

**POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government**  
University of Georgia  
Spring 2019

Instructor:  
Dr. Brittany Bramlett  
[bbram@uga.edu](mailto:bbram@uga.edu)

Office meeting times:  
Before/after class  
Or by appointment

Class meets:  
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 8:00am to 8:50am, Instructional Plaza, S306  
Mondays, breakouts with TAs (check your time/place in Athena)

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 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 (Revel app!)
- *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/>)

---

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

## Assignments and grading

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

Discussion sections occur every Friday and attendance is mandatory. More than one unexcused absence will result in reduction of the student's discussion section grade. More than four unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for this portion of the course. These sections are small and benefit from student attendance and participation. The discussion section grade may also include reading quizzes and short assignments.

Discussion section instructors:

Aman Bekmagambetov  
Qingyan Wang  
Yu-Lin Ryan Liou  
Ryan Moss  
Sydney Borges  
Jungyeon Park

### **Midterm exams (20% each, 60% total)**

Students will take three exams throughout the semester. 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.

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

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

### **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.

### **Attendance notes**

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 on Monday. Obviously, things come up. Open communication is always appreciated and considered. However, your TAs notes when you are not in class, and this factors into your 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 slides and 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 or your TA within the week of the missed due date to discuss the timely completion of the assignment. Documentation is required for make-up exams.

### **Classroom safety**

If the fire alarm sounds, we will exit the building and reassemble outside of the Plaza to make sure everyone exited the building. If there is a tornado warning, we will move downstairs to shelter and account for everyone. If you have concerns about other emergencies or if you have special circumstances that I need to know about in case of an emergency, please speak to me after class. If you have questions about evacuation locations or shelter locations, contact OEP (Office of Emergency Preparedness).

### **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. 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 10

- Course syllabus

Monday, January 14

- Breakout introduction

Tuesday, January 15

- *Roots & Reform 1* (Introduction)

Thursday, January 17

- *Roots & Reform 2* (The Constitution)
- *Georgia Politics 4*

### **Week 2.**

Monday, January 21 – Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

- NO CLASS OR BREAKOUTS

Tuesday, January 22

- *Roots & Reform 2* (The Constitution)
- *Georgia Politics 4*

Thursday, January 24

- *Roots & Reform 3* (Federalism)

### **Week 3.**

Monday, January 28

- *More Perfect Constitution* Preamble

Tuesday, January 29

- *Roots & Reform 4* (Liberties)

Thursday, January 31

- *Roots & Reform 5* (Civil rights)

### **Week 4.**

Monday, February 4

- “The Case for Reparations” by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Tuesday, February 5

- “John Adams” film, Part I

Thursday, February 7

- “John Adams” film, Part II

### **Week 5.**

Monday, February 11

- Film discussion

Tuesday, February 12

- Exam 1

Thursday, February 14

- *Roots & Reform 6* (Congress)
- *Georgia Politics 5*

### **Week 6.**

Monday, February 18

- Engagement extra credit day 1 (Congress)

Tuesday, February 19

- *Roots & Reform 6* (Congress)
- *Georgia Politics 5*

Thursday, February 21

- *Roots & Reform 6* (Congress)
- *Georgia Politics 5*

### **Week 7.**

Monday, February 25

- *More Perfect Constitution 1*

Tuesday, February 26

- *Roots & Reform 7* (Presidency)
- *Georgia Politics 6*

Thursday, February 28

- *Roots & Reform 7* (Presidency)
- *Georgia Politics 6*

### **Week 8.**

Monday, March 4

- *More Perfect Constitution 2*

Tuesday, March 5

- *Roots & Reform 9* (Judiciary)

Thursday, March 7

- *Roots & Reform 9* (Judiciary)

**Spring break – Monday, March 11 – Friday, March 15**

**Week 9.**

Monday, March 18

- *More Perfect Constitution* 3

Tuesday, March 19

- *Roots & Reform* 8 (Bureaucracy)

Thursday, March 21

- Exam 2

**Week 10.**

Monday, March 25

- Engagement extra credit day 2 (Judiciary / Bureaucracy)

Tuesday, March 26

- *Roots & Reform* 15 (Interest groups)

Thursday, March 28

- *Roots & Reform* 14 (Media)

**Week 11.**

Monday, April 1

- Media literacy

Tuesday, April 2

- *Roots & Reform* 11 (Parties)

Thursday, April 4

- *Roots & Reform* 10 (Public opinion)

**Week 12.**

Monday, April 8

- Engagement extra credit day 3 (Parties)

Tuesday, April 9

- *Roots & Reform* 10 (Political socialization)

Thursday, April 11

- *Roots & Reform* 12 (Voting & participation)

**Week 13.**

Monday, April 15

- Political socialization roundtable

Tuesday, April 16

- *Roots & Reform* 12 & 13 (Campaigns & elections)

Thursday, April 18

- Please vote for Me, film

**Week 14.**

Monday, April 22

- *More Perfect Constitution* 4

Tuesday, April 23

- "Please vote for Me," film

Thursday, April 25

- Exam 3

**Week 15.**

Monday, April 29

- *More Perfect Constitution* 5
- Film discussion

Tuesday, April 30 – Last day of class

- Wrap up

Finals period, Thursday, May 2 – Wednesday, May 8

Final exam date/time, Thursday, May 2, 8:00AM – 11:00AM

**List of Important Dates**

Exam 1 – Tuesday, February 12

Exam 2 – Thursday, March 21

Exam 3 – Thursday, April 25

Engagement extra credit day 1 – Monday, February 18

Engagement extra credit day 2 – Monday, March 25

Engagement extra credit day 3 – Monday, April 8