

POLS 1105H: American Government, Honors Spring 2020

Instructor

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Office Hours: by appointment

Class Schedule

Tuesdays and Thursdays/online

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the basic aspects of American politics and government. The emphasis will be on the development of concepts and analytical tools that will help you understand how the institutions within American politics and government interact to produce policy outcomes. Whenever possible, we will relate these concepts and tools to historical or current political issues and events. The course will make use of in-class exercises and simulations to allow the class to “learn by doing.” Using a combination lectures, discussion, and experiential learning, the course seeks to give students a better understanding and appreciation of the American political process.

Required Book

We will be using *American Government, 2nd edition* from OpenStax. This is a free online textbook that is available [here](#).

In addition to the book, you should read the news on a daily basis. The [New York Times](#) and the [Washington Post](#) are two excellent sources of news on politics and government. Each Tuesday we will discuss a weekly newspaper article that I will email to you before class.

Finally, we will have additional readings that I will email to students or that can be downloaded from the internet.

Course Grading

Your grade in this class will be assigned according to the following:

1. **Class attendance and participation** (20% of final grade): Your attendance and participation grade for the already completed, pre-COVID-19, part of the course will be worth 5% of your grade. Your attendance and participation for the remainder of the semester will be worth 15%. This will be evaluated through a series of short reaction papers that you will be asked to complete. There will be a short assignment for each of the course modules. Those assignments should be submitted via email.
2. **Writing and Special Assignments** (30% of final grade): There are three assignments scheduled for this class. Assignments will require you to write short (two to four pages) papers about a specific example of a topic discussed in class. Assignments turned in late will be penalized 10% for each day they are late.

3. **Mid-Semester Exam** (25% of final grade): Please take note of the date for the exam and mark it on your calendar now.
4. **Final Exam** (25% of final grade): The final exam will be a take home final. I will post the exam online on Reading Day (April 29) and ask that you submit your completed exam by the last day of exams (May 6). Submit your answers via email.

Course grades will be assigned as follows: 93–100% = A, 90–93% = A-, 87–90% = B+, 83–87% = B, 80–83% = B-, 77–80% = C+, 73–77% = C, 70–73% = C-, 60–70% = D, 0–60% = F.

Other Issues

1. **Disabilities:** Students with disabilities of any kind are strongly encouraged to tell me at the beginning of the semester, so appropriate accommodations can be made. Students with disabilities that have been certified by the UGA Disabilities Services Office will be accommodated according to university policy. Contact Disabilities Services for more information.
2. **Instructor Availability:** I am available to meet with students by appointment if anyone cannot attend my posted office hours. Please email me to schedule a meeting.
3. **Technology in the Classroom:** Technology, used correctly, has the potential to greatly improve the quality of our lives. Technology, used incorrectly, has the potential of making the instructor very angry. Cellphones, tablets, laptops, etc. may be used to take notes in class, but not for playing games, checking email, or surfing the internet. Texting is never appropriate in class, unless it is to give your friends updates on the juicy tidbits you are learning about the U.S. presidency. I will understand if you can't wait until after class to share your new knowledge of Ross Perot's 1992 presidential bid or want to text about the failure of the 1868 Andrew Johnson impeachment trial. I would have done the same, if texting had been available when I was in college.
4. **Cheating and Plagiarism:** All course work must meet the standards put forth in the University of Georgia's [Student Honor Code](#). See the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) for details on what is expected of you.

Tentative Schedule

INTRODUCTION / COURSE OVERVIEW

JANUARY 7

WHY GOVERNMENT?

JANUARY 9 AND 14

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 1.

Axelrod, Robert M. 1984. *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Chapters 1 and 4.

Hardin, Garrett. 1968. “[The Tragedy of the Commons.](#)” *Science*. 162: 1243-1248.

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE FOUNDING

JANUARY 16 AND 21

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 2.

U.S. Constitution

Dougherty, Keith L. and Jac C. Heckelman. 2006. “[A Pivotal Voter from a Pivotal State: Roger Sherman at the Constitutional Convention.](#)” *American Political Science Review* 100(2): 297-302.

Kennedy, John F. 1955. *Profiles in Courage*. Chapter 6 - Edmund G. Ross

FEDERALISM

JANUARY 23 AND 28

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 3.

Sacco, et al. 2017. “[The Marijuana Policy Gap and the Path Forward.](#)” *Congressional Research Service*.

Assignment #1 Due.

CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CIVIL RIGHTS

JANUARY 30, FEBRUARY 4, AND 6

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapters 4 and 5.

Wehle, Kim. 2019. *How to Read the Constitution and Why*, Chapters 6 and 8.

Gratz v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. 244 (2003).

Hartocollis, Anemona. 2019. “[Harvard Does Not Discriminate Against Asian-Americans in Admissions, Judge Rules.](#)” *New York Times*. Oct. 1.

PUBLIC OPINION

FEBRUARY 11

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 6.

Gallup, George. 2008. “Polling the Public.”

ELECTIONS

FEBRUARY 13, 18, AND 20

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 7.

Abramowitz, Alan I. 2008. “[Forecasting the 2008 Presidential Election with the Time-for-Change Model.](#)” *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 41(4):691-695

Abramowitz, Alan I. 2016. “[Will Time for Change Mean Time for Trump](#)” *Ps:Political Science and Politics* 49(4):659-660.

Achen, Christopher H. and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*, Chapter 5.

Assignment #2 Due

THE MEDIA AND REVIEW

FEBRUARY 25

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 8.

Groseclose, Tim and Jeffery Milyo. 2005. “[A Measure of Media Bias.](#)” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

MIDTERM EXAM

FEBRUARY 27

POLITICAL PARTIES

MARCH 3 AND 5

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 9.

Gelman, Andrew. 2010. *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do*, Chapter 8.

SPRING BREAK–NO CLASS

MARCH 9–13

PANDEMIC BREAK–NO CLASS

MARCH 16–27

CONGRESS MODULE

POSTED BY MARCH 23

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 11.

Lynch, Michael S., Anthony J. Madonna, and Allison S. Vick. 2020. “The Erosion of “Regular Order” in the U.S. House: A Historical Examination of Special Rules” In *New Directions in Congressional Politics*.

Prokop, Andrew. 2014. “Beating the Odds: Why One Bill Made It Through a Gridlocked Congress ? and So Many Don’t (www.vox.com/2014/5/22/5723878/how-a-bill-becomes-a-law-in-2014).”

Module Assignment Due April 6

PRESIDENCY MODULE

POSTED BY MARCH 30

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 12.

Wehle, Kim. 2019. *How to Read the Constitution and Why*, Chapters 3.

Additional readings T.B.A.

Module Assignment Due April 13

COURTS MODULE

POSTED BY APRIL 6

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 13.

Scalia, Antonin. 2009. "Common-Law Courts in a Civil-Law System: The Role of United States Federal Courts in Interpreting the Constitution and Laws."

Breyer, Stephen. 2009. "Our Democratic Constitution."

Additional readings T.B.A.

Module Assignment Due April 21

BUREAUCRACY MODULE

POSTED BY APRIL 13

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 15.

Lewis, Michael. 2018 *The Fifth Risk*. Chapter 1.

Additional readings T.B.A.

Module Assignment Due April 27

DEBT AND DEFICIT MODULE

POSTED BY APRIL 20

Additional readings T.B.A.

Assignment #3 Due April 28

FINAL EXAM POSTED

APRIL 29

FINAL EXAM DUE

MAY 6 (5:00 PM)