Multiple-Choice Questions)

- Chapter 1: Introduction to Texas History and Politics
- Chapter 2: The American Federal System and the Texas State Constitution
- Chapter 7: Local Governments in Texas

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Exam# 2 (Texas Governmental Institutions at Work: 40 Multiple-Choice Questions)

- Chapter 12: Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas
- Chapter 3: The Texas Legislature
- Chapter 4: The Executive Department and the Office of the Governor of Texas
- Chapter 5: The Court System in Texas
- Chapter 6: The Criminal Justice System in Texas

Exam# 3 (Processes and Policies of Texas Politics: 40 Multiple-Choice Questions)

- Chapter 11: Political Parties in Texas
- Chapter 9: Voting and Political Participation in Texas
- Chapter 10: Elections and Campaigns in Texas
- Chapter 14: Financing State Government
- Chapter 13: Public Policy in Texas

Tentative Course Outline

Week / Class Cancellations	Reading(s) for the Week	Discussion Boards, Quizzes, & Exams
October 19 – October 25	Syllabus / Course Overview Mora Chapter 1	Log onto Brightspace / Introduce Yourself
October 19 – October 25	Mora Chapter 2	Discussion Post# 1
October 26 – November 1	Mora Chapter 2 (cont.)	Quiz# 1: Chapter 2
October 26 – November 1	Mora Chapter 7	Quiz# 2: Chapter 7
November 2 – November 8	Review for Exam# 1	<u>First Exam</u> Chapters 1, 2, & 7 of Mora
November 9 – November 15	Mora Chapter 12	Quiz# 3: Chapter 12
November 9 – November 15	Mora Chapter 3	Discussion Post# 2
November 16 – November 22	Mora Chapter 4	Quiz# 4: Chapter 4

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Week / Class Cancellations	Reading(s) for the Week	Discussion Boards, Quizzes, & Exams
November 16 – November 22	Mora Chapter 5 & Mora Chapter 6	Discussion Post# 3
November 23 – November 25 MCC CLOSED: NOVEMBER 25-28	Review for Exam# 2	<u>Second Exam</u> Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, & 12 of Mora
November 26 – December 6	Mora Chapter 11	Discussion Post# 4
November 26 – December 6	Mora Chapter 9 & Mora Chapter 10	Quiz# 5: Chapters 9 & 10
November 26 – December 6	Mora Chapter 14	Quiz# 6: Chapter 14
November 26 – December 6	Mora Chapter 13	Discussion Post# 5
December 7 – December 10	Review for Exam# 4	Make-up Exams (As Necessary) & Course Evaluations
December 7 – December 10	“FINALS WEEK”	Final Exam: <u>Due Thursday, Dec. 10th at 5PM</u> Chapters 9, 10, 11, 13, & 14 of Mora

Course Grading Information:

Exams: There will be three required exams in this class (including the final). All exams are non-cumulative, covering only the material covered in that particular section of the course. Each exam will be comprised of forty (40) multiple-choice questions chosen at random by the test. Students will take exams in the respective learning units on Brightspace. Test questions will come from the textbook and the learning units. To do well on the exams you need to be familiar with both. Each exam will be worth twenty (20) percent of your final course grade, or 60% of your total course grade. You will have approximately two hours to complete each examination.

Quizzes: There will be six chapter quizzes consisting of ten (10) multiple-choice questions throughout the semester to check your progress on the course material before you take the related exams. Students will take quizzes on Brightspace at the end of those learning units. Only your top five chapter quizzes will be counted, each worth three (3) percent, or 15% of your total course grade. You will have approximately thirty (30) minutes to complete each chapter quiz.

Discussion Boards: Another portion of your grade (15%) will be based off of occasional discussion postings that will be given on Brightspace that will allow each student an opportunity to discuss his or her opinion more thoroughly. These postings might be from something in the learning units or something entirely abstract that *relates* to the material being discussed. While only one posting per discussion board assignment is required for participation, students are encouraged to post frequently. Information provided with sources will be highly encouraged and given potential “bonus” points. Otherwise, opinions will suffice for the most part, but please consider your answer carefully for each discussion posting. While these are designed to encourage discussion among classmates on a topic, they should **NOT** turn into an argument.

Attendance & Participation: Your attendance and participation grade is calculated as the remaining ten (10) percent of your course grade. Essentially, your weekly “participation” on each assignment will contribute to this score. There are a total of fifteen assignments throughout the semester. But there are only fourteen graded assignments, so this will be, how many out of the fourteen assignments that you did, entered numerically. (*i.e.* 14/14 is a 100, 13/14 is a 93, *etc.*) This is an easy part of your grade to earn—it is also an easy part of your grade to lose!

Reading Assignments: The chapters that you are to read in your textbook are listed on the *tentative* course outline {see last page}. You will have the entire week to read the material, familiarize yourself with the relevant chapters in the textbook, and learn the material accordingly. The purpose of assigning reading in the textbook is to help you to better follow the learning units and allow you a way to ask questions on aspects that you are unsure about along the way. While they are not a direct part of your grade, they are a strong indirect part of it!

Grade Breakdown:

Exam 1:	20%	A = 90-100
Exam 2:	20%	B = 80-89
Exam 3:	20%	C = 70-79
Quizzes (5 @ 3%):	15%	D = 60-69
Discussion Posts (5 @ 3%)	15%	F = 59 or less
Attendance/Participation:	10%	W or I = as appropriate

THE FIRST TIME YOU RECEIVE A GRADE THAT YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH... GET IN TO SEE ME IMMEDIATELY!

Too frequently students wait until the end of the semester to try to rectify poor grades received throughout the term. I am here to help, so utilize me. However, once all the grades are said and done there is not much that I can do. But if you get with me earlier in the semester, chances are that grades can be rectified. Remember, there is no stupid question!

Late Work, Attendance, and Make-Up Work Policies:

Late quizzes and exams will not be allowed for any reason. However, your lowest quiz and exam grade will be automatically dropped. You can only take exams early if you have an approved absence in advance. Early exams will be given at an agreed upon date, time, and location between the instructor and student. You cannot take an exam after the learning unit has expired, unless it is approved by me in advance in writing (email). In the event that this occurs, you must have a copy of an email granting you permission to do so before you will be given the exam. Therefore, if you cannot take and complete the exam when it is given to the entire class, you will have to take a Make-Up Exam on your own time during the week before finals week. You will need to contact the instructor to receive a password to access the Make-Up Exams. You may **NOT** have more than one make-up exam. Finally, all make-up exams will be comprised of two *essay questions* from the respective section that you missed. So, please don't miss an exam!

Student Behavioral Expectations or Conduct Policy:

Attendance: We will cover a great deal of information in each of the respective learning units. These are lectures that would be similar to what you would hear if this course met in a face-to-face section. I use the learning units to emphasize key areas that you should study for both quizzes and exams. Each week will also have some form of assignment due (*i.e.* discussion posting, quiz, or exam). As a result, students that will not be able to regularly sign in to this course should contact the instructor immediately, so we can make alternate arrangements more suitable for your needs. Since there are fifteen (15) learning units, students that do not complete ***any* four (4)** of these assignments will effectively miss 25% of the total course and will be dropped administratively. Attendance will comprise a portion of ten percent of your total average. Furthermore, given that much of the material for tests is drawn from the learning units, your "attendance" is essential to do well. Finally, it is in your best interest to attend class. Why?

There is a strong correlation with low semester grades and high absenteeism.

Netiquette: There are several classroom policies regarding behavior in an online course that students should be aware of before proceeding with the class. First, all students should treat the instructor as well as other students with respect, just as they would in a face-to-face section. This might be more important here because it can be hard for others to understand your intent and meaning online. Secondly, students should use complete sentences when using the discussion board. Building proper writing is one of the skills that students should constantly be undertaking in any academic course. As a result, students should not use slang, abbreviations, etc. when

writing. On a similar note, students should not write with “text message” styles of writing either. For example, do not use “u” when you mean “you” and the like. Similarly, students should not use all lower case letter or all capital letters. Write as you would if this were an essay for an English class. Finally, students who have complaints about others' disruptive behavior should first talk to me about the problem. I will then speak with the disruptive student privately. Then, if the problem(s) still persist, the classmate who is being disrupted may contact the disruptive student with my permission. If this does not solve the problem, the Division Director of Social Sciences will be contacted immediately. The potential sanctions for persons who disrupt class or their fellow students include (but are not limited to) moving you to a different section, dropping you from the course entirely, to giving you an "F" for the course, at the instructor’s discretion. So, please don’t interrupt others!

* [Click Here for the MCC Academic Integrity Statement](#)

(www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity)

The link above will provide you with information about academic integrity, dishonesty, and cheating.

* [Click Here for the MCC Attendance/Absences Policy](#)

(<https://www.mclennan.edu/highlander-guide/policies.html>)

Click on the link above for the college policies on attendance and absences. Your instructor may have guidelines specific to this course.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days

McLennan Community College shall excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities including examinations for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students are required to file a written request with each instructor for an excused absence. A student whose absence is excused for this observance may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. Religious holy day means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Texas Tax Code.

McLennan Community College may not excuse absences for religious holy days which may interfere with patient care.

Accommodations/ADA Statement:

Any student who is a qualified individual with a disability may request reasonable accommodations to assist with providing equal access to educational opportunities. Students should contact the Accommodations Coordinator as soon as possible to provide documentation and make necessary arrangements. Once that process is completed, appropriate verification will be provided to the student and instructor. Please note that instructors are not required to provide classroom accommodations to students until appropriate verification has been provided by the Accommodations Coordinator. Instructors should not provide accommodations unless approved by the Accommodations Coordinator. For additional information, please visit mclennan.edu/disability.

Students with questions or who require assistance with disabilities involving physical, classroom, or testing accommodations should contact:

disabilities@mclennan.edu

254-299-8122

Room 319, Student Services Center

* **[Click Here for more information about Title IX](#)**

(www.mclennan.edu/titleix)

We care about your safety, and value an environment where students and instructors can successfully teach and learn together. If you or someone you know experiences unwelcomed behavior, we are here to help. Individuals who would like to report an incident of sexual misconduct are encouraged to immediately contact the Title IX Coordinator at titleix@mclennan.edu or by calling Dr. Drew Canham (Vice President for Student Success) at 299-8645. Individuals also may contact the MCC Police Department at 299-8911 or the MCC Student Counseling Center at MCC by calling 299-8210. The MCC Student Counseling Center is a confidential resource for students. Any student or employee may report sexual harassment anonymously by visiting the following website: <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/mclennan/>.

McLennan's Title IX webpage (<http://www.mclennan.edu/titleix/>) contains more information about definitions, reporting, confidentiality, resources, and what to do if you or someone you know is a victim of sexual misconduct, gender-based violence or the crimes of rape, acquaintance rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, dating violence or domestic violence.

** You will need to access each link separately through your Web browser (for example: Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Chrome, or Safari) to print each link's information.*