

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:
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30am to 10:45am, 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/>)

¹ 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

Tuesday, August 15

- Course syllabus

Thursday, August 17

- *Roots & Reform 1*

Week 2. Constitution & Federalism

Tuesday, August 22

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

Thursday, August 24

- *Roots & Reform 3*

Week 3. Civil Rights & Civil Liberties

Tuesday, August 29

- *Roots & Reform* 4
- *Roots & Reform* 5

Thursday, August 31 – Class discussion 1*

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

Week 4. Congress

Tuesday, September 5

- *Roots & Reform* 6

Thursday, September 7

- *More Perfect Constitution* 1

Week 5. Congress & the Presidency

Tuesday, September 12

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

Thursday, September 14

- *Roots & Reform* 7

Week 6. The Executive Branch & the Bureaucracy

Tuesday, September 19 – Class discussion 2*

- *Roots & Reform* 7
- *Georgia Politics* 6
- *More Perfect Constitution* 2*
- Engagement extra credit 1

Thursday, September 21

- *Roots & Reform* 8

Week 7. The Bureaucracy & the Judiciary

Tuesday, September 26– 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)
- “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

Thursday, September 28

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

Week 8. Wrapping up institutions of American government

Tuesday, October 3 – Class discussion 4*

- *More Perfect Constitution* 3*
- Engagement extra credit 2
- Wrap up institutions and review

Thursday, October 5 – Exam 1

Week 9. Informal institutions of American government

Tuesday, October 10

- *Roots & Reform* 15
- *Georgia Politics* 12
- *Roots & Reform* 11
- *Georgia Politics* 11

Thursday, October 12 – 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

Tuesday, October 17

- *Roots & Reform* 14
- "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/>)

Thursday, October 19

- "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

Tuesday, October 24

- *Roots & Reform* 12 & 13

Thursday, October 26

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

Week 12. Campaigns & Participation

Tuesday, October 31– Class discussion 6*

- *More Perfect Constitution* 4*
- Engagement extra credit 3
- *Roots & Reform* 12
- *Georgia Politics* 9

Thursday, November 2

- *Roots & Reform* 12
- *Georgia Politics* 9
- *Voice & Equality*, Chapters 1 & 2

Week 13. Voting & Political socialization

Tuesday, November 7 – Class discussion 7*

- *More Perfect Constitution* 5*
- *Please vote for Me*, documentary

Thursday, November 9

- *Please vote for Me*, documentary & discussion
- *Roots & Reform* 10

Week 14. Political Socialization & Public Opinion

Tuesday, November 12

- Excerpts from: *Cultivating Democracy* by Gimpel et al
- Excerpts from: *What Americans Know about Politics* by Carpini & Keeter
- *Roots & Reform* 10
- *More Perfect Constitution* 6

Thursday, November 14 – 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

Tuesday, November 21– NO CLASS/THANKGIVING BREAK

Thursday, November 23 – NO CLASS/THANKGIVING BREAK

Week 16. Civic Engagement

Tuesday, November 28

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

Thursday, November 30 – Exam 2

Week 17/18. Finals period, Thursday, December 7 – Wednesday, December 13

- Tuesday, December 12: FINAL EXAM, 8:00AM – 11:00AM
- Tuesday, December 12: Civic Autobiography Paper due

List of Due Dates

Exam 1 – Thursday, October 5

Exam 2 – Thursday, November 30

Final Exam – Tuesday, December 12, 8:00AM – 11:00AM

Civic autobiography paper due – Tuesday, December 12, 8:00AM – 11:00AM

Class discussion dates	Thursday, August 31
	Tuesday, September 19
	Tuesday, September 26
	Tuesday, October 3
	Thursday, October 12
	Tuesday, October 31
	Tuesday, November 7
	Thursday, November 14

Engagement extra credit opportunity dates	Tuesday, September 19
	Tuesday, October 3
	Tuesday, October 31

Pop quizzes – ☺