

**POLS 1105H: Introduction to American Government**  
University of Georgia  
Fall 2016

Instructor:  
Dr. Brittany Bramlett  
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Office hours:  
Before/after class  
Or by appointment

Class meets:  
Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays, 9:05am to 9:55am, Baldwin Hall G32

Course description

The aims of this course are 1) to introduce students to the foundations and organization of American Government, and 2) to help students become critical observers and actors within the realm of American politics. We will cover the beginnings of American government through examining the Constitution and the challenges faced by the Founders, learn about the formal and informal institutions in American government and their interactions, and look at how the electorate responds to and fits into the American system of government. A running theme throughout the course is civic engagement. We'll talk about what it looks like, learn how it relates to American government, and have lots of opportunities for practicing it through service-learning.

Course objectives

Students will:

- Study the origins and workings of American government
- Analyze American government, considering democratic ideals
- Develop a working knowledge of current events in American politics
- Learn the course material by working with others and serving the community
- Improve critical thinking and communication skills by considering various political perspectives, reflecting on the development of personal views, and communicating those views effectively

Course note

There will be times during the semester where we won't meet as a class in our assigned room. This does not mean that class will be canceled. You will be notified via e-mail prior to each virtual class meeting. What does this mean for students?

- Students will have an assignment for the day that corresponds to the readings and schedule on the syllabus.
- Students will be responsible for participating in the assignment, whether it's returning a written assignment via email to the professor or engaging in an online discussion via eLC.
- Students should never hesitate to communicate with the Professor if they have questions about this arrangement. Open communication will be critical.

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<sup>1</sup> Instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as needed.

## Course texts

You are required to gain access to the three books listed below. They are available at the campus bookstore.

- *American Government: Roots and Reform* (12th Edition, 2014 Elections and Updates Edition), Karen O'Connor, Larry J. Sabato and Alixandra B. Yanus.
- *A More Perfect Constitution*, Larry J. Sabato.
- *Georgia Politics in a State of Change* (2nd Edition), Charles S. Bullock and Ronald Gaddie.
- Other assigned readings will be made available to you via E-Learning Commons (<https://uga.view.usg.edu/>)

## Assignments and grading

### **Service-learning activities (20% total)**

The class will organize a politically and civically focused event over the course of the semester with the aim of meeting a relevant and timely need in the community. For this course, the targeted community is University of Georgia students, and the relevant need in the community is Election Day related voter education. The first part of the course will introduce the concept of civic engagement and build the case for voter education efforts in this community. Students will use their growing knowledge of American government throughout the semester, as they prepare to educate and encourage their peers at the University through a service-learning activity.

Students will plan for and run a voter education drive to be held at the Tate Student Center. The class will prepare voter education materials to hand out to their fellow students with the aim of generating discussion with peers regarding the candidates/issues on the ballot, polling locations/absentee ballots, and the Electoral College. Students will work in teams on each of these voter education initiatives. They will set up, advertise, and work the event, signing up for time slots.

### **Service-learning reflection (20% total)**

Students will be encouraged to reflect on their service-learning activities at three specific points during the semester. They will be asked to do this individually, by responding to a written prompt, and collectively, through a class roundtable discussion. These scheduled reflections will take place before and after the event (5% **each**) and at the conclusion of the semester (10%).

### **Midterm exams 1 & 2 (10 each%, 20% total)**

Anything from the assigned readings and discussed during class up to the first exam is considered fair game to show up on the exam.

### **Final exam (20%)**

This is a comprehensive final exam given during the final exam period. Anything from the assigned readings and discussed in class during the semester is considered fair game to show up on the exam.

### **Participation & attendance (10%)**

You are expected to attend class and participate in class and in group discussions and activities. Quality engagement is more important than the quantity of contributions. If you know that you must miss class, please let me know as soon as possible. If discussion lags, expect a few reading quizzes throughout the semester!

**Class discussion leader (10%)**

Groups of 2 or 3 students will sign up to be discussion leaders for one of our Friday class discussions throughout the semester. Student leaders will be responsible for presenting the assigned material, developing discussion questions for the class period, and facilitating class discussion. Students are encouraged to present additional material if relevant and helpful. Prepare to sign up for a date during the second week of classes.

Administrative Items**ELearning**

You can find additional reading assignments for our class via the ELearning Commons (<https://uga.view.usg.edu/>). You should sign into the ELearning Commons using your UGA MyId and password. If you are registered for the class, the course link should show up on your ELearning Commons homepage. I may post additional documents useful for your class, so you will want to check in throughout the semester.

**Missed deadlines**

If you have a conflict with a due date or will miss class repeatedly, please come talk to me about it as soon as you know about it. This way we can work something out and your grade may not suffer. If you have an emergency conflict (i.e. personal, family or medical emergencies), you should e-mail me within the week of the missed due date to discuss the timely completion of the assignment. Documentation is required for make-up exams. If you miss a deadline for a non-emergency, most assignments (NOT exams) can still be completed and will be accepted for up to a week—but they will be penalized a letter grade for every additional day late.

**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 carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

**UGA culture of honesty policy**

The policy is in place to encourage academic honesty among students, faculty and other members of the university community. You and I are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating and much more. It's in your best interest to understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an F for the course, and their names will be forwarded to the University. Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty/academic-honesty-policy>

## Tentative Course Outline

### **Week 1.**

Friday, August 12 – Course introduction

Monday, August 15 – Roots of American Government

Wednesday, August 17 – The Constitution

Friday, August 19 – Civic Engagement

### **Week 2.**

Monday, August 22 – Federalism

Wednesday, August 24 – Civil Liberties

Friday, August 26 – Civil Rights

### **Week 3.**

Monday, August 29 – Congress

Wednesday, August 31 – Congress

Friday, September 2 – Class Discussion 1

### **Week 4.**

Monday, September 5 – NO CLASS, LABOR DAY

Wednesday, September 7 – Presidency

Friday, September 9 – Presidency

## Readings Schedule

Course syllabus

*Roots & Reform 1*

*Roots & Reform 2*  
*Georgia Politics 4*

Excerpts from: *Civic Engagement in Higher Education* by Barbara Jacoby et al

*Service-Learning Essentials* by Barbara Jacoby

*Roots & Reform 3*

*Roots & Reform 4*

*Roots & Reform 5*

*Roots & Reform 6*

*Roots & Reform 6*  
*Georgia Politics 5*

*More Perfect Constitution 1*

*Roots & Reform 7*  
*Georgia Politics 6*

*More Perfect Constitution 2*

**Week 5.**

Monday, September 12 – Midterm exam 1

Wednesday, September 14 – Bureaucracy

Friday, September 16 – Class Discussion 2

*Roots & Reform* 8

“Michigan Governor Tells Congress He Was Misled on Flint Water”  
([http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/18/us/michigan-governor-tells-congress-he-was-misled-on-flint-water.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/18/us/michigan-governor-tells-congress-he-was-misled-on-flint-water.html?_r=0))

“Flint Residents’ Broken Faith: ‘The People We Trusted Failed Us’”  
(<http://www.npr.org/2016/02/10/466278433/flint-residents-broken-faith-the-people-we-trusted-failed-us>)

**Week 6.**

Monday, September 19 – Judiciary

Wednesday: September 21 – Judiciary

Friday: September 23 – Class Discussion 3

*Roots & Reform* 9  
*Georgia Politics* 7

*Roots & Reform* 9  
*Georgia Politics* 7

*More Perfect Constitution* 3

**Week 7.**

Monday, September 26 – Civic Engagement

Wednesday, September 28 – Civic Engagement

Friday, September 30 – Civic Engagement

Excerpts from: *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam

Excerpts from: *A New Engagement?* by Zukin et al

“Civic Education and Deeper Learning” by Peter Levine & Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg  
(<http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/Civic-Education-and-Deeper-Learning-012815.pdf>)

**Week 8.**

Monday, October 3 – Campaigns & Elections

*Roots & Reform* 12 & 13  
*Georgia Politics* 13

Wednesday, October 5 – Campaigns & Elections

*Roots & Reform* 12 & 13  
*More Perfect Constitution* 4

Friday, October 7 – Service Learning Planning day

**Week 9.**

Monday, October 10 – Voting & Participation

*Roots & Reform* 12  
*Georgia Politics* 9

Wednesday, October 12 – Voting & Participation

“Millennials Civic Health Index”  
Find the pdf here:  
(<http://www.ncoc.net/MillennialsCHI>)

Friday, October 14 – Service Learning Planning day

**Week 10.**

Monday, October 17 – Political Parties

*Roots & Reform* 11  
*Georgia Politics* 11

Wednesday, October 19 – Political Parties

Political party investigation  
assignment and discussion

Library session

Friday, October 21 – Service Learning Planning day

**Week 11.**

Monday, October 24 – Service Learning Reflection  
& Roundtable

Reflection 1 due

Wednesday, October 26 – Service Learning Event

Friday, October 28 – NO CLASS/FALL BREAK

## **Week 12.**

Monday, October 31 – Service Learning Reflection & Roundtable

Reflection 2 due

Wednesday, November 2 – Interest groups

*Roots & Reform* 15  
*Georgia Politics* 12

Friday, November 4 – Class Discussion 4

“This is what makes Republicans and Democrats so different”  
(<http://www.vox.com/2016/1/13/10759874/republicans-democrats-different>)

“2 political scientists have found a key reason Republicans and Democrats see politics so differently”  
(<http://www.vox.com/2016/4/1/11340882/republicans-democrats-media-fox>)

## **Week 13.**

Monday, November 7 – Midterm exam 2

Wednesday, November 9 – Media & Politics

*Roots & Reform* 14

Friday, November 11 – Class Discussion 5

“Twitter Style: An Analysis of How House Candidates Used Twitter in Their 2012 Campaigns” by Heather Evans et al  
(<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=9235769&fileId=S1049096514000389>)

## **Week 14.**

Monday, November 14 – Public Opinion

*Roots & Reform* 10

Wednesday, November 16 – Political Socialization

*Roots & Reform* 10

Friday, November 18 – Class Discussion 6

Excerpts from: *Cultivating Democracy* by Gimpel et al

**Week 15.**

Monday, November 21 – NO CLASS/THANKGIVING BREAK

Wednesday, November 23 – NO CLASS/THANKGIVING BREAK

Friday, November 25 – NO CLASS/THANKGIVING BREAK

**Week 16.**

Monday, November 28 – *Please vote for Me*, documentary

Wednesday, November 30 – *Please vote for Me*, documentary  
& discussion

Friday, December 2 – Civic Engagement

Excerpts from: *We are the  
Ones We Have Been Waiting  
For* by Peter Levine

**Week 17.**

Monday, December 5 – Final Service Learning Reflection  
& Roundtable

Final reflection due

**Week 18.** Finals period, Wednesday, December 7 – Tuesday, December 13

Wednesday, December 7: FINAL EXAM, 8:00AM – 11:00AM

**List of Due Dates**

Midterm Exam 1 – Monday, September 12

Midterm Exam 2 – Monday, November 7

Final Exam – Wednesday, December 7

Reflection 1 – Monday, October 24

Reflection 2 – Monday, October 31

Final reflection – Monday, December 5

Class discussion leader dates:

Friday, September 2  
Friday, September 16  
Friday, September 23  
Friday, November 4  
Friday, November 11  
Friday, November 18

Pop quizzes – ☺