

POLS 1101 – Intro to American Government

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Pierce

Fall 2019

Meeting Information:

Class Time: TuTh 9:30 am - 10:45 am

Class Location: Baldwin 101D

Contact Information:

Office: Baldwin 304C

Email: apierce@uga.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description:

The goal of this course is to provide students with an understanding of the contemporary American political system. In addition, the course will introduce students to some of the approaches that political scientists use to study political institutions, processes and behavior. The course will examine the major institutions of American national government including Congress, the Presidency, and the Supreme Court, and the relationships among these institutions. In addition, the course will investigate the role of non-governmental groups and actors that influence political decision-making such as voters, political parties, and interest groups.

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Identify and explain the role of each of the major institutions in American politics
- Assess the degree to which relevant political actors influence the policy process
- Summarize the influence of the Founding Fathers on politics today
- Appraise your own beliefs about the American political system

Course Structure

This course will be taught using a team-based approach that encourages collaboration and active learning for individuals and teams. Most in-class time will be spent working on team activities that will allow you to directly apply key course concepts to various tasks.

The course itself is divided into three parts, each covering a significant component of American politics. The first part covers the founding of the United States and the important aspects of its Constitution. The second part covers different aspects of American political institutions, including Congress and the Presidency. The third and final part concerns the organization and influence of public opinion in the United States.

The Structure of Team-Based Learning

The Readiness Assurance Process (RAP) is an integral piece of a teaching approach called team-based learning. This process allows you numerous opportunities to demonstrate your comprehension of the reading and the course concepts while receiving immediate feedback on your progress. The RAP takes place in a sequence containing the following components.

1. *Readings*- At the start of each unit, you will complete a number of readings outside of class. These readings contain the core concepts and ideas of that particular unit. While these may not be the only readings for a unit, they will provide you a foundation.

2. *Individual Reading Challenge (IRC)* - The first in-class activity of each unit is the IRC, based upon assigned readings. These are in the form of a short quiz featuring multiple choice questions focused on the key concepts and ideas of the readings. They are designed to assess comprehension of these concepts as well as to maintain accountability for reading the assignments on time.
3. *Team Reading Challenge (TRC)* – After finishing the IRC, you will take the same test as a team. You are allowed to discuss the questions as a team and decide on a final answer for each question. You will know immediately how well you did on both RCs, receiving an individual team score. Individual scores will remain anonymous, but team scores will be posted on the whiteboard to compare each team’s progress.
4. *Appeals* – After the TRC is completed, students can appeal any question they missed on the team test. This is an open-ended book process wherein students can submit appeals on questions they got wrong based on evidence from the text. Appeals will only be granted when they are fully supported by the text. Appeals must also be in writing and submitted by the end of the class period in which the TRC was taken. Only teams submitting an appeal will be eligible for receiving points back.
5. *Application* – Most of the class meetings will involve short lectures followed by individuals or team-based activities that will allow you to apply the material from the readings.
6. *Peer Evaluation* – Since much of the activities involved in class focus on team activities, students will have an opportunity to evaluate each other several times throughout the class. These anonymous peer evaluations will factor into your grade, and they allow you give and receive feedback about things that are going well in the team and things that need improvement

Assignments and Responsibilities:

Grading Components

- RCs – 30% (33% IRC, 67% TRC)
- In-Class Applications and Participation – 10%
- Exam 1 – 10%
- Exam 2 – 15%
- Final Exam – 25%
- Peer Evaluations – 10%

Assignments

1. *RCs* – At the start of each units, you will be given an IRC and a TRC
2. *In-Class Activities* – These will be team exercises asking you to apply the knowledge you learned to an important real-world problem in American politics.
3. *Exams*- These will be short-answer, short-essay exams covering the material in the preceding units.

4. *Peer Evaluations*- There will be one anonymous peer evaluation at the end of the course. Failure to turn in a peer evaluation will result in a grade of zero for this component of the course.

Grading Scale

100%-93%: A	76.9%-73%: C
92.9%-90%: A-	72.9%-70%: C-
89.9%-87%: B+	69.9%-67%: D+
86.9%-83%: B	66.9%-60%: D
82.9%-80%: B-	<59.5%: F
79.9%-77%: C+	

I reserve the right to curve grades upwards at the end of the semester based on individual performance.

Required Course Materials

- James Q. Wilson, John J. DiIulio, Meena Bose, and Matthew Levendusky. 2018. *American Government: Institutions and Policies*. Cengage Learning (16th Edition).

Note this is the only required text for the beginning of the class; additional readings or multimedia viewings may be required as the semester progresses. You may buy this book in the bookstore or online; it is likely you will save money by buying a cheaper, used version online. You can expect around 35-70 pages a week of reading from this book, plus supplemental materials.

Course Prerequisites

Although there are no formal prerequisites, a high-school level knowledge of American politics, culture, and history would be useful when discussing the richer context of American politics.

Course Policies:

Late Work

There is no individual work due in this class, outside of peer evaluations, and thus there should be little opportunity to turn in late work. Peer evaluations **MUST** be turned in before you can take any exam.

Attendance Expectations

Due to the collaborative nature of this class, attendance is required and will be recorded. Unexcused absences will result in a grade of zero for the corresponding activity (e.g. quiz, application, exam). Excused absences, i.e. those with an institutionally approved reasons, will result in an excused grade, and the corresponding grade reweighted to reflect the excused grade.

In-class Behavior

Due to the collaborative nature of the in-class assignments, it is likely that class discussions may get heated or tensions may arise within groups. These occurrences are natural, and very much like situations you will likely encounter in the workforce. As such, it is expected that you settle any disputes in a civil manner, and that you treat each other with the utmost respect.

One aspect of respect entails listening and considering the opinions of others. This is particularly important given that many students will elect to bring laptops to class in order to consult their notes during discussion. While acknowledging the strong temptation of the internet, it is expected that you participate actively with your team in discussion and not pursue other endeavors during class.

Make-up Exams

An exam may be re-taken under the following circumstances only:

1. Death in the immediate family (parent, spouse, sibling, or child) within 2 weeks before the exam.
2. Unforeseeable medical emergency affecting yourself, your spouse, or your child.
3. Participation in an official UGA-sponsored academic or sporting event

In the case of a death, you must provide me 24 hours advanced notice, and I reserve the right to require supporting documentation. For participation in UGA-sponsored events, you must provide me 2-weeks advance notice in order to make-up the exam.

Academic Misconduct

Cases of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct (e.g., cheating on exams) will be handled according to the UGA Honor Code, available on-line at <https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/Introduction/>.

Special Needs

I am more than willing to be accommodating with any qualified special needs you may have as communicated by UGA's Disability Resource Center. Feel free to contact me about any arrangements you may need.

Course Outline and Assigned Readings:

NOTE: This reading list is considered tentative and is subject to change based on class progress in meeting learning objectives.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Activity</u>
August	15		Class Intro
	20		Intro to TBL
	22		GA Constitution
	27		GA Constitution Quiz
	29	NO CLASS	
September	3	Ch. 1-2	iRC 1, tRC 1
	5		Ch. 1-2 Application
	10	Ch. 3	iRC 2, tRC 2
	12		Ch. 3 Application
	17	Ch. 4-5	iRC 3, tRC 3
	19		Ch.s 4-5 Application
	24	Ch. 6	iRC 4, tRC 4
	26		Ch. 6 Application
October	1	Ch. 1-6	Exam 1
	3		Exam Review
	8	Ch. 15-16	iRC 5, tRC 5
	10		Ch. 15-16 Application
	15	Ch. 13	iRC 6, tRC 6
	17		Ch. 13 Application
	22	Ch. 14	iRC 7, tRC 7
	24		Ch 14 Application
	29	Ch. 13-16	EXAM 2
	31	Ch. 7 - 8	iRC 8, tRC 8
November	5	Ch. 9 - 10	iRC 9, tRC 9
	7		Ch. 9 - 10 Application
	12	Ch. 10	iRC 10, tRC 10
	14		Ch. 10 Application
	19	Ch. 11	iRC 11, tRC 11
	21		Ch. 11 Application
	26	Ch. 12	iRC 12, tRC 12
	28	NO CLASS	Happy Thanksgiving!
December	3		Ch. 12 Application
December	10	8:00-11:00am	Final Exam

Acknowledgements:

Significant portions of this syllabus draw on the syllabi of Dr. Justin Esarey and Timothy Lindberg. My thanks to them for making their syllabi available to me.

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