

## **POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government**

Meeting times: Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:20

Room: Forest Resources-2 / 100

Instructor: Professor Alexa Bankert

Contact: alexa.bankert@uga.edu

Office: Baldwin Hall 380F

Office Hours: Tuesday 1-2 or by appointment

### **Course Description and Objective**

This course is important – whether you are a Political Science major or not. You will be introduced to the fundamentals of the American government, such as its political institutions and main actors. Most importantly, this class aims to demonstrate how you are connected to the government in your daily life and present you with tools to become informed and act in politically meaningful ways. For this purpose, we will also examine what being American means in today's society and how our political institutions and behavior compare to other countries. By doing so, you gain a better understanding of how specific features of the American system shape politics. Ultimately, you will leave this class with a comprehensive understanding of how to critically evaluate and actively participate in the American political system.

### **Required Text**

"We the People" (11<sup>th</sup> Essentials Edition) – by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Robert J. Spitzer **with access to InQuizitive.**

"Georgia Politics in a State of Change" (4<sup>th</sup> Custom Edition for the University of Georgia) – by Charles S. Bullock III and Ronald Keith Gaddie.

**\*\*\*\*Please do not buy this book until after the first breakout session\*\*\*\***

### **Sections**

You are expected to attend one section in addition to the main lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Please note that section attendance is mandatory. All sections take place on Mondays.

Sect.	Time	Place	Instructor	Email
10672	8:00-8:50	Baldwin Hall 301	Lian Shanshan	Shanshan.Lian@uga.edu
10675	9:05-9:55	Leconte Hall 135	Lian Shanshan	Shanshan.Lian@uga.edu
10676	9:05-9:55	Leconte Hall 322	Aman Bekmagambetov	aman@uga.edu
10678	10:10-11:00	Leconte Hall 230	Aman Bekmagambetov	aman@uga.edu
10679	10:10-11:00	Leconte Hall 135	Simon Williamson	simon.williamson25@uga.edu
10681	11:15-12:05	Baldwin Hall 102	Simon Williamson	simon.williamson25@uga.edu
10683	11:15-12:05	Baldwin Hall 301	Youkyoung Jeong	youkyoung.jeong25@uga.edu
10685	12:20-1:10	Baldwin Hall 301	Youkyoung Jeong	youkyoung.jeong25@uga.edu
10686	12:20-1:10	Journalism 513	Brittany Linn Cleveland	brittany.cleveland25@uga.edu
10689	1:25-2:15	Baldwin Hall 102	Brittany Linn Cleveland	brittany.cleveland25@uga.edu
10690	1:25-2:15	Journalism 513	Tara Trask	tet61@uga.edu

## Evaluation

**Response Paper:** You will complete one short paper in this course. Topics are listed in the syllabus and match each week's theme. Note that the due date of the paper varies according to the topic you choose. Short papers can range from 5 to 10 pages (double spaced) and are due at the end of a week's theme as listed on the syllabus. Please make sure to discuss the criteria of the paper with your TA in advance.

**Midterm:** The midterm will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. These questions will cover material from the first half of the semester. *As of now, the midterm is scheduled for Thursday, October 4<sup>th</sup> from 9:30am – 10:20 am.*

**Final Exam:** The final exam is **not** cumulative and will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. *As of now, the exam is scheduled for Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 - 11:00 am.*

**Weekly Assignments:** There will be short weekly assignments which you can access on the **InQuizitive** website that accompanies your textbook. You will need to create an account in order to submit your assignments, which are due every Friday at 6pm of each week. In addition, you will be asked for a student set ID, which is linked to the section you choose (see below). If you have trouble with the registration process, please contact your TA.

Student Set ID is **34532** for section 10672 from 8:00am to 8:50am (TA Lian Shanshan)

Student Set ID is **34533** for section 10675 from 9:05 to 9:55am (TA Lian Shanshan)

Student Set ID is **34535** for section 10676 from 9:05 to 9:55am (TA Aman Bekmagambetor)

Student Set ID is **34536** for section 10678 from 10:10am to 11am (TA Aman Bekmagambetor)

Student Set ID is **34537** for section 10679 from 10:10am to 11am (TA Simon Williamson)

Student Set ID is **34538** for section 10681 from 11:15am to 12:05pm (TA Simon Williamson)

Student Set ID is **34539** for section 10683 from 11:15am to 12:05pm (TA Youkyoung Jeong)

Student Set ID is **34540** for section 10685 from 12:20pm to 1:10pm (TA Youkyoung Jeong)

Student Set ID is **34541** for section 10686 from 12:20pm to 1:10pm (TA Brittany Linn Cleveland)

Student Set ID is **34542** for section 10689 from 1:25pm to 2:15pm (TA Brittany Linn Cleveland)

Student Set ID is **34543** for section 10690 from 1:25pm to 2:15pm (TA Tara Trask)

**Readings and Quizzes:** The required readings typically include one chapter of the textbook per week. If any additional readings are assigned they will be made available electronically on eLC. It is important that you stay current with these readings so that you can follow along with lectures and participate in discussions in your sections. I would strongly recommend you finish the readings before your section takes place since *there will be unannounced short quizzes (3-5 questions) based on the assigned readings for that week so make sure you are familiar with each chapter's key terms.*

**In-Section Participation:** Do not hesitate to speak up in class or in your section! And if you have a question, other people are likely to have questions, too. Especially in your section, there

will be discussions that should demonstrate your critical reflection on the material covered in class as well as on weekly assignments.

**Online Research Study:** You are required to participate in an online research study. The study will take approximately 20-25 minutes and is supposed to provide you with an understanding of political science research.

### **Grading Breakdown by Percentage:**

Final Exam: 20%

Midterm: 20%

Response Paper: 20%

Quizzes: 15%

Weekly Assignments: 10%

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Participation in Online Research Study: 5%

### **Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades**

100-94 A	79-77 C+	63-60 D-
93-90 A-	76-74 C	59-0 F
89-87 B+	73-70 C-	
86-84 B	69-67 D+	
83-80 B-	66-64 D	

### **Grade Appeals, Incompletes, Late Assignments, and Make-Up Policy**

Any questions you have regarding grades should be directed to your teaching assistant. If you are unable to resolve the matter with him or her, you may appeal the grade to me. Keep in mind that formal grade appeals must be made in writing, and in the case of a paper, I will re-grade your entire paper. Therefore, your grade can go up or down. A final grade of "Incomplete" will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student's responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be presented to the teaching assistant and accepted prior to the exam when feasible. Late assignments will be docked 5 percent per day (half letter grade), for each day that a project is late (including weekends). If you need a (reasonable) extension, talk to your teaching assistant.

### **Office Hours**

Students who are having difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments are encouraged to contact their teaching assistant. Don't be afraid to come by. However, please note that office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture if you skipped class. If you like to talk to me, feel free to stop by my office during office hours but please email me in advance if possible.

### **Syllabus Policy:**

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary. I will give you fair notice (at least a week) if something, such as a reading assignment, is to change.

## **Disability Resource Center**

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

## **Withdrawal Policy**

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal-passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses during the drop/add period do not qualify as withdrawals. Instructors have the ability to withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences (see course attendance policy).

Please review the policy here: <http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

## **Culture of Honesty Policy**

You are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures relating to academic honesty. To understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University, please carefully review the policy here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academichonesty/academic-honesty-policy>

## **Course Schedule**

### **First Week: August 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* The Citizen and the Government

*Readings:* Chapter 1 in “We The People”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 1 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Make a list of the most important political values you hold. How do they fit into the broader American values? (Due: August 22<sup>nd</sup>)

### **Second Week: August 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* The Founding and the Constitution

*Readings:* Chapter 2 in “We The People” & The Constitution of the United States of America pp.A11-A23.

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 2 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Imagine that you are a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. What would you include in (or exclude from) the document? (Due: August 29<sup>th</sup>)

### **Third Week: August 29<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Federalism

*Readings:* Chapter 3 in “We The People”. Also, listen to

<http://www.npr.org/2013/03/28/175596229/the-road-to-the-supreme-court-arguments-on-gay-marriage>.

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 3 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Think about same-sex marriage, which puts state power in contention with national power. Write out your stance on whether the issue should be addressed

at the national or state level. Justify your decision. (Due: September 5<sup>th</sup>)  
**Please note that class will not take place on August 31<sup>st</sup>.**

**Fourth Week: September 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

*Readings:* Chapter 4 in "We The People"

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 4 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Imagine you are a legislative staffer. Draft a policy memo on the extent of government surveillance of American citizens. Should there be limits on government surveillance in the fight against terrorism? (Due: September 12<sup>th</sup>)

**Fifth Week: September 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Public Opinion

*Readings:* Chapter 5 in "We The People"

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 5 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Take the Political Compass test at [www.politicalcompass.org](http://www.politicalcompass.org) or the Pew Research Center's political typology quiz at [www.people-press.org](http://www.people-press.org). These sites rate your political ideology based on your opinions. Can ideology help you to guide your political opinions or should your political opinions guide your ideology? Discuss. (Due: September 19<sup>th</sup>)

**Sixth Week: September 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>**

*Topic:* The Media

*Readings:* Chapter 6 in "We The People"

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 6 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Pick a current political topic and compare how it is reported on one of the national news (ABC, CBS, or NBC), one of the cable news (CNN, MSNBC, or FOX NEWS), and one newspaper (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, or The Washington Post). (Due: September 26<sup>th</sup>)

**Seventh Week: September 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Political Parties, Participation, and Elections

*Readings:* Chapter 7 in "We The People"

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 7 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Write a list of reasons individuals may not vote. In your view, are these obstacles necessary? Examine the role of personal motivation as well as institutional barriers in your answer. (Due: October 3<sup>rd</sup>)

**Eighth Week: October 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Interest Groups

*Readings:* Chapter 8 in "We The People". Also, read: <http://themonkeycage.org/2013/05/shadow-lobbyists-and-the-revolving-door-or-what-anthony-weiner-and-newt-gingrich-have-in-common/>

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 8 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Imagine you are an aide to a member of Congress. Write a policy memo for or against more regulation of lobbying. (Due: October 10<sup>th</sup>)

**Ninth Week: October 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Congress

*Readings:* Chapter 9 in “We The People”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 9 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Look up your representative’s recent voting records in the Washington Post’s Database. Make a list of five issues he or she voted on, and state whether you would have voted the same way on behalf of your district. Justify your decisions. (Due: October 17<sup>th</sup>)

**Tenth Week: October 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* The Presidency

*Readings:* Chapter 10 in “We The People”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 10 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Consider President Obama’s transgender directive or the executive order on immigration. Explain why you think the president should or should not have the power to act on these issues. (Due: October 24<sup>th</sup>)

**Eleventh Week: October 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Bureaucracy (it is not going to be as boring as it sounds)

*Readings:* Chapter 11 in “We The People”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 11 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Read <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/04/gsa-employees-spend-taxpayer-money-in-vegas/>. Can large bureaucratic organizations like the U.S. General Services Administration ever run effectively? Explain your answer in terms of the discussion of bureaucracy in the textbook. (Due: **October 31<sup>st</sup>**)

**Twelfth Week: October 31<sup>st</sup> and November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

*Topic:* The Federal Courts

*Readings:* Chapter 12 in “We The People”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 12 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Identify one Supreme Court case that affects your life and explain how. For ideas, search [www.uscourts.gov](http://www.uscourts.gov) for their “Landmark Supreme Court Cases about Students” page. (Due: **November 7<sup>th</sup>**)

**Thirteenth Week: November 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Domestic Policy

*Readings:* Chapter 13 in “We The People”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 13 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Write a list of how you expect economic and social policies to affect your life in the next five years. (Due: **November 14<sup>th</sup>**)

**Fourteenth Week: November 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Foreign Policy

*Readings:* Chapter 14 in “We The People”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 14 on *Inquizitive*

*Potential Short Paper Topic:* Why should we care about foreign policy? Is Isolationism possible in

today's world? (Due: November 21<sup>st</sup>)

Thanksgiving Break November 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>

**Fifteenth Week: November 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Conclusion, Review, and Preparation for Final Exam

**Sixteenth Week: December 5<sup>th</sup>**

*Topic:* Review and Preparation for Final Exam