

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

Instructor:
Dr. Brittany Bramlett
bbram@uga.edu

Office meeting times:
Before / after class
Or by appointment

Class meets:
Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays 12:20pm – 1:10pm, 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* (2016 Presidential Edition), Karen O'Connor & Larry J. Sabato (**older versions are fine!**)
- *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 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.

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 in addition to learning the material in a different way.

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 two-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 or through the student providing documentation, signed by the superior, scanned and uploaded to eLC.

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.

Wednesday, August 14

- Course syllabus

Friday, August 16

- *Roots & Reform* 1 (Introduction)

Week 2.

Monday, August 19

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

Wednesday, August 21

- *Roots & Reform* 3 (Federalism)

Friday, August 23

- *Roots & Reform* 4 (Liberties)

Week 3.

Monday, August 26

- *Roots & Reform* 5 (Civil rights)

Wednesday, August 28

- Exam 1

Friday, August 31

- Discussion digital workday (“The Case for Reparations” by Ta-Nehisi Coates)

Week 4.

Monday, September 2 – Labor Day, No Classes

Wednesday, September 4

- “John Adams” Part II

Friday, September 6

- “John Adams” Part II & discussion

Week 5.

Monday, September 9

- *Roots & Reform 6* (Congress)

Wednesday, September 11

- *Roots & Reform 6* (Congress)

Friday, September 13

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

Week 6.

Monday, September 16

- Class discussion 1 (*More Perfect Constitution 1*)

Wednesday, September 18

- Engagement extra credit day 1 (Congress)

Friday, September 20

- *Roots & Reform 7* (Presidency)

Week 7.

Monday, September 23

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

Wednesday, September 25

- Class discussion 2 (*More Perfect Constitution 2*)

Friday, September 27

- *Roots & Reform 8* (Bureaucracy)

Week 8.

Monday, September 30

- *Roots & Reform 9* (Judiciary)

Wednesday, October 2

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

Friday, October 4

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

Week 9.

Monday, October 7

- Exam 2

Wednesday, October 9

- Wrap up institutions & Catch up

Friday, October 11

- *Roots & Reform* 14 (Media)

Week 10.

Monday, October 14

- Media literacy readings

Wednesday, October 16

- *Roots & Reform* 15 (Interest groups)

Friday, October 18

- *Roots & Reform* 11 (Parties)

Week 11.

Monday, October 21 – Withdrawal deadline

- Engagement extra credit day 2 (Parties)

Wednesday, October 23

- *Roots & Reform* 10 (Public opinion)

Friday, October 25

- *Roots & Reform* 10 (Political socialization)

Week 12.

Monday, October 28

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

Wednesday, October 30

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

Friday, November 1 – Fall Break, No Classes

Week 13.

Monday, November 4

- Class discussion 4 (*Cultivating Democracy* by Gimpel et al)

Wednesday, November 6

- "National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement: Campus Report, Student Voting Rates for UGA"
- *Voice & Equality*, Chapters 1 & 2

Friday, November 8

- Engagement extra credit day 3 (participation)

Week 14.

Monday, November 11

- Class discussion 5 (*More Perfect Constitution* 5)

Wednesday, November 13

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

Friday, November 15

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

Week 15.

Monday, November 18

- Class discussion 6 (*More Perfect Constitution* 4)

Wednesday, November 21

- *Please vote for Me*, documentary

Friday, November 23

- *Please vote for Me*, documentary & discussion
- Civic engagement project roundtable

Week 16.

Monday, November 25

- Civic engagement project due

Thanksgiving Break (Wednesday, November 27 – Friday, November 29)

Week 17.

Monday, December 2

- Exam 3

Wednesday, December 4 (Classes End)

- Wrap up!

Finals period, Friday, December 6 – Thursday, December 12

List of Due Dates

Exam 1 – Wednesday, August 28

Exam 2 – Monday, October 7

Exam 3 – Monday, December 2

Civic engagement project – Monday, November 25

Engagement extra credit day 1 – Wednesday, September 18

Engagement extra credit day 2 – Monday, October 21

Engagement extra credit day 3 – Friday, November 8

Class discussion 1 – Monday, September 16

Class discussion 2 – Wednesday, September 25

Class discussion 3 – Friday, October 4

Class discussion 4 – Monday, November 4

Class discussion 5 – Monday, November 11

Class discussion 6 – Monday, November 18