**POLS 1105H**

**Introduction to American Government**

University of Georgia

Fall 2017

Days: Tuesday and Thursday

Time: 2:00 PM-3:15 PM

Room: 513 Journalism Building

Office Hours: Wednesday, 1:00 PM-2:00 PM

(or by appointment)

Instructor: Professor Ben Kantack

Office: 380B Baldwin Hall

Email: ben.kantack@uga.edu

(preferred form of contact)

Telephone: 706-542-8203

**Course Description**

This introductory course will explore the unique institutions of the American political system and the actors – individuals and groups, elites and masses – whose behavior shapes and is shaped by those institutions. As a class, we will approach questions about American politics and government from a scientific perspective, endeavoring to understand the incentives motivating political actors, the logic underlying institutional design, and how politics and government does or does not work in both the United States overall and Georgia in particular.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, students will be able to do the following:

* Understand the basic concepts of American government and politics
* Analyze political events from a scientific perspective
* Take part in American politics as an informed participant

**Required Textbooks**

This course requires two textbooks:

* Bianco, William T. and David T. Canon. 2017. *American Politics Today, 5th Core Edition*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
* Bullock, Charles S. III and Ronald Keith Gaddie. 2013. *Georgia Politics in a State of Change, 2nd Edition*. New York: Pearson.

Both textbooks are available from the [**University of Georgia Bookstore**](http://www.bkstr.com/georgiastore/home) and from online retailers. Note that both textbooks are available in several editions. Students may elect to obtain older editions to save money; however, those who do so will assume the responsibility of coping with any changes in chapter numbers, page numbers, and content between editions.

**Other Course Content**

To complement textbook readings, students will frequently be assigned to read, watch, or play additional content. This complementary content will be related to the textbook readings and serve primarily as a basis for in-class discussion.

Students will be expected to complete both textbook readings and complementary content *before* the class sessions in which they are assigned.

**Grading Breakdown**

Grades will be allocated as follows:

* *Class Participation* (20% of total grade): Each class session will include opportunities for discussion. Credit will be given for students who make a topical contribution to the discussion based on course material.
* *“Political Science Workshop” Paper* (30% of total grade): Throughout the course students will learn about the scientific method as it is applied to the study of politics. This will culminate in a research design paper in which students come up with an original research question, develop a theory and hypothesis (or hypotheses) and propose (but not carry out) a research design for answering that question. Details will be given in class.
* *Exams* (50% of total grade): Two equally-weighted exams, one midterm and one final, will be given. The final exam is designed to be non-cumulative; however, students’ understanding of concepts covered by the midterm may indirectly influence their performance on the final.

**Grading Scale**

93 – 100: A

90 – 92: A-

87 – 89: B+

83 – 86: B

80 – 82: B-

77 – 79 : C+

73 – 76: C

70 – 72: C-

60 – 69: D

0 – 59: F

**Extra Credit Policy**

From time to time, extra credit will be offered as part of in-class activities. These opportunities are conditional on attendance and cannot be made up outside of class. No other forms of extra credit will be available.

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance will not be graded. To deal with absences, each student’s lowest two class participation grades will be automatically dropped. Class participation cannot be made up outside of class. Students who are absent should consult their classmates for notes from the day(s) they were absent.

Students who will be absent on the day of an exam must notify the instructor before the start of class on the day of the missed exam so that a make-up exam can be scheduled. If the instructor is not notified in advance, a 10% penalty will be assessed on the make-up exam grade for each full or partial day that elapses before the student arranges a make-up exam date.

**Discussion Policy**

Political discussions have a tendency to become heated. The purpose of class discussion is to think critically about aspects of politics, not to rehash cable news-style arguments over which candidate, party, or policy is right or wrong. Students should feel free to respectfully challenge one another’s opinions in class and should in turn expect to have their opinions respectfully challenged by other students or the instructor.

**Electronic Devices Policy**

Use of laptop computers is allowed for class purposes only. Use of cell phones is prohibited. Students whose use of electronic devices becomes disruptive will be asked to put away the disruptive device and may be asked to leave the classroom.

**Academic Integrity Policy**

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University’s academic honesty policy, “A Culture of Honesty,” and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in “A Culture of Honesty” found at [**www.uga.edu/honesty**](www.uga.edu/honesty). Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

**Disability Accommodation Policy**

Students desiring disability accommodations should consult the [**Disability Resource Center**](https://drc.uga.edu/) and should notify the instructor as soon as possible.

**Course Schedule**

NOTE: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

* Tuesday, August 15: Course Overview and Introduction
* Thursday, August 17: Understanding American Politics
  + Read: APT, Chapter 1 (pp. 2 – 23)
* Tuesday, August 22: The Constitution, Part I
  + Read: APT, Chapter 2 (pp. 27 – 59)
  + Read: [***Federalist No. 47***](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Federalist_(Dawson)/47)
* Thursday, August 24: The Constitution, Part II
  + Read: GPSC, Chapter 4 (pp. 35 – 48)
  + Read: [**“A Reality Many Americans Don’t Want to Admit: Our Constitution Is Outdated and Broken”**](http://forwardprogressives.com/a-reality-many-americans-dont-want-to-admit-our-constitution-is-outdated-and-broken/)
* Tuesday, August 29: Federalism, Part I
  + Read: APT, Chapter 3 (pp. 64 – 94)
  + Read: GPSC, Chapter 2 (pp. 8 – 24)
* Thursday, August 31: Federalism, Part II
  + Watch: [**“The Trouble with the Electoral College”**](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wC42HgLA4k)
  + Watch: [**“The Popular Vote vs. the Electoral College”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXnjGD7j2B0)

**Submit your research question via email by 11:59 PM on Monday, September 4.**

* Tuesday, September 5: Political Science Workshop I
* Thursday, September 7: Civil Liberties
  + Read: APT, Chapter 4 (pp. 98 – 137)
  + Read: [**“Saturday It’s Official: Guns Legal on Georgia College Campuses”**](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/saturday-official-guns-legal-georgia-college-campuses/xRDUMtbd3QSWvzA1HFNVmI/)
* Tuesday, September 12: Civil Rights
  + Read: APT, Chapter 5 (pp. 143 – 185)
  + Read: GPSC, Chapter 9 (pp. 134 – 145)
* Thursday, September 14: Public Opinion, Part I
  + Read: APT, Chapter 6 (pp. 190 – 219)
  + Read: **[“Twins Study Confirms Genetic Role of Politics”](http://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/today/article/twins-study-confirms-genetic-role-of-politics/)**
* Tuesday, September 19: Public Opinion, Part II
  + - * + Read: [**“Why FiveThirtyEight Gave Trump a Better Chance than Almost Anyone Else”**](http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-fivethirtyeight-gave-trump-a-better-chance-than-almost-anyone-else/)
* Thursday, September 21: The Media, Part I:
  + Read: APT, Chapter 7 (pp. 224 – 247)
* Tuesday, September 26: The Media, Part II:
  + Read: **[“The Fake News Problem Isn’t Nearly as Bad as You Might Think”](http://www.vox.com/conversations/2017/1/27/14266228/donald-trump-hillary-clinton-fake-news-media-2016-election)**
* Thursday, September 28: Political Science Workshop II
* Tuesday, October 3: Review for Midterm Exam
* Thursday, October 5: Midterm Exam
* Tuesday, October 10: Political Parties, Part I
  + Read: APT, Chapter 8 (pp. 252 – 282)
  + Read: [***Federalist No. 10***](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Federalist_(Dawson)/10)
* Thursday, October 12: Political Parties, Part II
  + Read: [**Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, *Culture War?* (Chapter 4)**](http://benkantack.com/CultureWar_Ch4.pdf)
* Tuesday, October 17: Elections, Part I
  + Read: APT, Chapter 9 (pp. 286 – 326)
  + Read: [**“Will Ohio State’s Football Team Decide the White House?”**](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2012/10/how_the_presidential_race_between_barack_obama_and_mitt_romney_could_be.html)
* Thursday, October 19: Elections, Part II
  + Read: GPSC, Chapter 13 (pp. 183 – 195)
  + Read: [**“A Tale of Two Races: Quist and Ossoff”**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/a-tale-of-two-races-quist-ossoff_us_594a0fc6e4b0710bea889a98)
* Tuesday, October 24: Interest Groups
  + Read: APT, Chapter 10 (pp. 332 – 358)
  + Read: GPSC, Chapter 12 (pp. 171 – 182)
* Thursday, October 26: Congress, Part I
  + Read: APT, Chapter 11 (pp. 362 – 401)
  + Read: GPSC, Chapter 5 (pp. 55 – 75)
* Tuesday, October 31: Congress, Part II
  + Read: GPSC, Chapter 10 (pp. 146 – 163)
  + Play: [**The Redistricting Game**](http://www.redistrictinggame.org/)

**Submit your theory and hypothesis/hypotheses via email by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, November 1.**

* Thursday, November 2: Political Science Workshop III
* Tuesday, November 7: The Presidency, Part I
  + Read: APT, Chapter 12 (pp. 406 – 435)
  + Read: GPSC, Chapter 6 (pp. 76 – 92)
* Thursday, November 9: The Presidency, Part II
  + Read: [**“Fix the Broken U.S. Government with ‘Fast Track’”**](http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/24/opinions/presidential-fast-track-moe-howell/index.html)
* Tuesday, November 14: The Bureaucracy
  + Read: APT, Chapter 13 (pp. 440 – 469)
  + Read: GPSC, Chapter 8 (pp. 107 – 133)
* Thursday, November 16: The Courts, Part I
  + Read: APT, Chapter 14 (pp. 475 – 512)
  + Read: GPSC, Chapter 7 (pp. 93 – 106)
* Tuesday, November 28: The Courts, Part II
  + Read: [**“Gorsuch’s Confirmation Shattered Political Conventions. Here is Why.”**](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/04/10/neil-gorsuchs-confirmation-shattered-political-conventions-here-is-why/?utm_term=.417c95a9e9be)
* Thursday, November 30: Review for Final Exam

**Submit your research design paper via email by 11:59 PM on Friday, December 1.**

**FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7 (3:30PM-6:30PM)**