

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government

Meeting times: Tuesdays and Thursday, 3:30-4:20pm plus Friday section

Room: Instructional Plaza/S306

Instructor: Professor Alexa Bankert

Contact: alexa.bankert@uga.edu

Office: Baldwin Hall 380F

Office Hours: Thursdays 1–2 or by appointment

Course Description and Objective

This course is important – whether you are a Political Science major or not. You will be introduced to the fundamentals of the American government, such as its political institutions and main actors. Most importantly, this class aims to demonstrate how you are connected to the government in your daily life and present you with tools to become informed and act in politically meaningful ways. For this purpose, we will also examine what being American means in today’s society and how our political institutions and behavior compare to other countries. By doing so, you gain a better understanding of how specific features of the American system shape politics. Ultimately, you will leave this class with a comprehensive understanding of how to critically evaluate and actively participate in the American political system.

Required Text

“We the People” (11th Essentials Edition) – by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Robert J. Spitzer **with access to InQuizitive.**

“Georgia Politics in a State of Change” (4th Custom Edition for the University of Georgia) – by Charles S. Bullock III and Ronald Keith Gaddie.

******Please do not buy this book until after the first breakout session******

Sections

You are expected to attend one section in addition to the main lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Please note that section attendance is mandatory. All sections take place on Fridays.

Sect.	Time	Place	Instructor	Email
10628	8:00-8:50	Joe Brown Hall 154	Linan Jia	linan.jia25@uga.edu
10643	9:05-9:55	Joe Brown Hall 154	Linan Jia	linan.jia25@uga.edu
10644	9:05-9:55	MLC 367	Sydney Borges	sydney.borges@uga.edu
10646	10:10-11:00	MLC 367	Sydney Borges	sydney.borges@uga.edu
10647	10:10-11:00	Journalism 513	Adam Burchfield	awb4710@uga.edu
10649	11:15-12:05	Old College 100	Adam Burchfield	awb4710@uga.edu
10652	11:15-12:05	Journalism 513	Sam Marcotte	marcotte@uga.edu
10654	12:20-1:10	Joe Brown Hall 242	Sam Marcotte	marcotte@uga.edu

10655	12:20-1:10	Old College 100	Jacob Lambeck	jacob.lambeck@uga.edu
10656	1:25-2:15	Joe Brown Hall 242	Jacob Lambeck	jacob.lambeck@uga.edu
10662	1:25-2:15	Psychology 309	Meredith Bennet	msb37@uga.edu

Evaluation

Response Paper: You will complete one short paper in this course. Topics are listed in the syllabus and match each week's theme. Note that the due date of the paper varies according to the topic you choose. Short papers can range from 5 to 10 pages (double spaced) and are due at the end of a week's theme as listed on the syllabus. Please make sure to discuss the criteria of the paper with your TA in advance.

Midterm: The midterm will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. These questions will cover material from the first half of the semester. *As of now, the midterm exam is scheduled for Thursday, September 27th.*

Final Exam: The final exam is **not** cumulative and will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. *As of now, the exam is scheduled for Thursday, December 6th from 3:30 - 6:30 pm.*

Weekly Assignments: There will be short weekly assignments which you can access on the **InQuizitive** website that accompanies your textbook (you can find their website here: <https://digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople1less>). You will need to create an account in order to submit your assignments, which are due every Friday at 6pm of each week. In addition, you will be asked for a student set ID, which is linked to the section you choose (see below). If you have trouble with the registration process, please contact your TA.

Student Set ID is **60472** for section 10628 from 8:00am to 8:50am (TA Linan Jia)
 Student Set ID is **60473** for section 10643 from 9:05 to 9:55am (TA Linan Jia)

Student Set ID is **60474** for section 10644 from 9:05 to 9:55am (TA Sydney Borges)
 Student Set ID is **60475** for section 10646 from 10:10am to 11am (TA Sydney Borges)

Student Set ID is **60476** for section 10647 from 10:10am to 11am (TA Adam Burchfield)
 Student Set ID is **60477** for section 10649 from 11:15am to 12:05pm (TA Adam Burchfield)

Student Set ID is **60479** for section 10652 from 11:15am to 12:05pm (TA Sam Marcotte)
 Student Set ID is **60480** for section 10654 from 12:20pm to 1:10pm (TA Sam Marcotte)

Student Set ID is **60481** for section 10655 from 12:20pm to 1:10pm (TA Jacob Lambeck)
 Student Set ID is **60482** for section 10656 from 1:25pm to 2:15pm (TA Jacob Lambeck)

Student Set ID is **60484** for section 10662 from 1:25pm to 2:15pm (TA Meredith Bennet)

Readings and Quizzes: The required readings typically include one chapter of the textbook per week. If any additional readings are assigned they will be made available electronically on eLC. It is important that you stay current with these readings so that you can follow along with lectures and participate in discussions in your sections. I would strongly recommend you finish the readings before your section takes place since *there will be unannounced short quizzes (3-5 questions) based on the lectures and assigned readings for that week so make sure you are familiar with each chapter's key terms.*

In-Section Participation: Do not hesitate to speak up in class or in your section! And if you have a question, other people are likely to have questions, too. Especially in your section, there will be discussions that should demonstrate your critical reflection on the material covered in class as well as on weekly assignments.

Online Research Study: You are required to participate in an online research study. The study will take approximately 20-25 minutes and is supposed to provide you with an understanding of political science research.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage:

Final Exam: 20%

Midterm: 20%

Response Paper: 15%

Quizzes: 15%

Attendance and Participation: 15%

Weekly Assignments: 10%

Participation in Online Research Study: 5%

Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades

100-94 A	79-77 C+	63-60 D-
93-90 A-	76-74 C	59-0 F
89-87 B+	73-70 C-	
86-84 B	69-67 D+	
83-80 B-	66-64 D	

******Please note that there is no standard rounding policy. Rounding decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis and are largely determined by your TA.******

Grade Appeals, Incompletes, Late Assignments, and Make-Up Policy

Any questions you have regarding grades should be directed to your teaching assistant. If you are unable to resolve the matter with him or her, you may appeal the grade to me. Keep in mind that formal grade appeals must be made in writing, and in the case of a paper, I will re-grade your entire paper. Therefore, your grade can go up or down. A final

grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be presented to the teaching assistant and accepted prior to the exam when feasible. Late assignments will be docked 5 percent per day (half letter grade), for each day that a project is late (including weekends). If you need a (reasonable) extension, talk to your teaching assistant.

Office Hours

Students who are having difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments are encouraged to contact their teaching assistant. Don’t be afraid to come by. However, please note that office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture if you skipped class. If you like to talk to me, feel free to stop by my office during office hours but please email me in advance if possible.

Syllabus Policy:

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary. I will give you fair notice (at least a week) if something, such as a reading assignment, is to change.

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 review the policy here: <http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

Culture of Honesty Policy

You are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures relating to academic honesty. To understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University, please carefully review the policy here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academichonesty/academic-honesty-policy>

Course Schedule

First Week (starting August 14th)

Topic: The Citizen and the Government

Readings: Chapter 1 in “We The People”

Second Week (starting August 21st)

Topic: The Founding and the Constitution

Readings: Chapter 2 in “We The People” & The Constitution of the United States of America pp. A11-A23.

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 1 and 2 on *Inquizitive*

Third Week (August 28th, no class on Thursday!)

Topic: Federalism

Readings: Chapter 3 in “We The People”. Also, listen to

<http://www.npr.org/2013/03/28/175596229/the-road-to-the-supreme-court-arguments-on-gay-marriage>.

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 3 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Think about the medical marijuana issue, which puts state power in contention with national power. Write out your stance on whether the issue should be addressed at the national or state level. Justify your decision. (Due: September 3rd)

Fourth Week (starting September 4th)

Topic: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Readings: Chapter 4 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 4 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Imagine you are a legislative staffer. Draft a policy memo on the extent of government surveillance of American citizens. Should there be limits on government surveillance in the fight against terrorism? If so, which ones? Justify your decision. (Due: September 10th)

Fifth Week (starting September 11th)

Topic: Public Opinion

Readings: Chapter 5 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 5 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Take the Political Compass test at www.politicalcompass.org or the Pew Research Center’s political typology quiz at www.people-press.org. These sites rate your political ideology based on your opinions. Can ideology help you to guide your political opinions or should your political opinions guide your ideology? Discuss. (Due: September 17th)

Sixth Week (starting September 18th)

Topic: The Media

Readings: Chapter 6 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 6 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Pick a current political topic and compare how it is reported on one of the national news (ABC, CBS, or NBC), one of the cable news (CNN, MSNBC, or FOX NEWS), and one newspaper (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, or The Washington Post). Identify the different frames and describe their impact. (Due: September 24th)

Seventh Week (starting September 25th, Midterm on Thursday!)

Topic: Political Parties, Participation, and Elections

Readings: Chapter 7 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 7 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Write a list of reasons individuals may not vote. Examine the role of personal motivation as well as institutional barriers in your answer and propose possible strategies to increase turnout. (Due: October 1st)

Eighth Week (starting October 2nd)

Topic: Interest Groups

Readings: Chapter 8 in “We The People”. Also, read:

<http://themonkeycage.org/2013/05/shadow-lobbyists-and-the-revolving-door-or-what-anthony-weiner-and-newt-gingrich-have-in-common/>

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 8 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Imagine you are an aide to a member of Congress. Write a policy memo for or against more regulation of lobbying. In your memo, discuss the impact of the U.S. campaign finance system. (Due: October 8th)

Ninth Week (starting October 9th)

Topic: Congress

Readings: Chapter 9 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 9 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Look up your representative’s recent voting records and ideological placement (<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes>). Make a list of five issues he or she voted on, and state whether you would have voted the same way on behalf of your district taking into account your district’s economic and socio-economic characteristics. Justify your decisions. (Due: October 15th)

Tenth Week (starting October 16th)

Topic: The Presidency

Readings: Chapter 10 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 10 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Consider President Trump’s travel ban. Explain why you think the president should or should not have the power to act on this issue. In your answer, discuss the reaction of the international community to the travel ban as well as its impact on America’s image abroad. (Due: October 22nd)

Eleventh Week (starting October 23rd)

Topic: The Bureaucracy (it is not going to be as boring as it sounds)

Readings: Chapter 11 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 11 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Read <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/04/gsa-employees-spend-taxpayer-money-in-vegas/>. Why do federal and state government need bureaucracies? Why do bureaucratic agencies have such a bad reputation? Is it justified? (Due: October 29th)

Twelfth Week (starting October 30th)

Topic: The Federal Courts

Readings: Chapter 12 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 12 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Read <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/7/9/17537808/supreme-court-brett-kavanaugh-right-cartoon>. How will SCOTUS change after the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh? What are potential consequences of that change for the ideological trajectory of the U.S? To what extent could they personally affect you? (Due: November 5th)

Thirteenth Week (starting November 6th)

Topic: Domestic Policy

Readings: Chapter 13 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 13 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Describe the level of income inequality in the U.S. and compare it to other countries (<https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm>). Why should or should we not care about income inequality? What are the consequences of income inequality on society and the economy? (Due: November 12th)

Fourteenth Week (starting November 13th)

Topic: Foreign Policy

Readings: Chapter 14 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 14 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Why should we care about foreign policy? Is Isolationism possible in today’s world? In your answer, describe the role of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. (Due: November 19th)

Fifteenth Week (starting November 27th)

Review session in preparation for final exam.

Sixteenth Week (December 4th)

Review session in preparation for final exam.