

**POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government**  
University of Georgia  
Spring 2017

Instructor:

Brittany Bramlett<sup>1</sup>  
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Office hours:

Before / after class  
Or by appointment

Class meets:

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30am to 10:20am, MLC 171

Course description

This course aims to introduce students to the foundations and organization of American government. First, we will cover the beginnings of American government through examining the Constitution and the challenges faced by the Founders. For the next part of the course, we will learn about the formal institutions in American government and the interaction between these branches. We will then broaden our definition of government institutions and consider the role of informal institutions (media, political parties and interest groups). Finally, we will look at how the electorate responds to and fits into the American system of government. Throughout the course, we'll also cover similar topics related to Georgia state government.

Course objectives

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

Course texts

You are required to gain access to the books listed below. These 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/>)

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

## Assignments and grading

### **Discussion section (10%)**

Discussion sections occur every Monday and attendance is mandatory. More than one unexcused absence will result in reduction of the student's discussion section grade. These sections are small and benefit from student attendance and participation. The discussion section grade will also include reading quizzes and short assignments.

Discussion section instructors:

Kevin Spann	<a href="mailto:kevin.spann25@uga.edu">kevin.spann25@uga.edu</a>
Naji Bsisu	<a href="mailto:najibsisu@uga.edu">najibsisu@uga.edu</a>
Young Sang Kim	<a href="mailto:ysangkim@uga.edu">ysangkim@uga.edu</a>
Ryan Fleming	<a href="mailto:ryan.flemming@uga.edu">ryan.flemming@uga.edu</a>
Hadley Nobles	<a href="mailto:hnobles@uga.edu">hnobles@uga.edu</a>
Kylie Keyser	<a href="mailto:khk50752@uga.edu">khk50752@uga.edu</a>

### **Midterm exams (60%)**

Students will take three exams throughout the semester (**each worth 20%**). Each midterm exam will be non-cumulative, only covering recent material. If a student knows they will miss an exam on the assigned date, they must contact their TA or course instructor prior to the exam to schedule a make up exam. In order to make up an exam due to illness, documentation from a physician must be provided. If you miss an exam for a non-excused reason, you may take the missed exam on the day of the final exam.

### **Final exam (30%)**

This exam will be cumulative, covering material for all readings and lectures throughout the semester.

### **Attendance note**

Your attendance is expected and appreciated in this course. You benefit from attending class, and I benefit when you attend class. I look forward to seeing you every Tuesday and Thursday. The same is true for discussion sections. Obviously, things come up. Open communication is always appreciated and considered. However, your TAs note when you are not in class, and this factors into your participation grade.

### **Classroom behavior**

Students are expected to behave professionally and cordially throughout the course. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated, and students engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave. This includes cell phone usage, excessive talking, and derogatory or offensive comments made during class or discussion section.

## 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 an exam date or will miss class repeatedly, please come talk to your TA or me about it as soon as you know about it. This way we can work something out and your grade will not suffer.

If you have an emergency conflict (i.e. personal, family or medical emergencies), you should e-mail your TA or me within the week of the missed due date to discuss making up the exam. Otherwise, you may take a make-up exam on the day of the final exam.

### **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**

Thursday, January 5 – Introduction

Monday, January 9 – Discussion Section Introduction

Tuesday, January 10 – Roots of American Government

Thursday, January 12 – The Constitution

### **Week 2**

Monday, January 16 – Martin Luther King Day Holiday

Tuesday, January 17 – Federalism

Thursday, January 19 – The Founding

### **Week 3**

Monday, January 23 – Discussion Section

Tuesday, January 24 – The Founding

Thursday, January 26 – Civil Liberties

### **Week 4**

Monday, January 30 – Discussion Section

Tuesday, January 31 – Civil Rights

Thursday, February 2 – Midterm Exam 1

### **Week 5**

Monday, February 6 – Discussion Section

Tuesday, February 7 – Congress

Thursday, February 9 – Congress

## Readings Schedule

Course syllabus

*Roots & Reform* 1

*Roots & Reform* 2

*Georgia Politics* 4

NO CLASS

*Roots & Reform* 3

“John Adams,” film

*More Perfect Constitution*  
Preamble

“John Adams,” film (cont)

*Roots & Reform* 4

Film discussion

*Roots & Reform* 5  
*Georgia Politics* 9

*The Atlantic*: “The Case for  
Reparations”

*Roots & Reform* 6

*Roots & Reform* 6  
*Georgia Politics* 5

**Week 6**

Monday, February 13 – Discussion Section	Congress news/engagement seminar
Tuesday, February 14 – Congress	<i>Roots &amp; Reform 6</i> <i>More Perfect Constitution 1</i>
Thursday, February 16 – Presidency	<i>Roots &amp; Reform 7</i> <i>Georgia Politics 6</i>

**Week 7**

Monday, February 20 – Discussion Section	<i>More Perfect Constitution 1</i>
Tuesday, February 21 – Presidency	<i>Roots &amp; Reform 7</i> <i>More Perfect Constitution 2</i>
Thursday, February 23 – Catch up day	

**Week 8**

Monday, February 27 – Discussion Section	<i>More Perfect Constitution 2</i>
Tuesday, February 28 – Midterm Exam 2	
Thursday, March 2 – Presidency	“The President’s Photographer,” film

**Spring Break – Monday, March 6 – Friday, March 10****Week 9**

Monday, March 13 – Discussion Section	Judiciary news/engagement seminar
Tuesday, March 14 – The Judiciary	<i>Roots &amp; Reform 9</i> <i>Georgia Politics 7</i>
Thursday, March 16 – The Judiciary	<i>Roots &amp; Reform 9</i> <i>More Perfect Constitution 3</i>

**Week 10**

Monday, March 20 – Discussion Section	<i>More Perfect Constitution 3</i>
Tuesday, March 21 – Bureaucracy	<i>Roots &amp; Reform 8</i>
Thursday, March 23 – Public Opinion & Political socialization	<i>Roots &amp; Reform 10</i>

**Week 11**

Monday, March 27 – Discussion Section

Political Socialization  
roundtable

Tuesday, March 28 – Media and politics

*Roots & Reform* 14

Thursday, March 30 – Interest groups

*Roots & Reform* 15  
*Georgia Politics* 12

**Week 12**

Monday, April 3 – Discussion Section

“A Finder’s Guide to Facts”  
discussion  
(<http://www.npr.org/2016/12/11/505154631/a-finders-guide-to-facts>)

Tuesday, April 4 – Political Parties

*Roots & Reform* 11  
*Georgia Politics* 11

Thursday, April 6 – Catch up day

**Week 13**

Monday, April 10 – Discussion section

Political parties  
news/engagement seminar

Tuesday, April 11 – Midterm Exam 3

Thursday, April 13 – Campaign and Elections

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

**Week 14**

Monday, April 17 – Discussion section

*More Perfect Constitution* 4

Tuesday, April 18 – Campaigns and Elections

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

Thursday, April 20 – Voting and Participation

*Roots & Reform* 12  
*Georgia Politics* 9

**Week 15**

Monday, April 24 – Discussion section

*More Perfect Constitution 5*

Tuesday, April 25 – Voting and Participation

“Vote for Me,” film

Thursday, April 27 – Voting and Participation

Film discussion and Wrap up

**Week 16**

Thursday, May 2  
8:00am to 11:00am

FINAL EXAM

**List of Due Dates**

Midterm Exam 1 – Thursday, February 2

Midterm Exam 2 – Tuesday, February 28

Midterm Exam 3 – Tuesday, April 11

Final Exam – Tuesday, May 2, 8:00am to 11:00am