

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

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

Class meets:  
Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays, 12:20pm to 1:10pm, Baldwin Hall, 0102

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 and learn how it relates to American government.

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 individually and with others
- 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 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/>)

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

## Assignments and grading

### **Exams (20 each%, 40 total)**

Anything from the assigned readings and discussed during class 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.

### **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.

### **Civic autobiography (20%)**

Reflection is an important part of the learning process. Students will complete a reflection paper as part of the course, considering the role of civic engagement in their lives and how it relates to what they are learning about American government.

### **Attendance & participation (10%)**

Attendance and participation are expected. This is a small class, so we will get to know each other. In sum, class will be more enjoyable if we talk with each other.

### **Engagement assignments (extra credit)**

I encourage you to be engaged with political news throughout the semester. It should provide a richer experience with the course material and may establish news reading habits. There will be opportunities to gain extra credit throughout the semester by sharing/presenting political news with the class.

## Administrative Items

### **ELearning**

You will submit written assignments and 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. Course introduction & Roots of American Government**

Monday, August 14

- Course syllabus

Wednesday, August 16

- *Roots & Reform 1*

Friday, August 18

- *Roots & Reform 1*

#### **Week 2. Constitution & Federalism**

Monday, August 21

- *Roots & Reform 2*

Wednesday, August 23

- *Roots & Reform 2*
- *Georgia Politics 4*

Friday, August 25

- *Roots & Reform 3*

### **Week 3. Civil Rights & Civil Liberties**

Monday, August 28

- *Roots & Reform* 4

Wednesday, August 30

- *Roots & Reform* 5

Friday, September 1 – Class discussion 1

- “The Case for Reparations”  
(<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631>)

### **Week 4. Congress**

Monday, September 4 – NO CLASS, LABOR DAY

Wednesday, September 6

- *Roots & Reform* 6

Friday, September 8

- *More Perfect Constitution* 1

### **Week 5. Congress & the Presidency**

Monday, September 11

- *Roots & Reform* 6

Wednesday, September 13

- *Roots & Reform* 6
- *Georgia Politics* 5

Friday, September 15

- *Roots & Reform* 7

### **Week 6. The Executive Branch & the Bureaucracy**

Monday, September 18

- *Roots & Reform* 7
- *Georgia Politics* 6

Wednesday, September 20 – Class discussion 2

- *More Perfect Constitution* 2
- Engagement extra credit 1

Friday, September 22

- *Roots & Reform* 8

## **Week 7. The Bureaucracy & the Judiciary**

Monday, September 25 – Class Discussion 3

- “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>)
- “Trump’s slow pace of appointments is hurting government—ad his own agenda”  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/03/six-months-into-his-presidency-trump-continues-to-be-exceptionally-slow-at-appointing-officials-heres-why-that-matters/?utm\\_term=.55a943a8012c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/03/six-months-into-his-presidency-trump-continues-to-be-exceptionally-slow-at-appointing-officials-heres-why-that-matters/?utm_term=.55a943a8012c)

Wednesday, September 27

- *Roots & Reform* 9

Friday, September 29

- *Roots & Reform* 9
- *Georgia Politics* 7

## **Week 8. Wrapping up institutions of American government**

Monday, October 2 – Class discussion 4

- *More Perfect Constitution* 3
- Engagement extra credit 2

Wednesday, October 4

- Wrap up institutions and review

Friday, October 6 – Exam 1

## **Week 9. Informal institutions of American government**

Monday, October 9

- *Roots & Reform* 15
- *Georgia Politics* 12

Wednesday, October 11

- *Roots & Reform* 11
- *Georgia Politics* 11

Friday, October 13 – Class discussion 5

- “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>)
- “The Republican Party has a big problem: Insurgent candidates”  
(<http://time.com/4892800/republican-gop-candidates-donald-trump/>)

## **Week 10. Informal institutions & media literacy**

Monday, October 16

- *Roots & Reform* 14

Wednesday, October 18

- “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>)
- “Political Polarization in the American Public” (<http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>)

Friday, October 20

- “No, we’re not arguing from the same facts. How can democracies make good decisions if citizens are misinformed?” (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/07/21/no-were-not-arguing-from-the-same-facts-how-can-democracies-make-good-decisions-if-citizens-are-misinformed/>)
- <http://www.npr.org/2016/12/11/505154631/a-finders-guide-to-facts>
- <http://libguides.libraries.wsu.edu/c.php?g=616286&p=4287809>
- <https://www.allsides.com/>
- <http://graphics.wsj.com/blue-feed-red-feed/>

## **Week 11. Campaigns & elections**

Monday, October 23

- *Roots & Reform* 12 & 13

Wednesday, October 25

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

Friday, October 27 – NO CLASS/FALL BREAK

## **Week 12. Campaigns & Participation**

Monday, October 30 – Class discussion 6

- *More Perfect Constitution* 4
- Engagement extra credit 3

Wednesday, November 1

- *Roots & Reform* 12
- *Georgia Politics* 9

Friday, November 3

- *Voice & Equality*, Chapters 1 & 2

### **Week 13. Voting & Political socialization**

Monday, November 6 – Class discussion 7

- *More Perfect Constitution* 5

Wednesday, November 8

- *Please vote for Me*, documentary

Friday, November 10

- *Please vote for Me*, documentary & discussion

### **Week 14. Political Socialization**

Monday, November 13

- *Roots & Reform* 10

Wednesday, November 15

- Excerpts from: *Cultivating Democracy* by Gimpel et al
- Excerptps from: *What Americans Know about Politics* by Carpini & Keeter

Friday, November 17 – Class discussion 8

- “Millennials Civic Health Index” (<http://ncoc.veracitymedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2013MillennialsCHI.pdf>)
- “Georgia Civic Health Index” (<http://cviog.uga.edu/resources/documents/publications/georgia-civic-health-index.pdf>)
- “National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement: Campus Report, Student Voting Rates for UGA” (see eLC)

### **Week 15. Thanksgiving!**

Monday, November 20 – NO CLASS/THANKGIVING BREAK

Wednesday, November 22 – NO CLASS/THANKGIVING BREAK

Friday, November 24 – NO CLASS/THANKGIVING BREAK

### **Week 16. Public Opinion**

Monday, November 27

- *Roots & Reform* 10

Wednesday, November 29

- *More Perfect Constitution* 6

Friday, December 1 – Exam 2

## Week 17. Civic engagement

Monday, December 4

- Excerpts from: *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam
- Excerpts from: *A New Engagement?* by Zukin et al

Tuesday, December 5

- Wrap up & review

## Week 18. Finals period, Thursday, December 7 – Wednesday, December 13

- Friday, December 8: FINAL EXAM, 12:00PM – 3:00PM
- Friday, December 8: Civic Autobiography Paper due

## List of Due Dates

Exam 1 – Friday, October 6

Exam 2 – Friday, December 1

Final Exam – Friday, December 8, 12:00PM – 3:00PM

Civic autobiography paper due – Friday, December 8, 12:00PM – 3:00PM

Class discussion dates

- Friday, September 1
- Wednesday, September 20
- Monday, September 25
- Monday, October 2
- Friday, October 13
- Monday, October 30
- Monday, November 6
- Friday, November 17

Engagement extra credit opportunity dates

- Wednesday, September 20
- Monday, October 2
- Monday, October 30

Pop quizzes – ☺