

POLS 1105H: Introduction to American Government
University of Georgia
Spring 2019

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

Class meets:
Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30am – 10:45am, Baldwin Hall, 0104

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

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 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 (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/>)

¹ Instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as needed.

Assignments and grading

Exams 1, 2 & 3 (20 each%, 60% total)

Anything from the assigned readings and discussed during class up to the first exam 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 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 expected to present additional material where relevant and helpful. Prepare to sign up for a date during the second week of classes.

Participation & attendance (10%)

Students are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions, large and small. There will be a lot of opportunities to do this. This is a great way to get to know students in the class/major in addition to learning the material in a different way. I take attendance every day for a couple of reasons: 1) I want to learn student names, and 2) if you're not present, you cannot participate. When calculating attendance and participation at the end of the semester, I typically allow for two unexcused absences that will not count against your grade. Be sure to provide documentation for any absences wished to be excused.

Civic engagement project (20%)

Practice what you've learned! Students should participate in at least 2 hours of civic/political engagement with one civic/political organization or in one campus and/or community civic/political engagement activities event. There are two components to this project:

- Students will complete a three-page report providing details about their organization or event they attended. They will describe the engagement experience and how it qualifies as civic/political engagement. Finally, they will reflect on that experience and relate back to material learned in the course.
- Students will also provide documentation of the engagement through the students' supervisor emailing the instructor directly to verify participation, through the student providing documentation, signed by the superior, scanned and uploaded to eLC, or through some other means. The goal is to take an extra step to verify the engagement with the instructor.

This seems like a good place to remind students of the University of Georgia's Academic Honesty Policy: (<https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty/academic-honesty-policy>). If a student is dishonest in reporting their applied civic engagement, the student will fail the course. Please be clear and upfront about your engagement. If you run into any issues with obtaining documentation or identifying an event/organization, reach out to your instructor ASAP.

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 writing assignments and locate 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 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.

Classroom safety

If the fire alarm sounds, we will exit the building and reassemble across the street (Jackson) 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

Tuesday, January 15

- *Roots & Reform* 1 (Introduction)

Thursday, January 17

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

Week 2.

Tuesday, January 22

- *More Perfect Constitution* Preamble
- *Roots & Reform* 3 (Federalism)

Thursday, January 24

- *Roots & Reform* 4 (Liberties)
- *Roots & Reform* 5 (Civil rights)

Week 3.

Tuesday, January 29

- Class discussion 1 ("The Case for Reparations" by Ta-Nehisi Coates)
- "John Adams" Part I

Thursday, January 31

- "John Adams" Part II & discussion

Week 4.

Tuesday, February 5

- Exam 1

Thursday, February 7

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

Week 5.

Tuesday, February 12

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

Thursday, February 14

- Class discussion 2 (*More Perfect Constitution* 1)
- Engagement extra credit day 1 (Congress)

Week 6.

Tuesday, February 19

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

Thursday, February 21

- *Roots & Reform* 7 (Presidency)
- *Georgia Politics* 6
- Class discussion 3 (*More Perfect Constitution* 2)

Week 7.

Tuesday, February 26

- *Roots & Reform* 9 (Judiciary)
- *Georgia Politics* 7

Thursday, February 28

- Class discussion 4 (*More Perfect Constitution* 3)

Week 8.

Tuesday, March 5

- *Roots & Reform* 8 (Bureaucracy)
- Engagement extra credit day 2 (Judiciary / Bureaucracy)

Thursday, March 7

- Exam 2

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

Week 9.

Tuesday, March 19

- *Roots & Reform* 15 (Interest groups)

Thursday, March 21

- *Roots & Reform* 14 (Media)
- Media literacy readings

Week 10.

Tuesday, March 26

- *Roots & Reform* 11 (Parties)
- Engagement extra credit day 3 (Parties)

Thursday, March 28

- *Roots & Reform* 10 (Public opinion & Political socialization)

Week 11.

Tuesday, April 2

- *Roots & Reform* 12 (Voting & participation)
- “National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement: Campus Report, Student Voting Rates for UGA”

Thursday, April 4

- Excerpt from *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam
- Class discussion 5 (Excerpt from *Cultivating Democracy* by Gimpel et al)

Week 12.

Tuesday, April 9

- *Roots & Reform* 12 & 13 (Campaigns & elections)
- Class discussion 6 (Excerpt from *A New Engagement?* by Zukin)

Thursday, April 11

- *Roots & Reform* 12 & 13 (Campaigns & elections)
- Class discussion 7 (Excerpt from *The Gamble*)

Week 13.

Tuesday, April 16

- Class discussion 8 (*More Perfect Constitution* 4)

Thursday, April 18

- *Please vote for Me*, documentary & discussion

Week 14.

Tuesday, April 23

- Class discussion 9 (*More Perfect Constitution* 5)
- Civic engagement project due & discussion

Thursday, April 25

- Exam 3

Week 15.

Tuesday, April 30 – Last Day of class

- Wrap up

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

List of Important Dates

Exam 1 – Tuesday, February 5

Exam 2 – Thursday, March 7

Exam 3 – Thursday, April 25

Civic engagement project – Tuesday, April 23

Engagement extra credit day 1 – Thursday, February 14

Engagement extra credit day 2 – Tuesday, March 5

Engagement extra credit day 3 – Tuesday, March 26

Class discussion 1 – Tuesday, January 29

Class discussion 2 – Thursday, February 14

Class discussion 3 – Thursday, February 21

Class discussion 4 – Thursday, February 28

Class discussion 5 – Thursday, April 4

Class discussion 6 – Tuesday, April 9

Class discussion 7 – Thursday, April 11

Class discussion 8 – Tuesday, April 16

Class discussion 9 – Tuesday, April 23