

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government
University of Georgia
Spring 2020

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

Class meets:
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30am to 10:20am, 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* (13th edition or older edition is fine), Karen O'Connor and Larry J. Sabato

Other assigned readings will be made available to you via E-Learning Commons (<https://uga.view.usg.edu/>)

¹ Dates and assignments are subject to change by the professor.

Assignments and grading

Discussion section (10%)

Discussion sections occur every Monday 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:

Nicolle Gaines
Douglas Perkins
Ah Rum Chang
KT Truszczynski
Shanshan Lian
Pedro Goulart

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.²

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.

² The final exam is optional. If students are happy with their previous exam grades, they can choose to have each exam count 30% instead of 20% and opt out of the final exam.

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.

Tuesday, January 7

- Course syllabus

Thursday, January 9

- *Roots & Reform 1* (Introduction)

Week 2.

Monday, January 13

- Breakout introduction
- Class discussion & reflection (engagement & knowledge)

Tuesday, January 14

- *Roots & Reform 2* (The Constitution)

Thursday, January 16

- *Roots & Reform 3* (Federalism)

Week 3.

Monday, January 20 – Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

- NO CLASS OR BREAKOUTS

Tuesday, January 21

- *Roots & Reform 4* (Liberties)

Thursday, January 23

- *Roots & Reform 5* (Civil rights)

Week 4.

Monday, January 27

- Class discussion & reflection – Rights & voting

Tuesday, January 28

- “John Adams” film, Part I

Thursday, January 30

- “John Adams” film, Part II

Week 5.

Monday, February 3

- Film discussion

Tuesday, February 4

- Exam 1

Thursday, February 6

- *Roots & Reform 6* (Congress)

Week 6.

Monday, February 10

- Engagement extra credit day 1 (Congress)

Tuesday, February 11

- *Roots & Reform 6* (Congress)

Thursday, February 13

- *Roots & Reform 6* (Congress)

Week 7.

Monday, February 17

- Class discussion & reflection – Congress & voting

Tuesday, February 18

- *Roots & Reform 7* (Presidency)

Thursday, February 20

- *Roots & Reform 7* (Presidency)

Week 8.

Monday, February 24

- Class discussion & reflection – Presidency & voting

Tuesday, February 25

- *Roots & Reform 9* (Judiciary)

Thursday, February 27

- *Roots & Reform 9* (Judiciary)

Week 9.

Monday, March 2

- Class discussion & reflection – Courts & voting

Tuesday, March 3

- *Roots & Reform* 8 (Bureaucracy)

Thursday, March 5

- Exam 2

Spring break. Monday, March 9 – Friday, March 13

Week 10.

Monday, March 16

- Engagement extra credit day 2 (Presidency / Judiciary / Bureaucracy)

Tuesday, March 17

- *Roots & Reform* 15 (Interest groups)

Thursday, March 19

- *Roots & Reform* 14 (Media)

Week 11.

Monday, March 23

- Class discussion & reflection – Media literacy & voting

Tuesday, March 24

- *Roots & Reform* 11 (Parties)

Thursday, March 26

- *Roots & Reform* 10 (Public opinion)

Week 12.

Monday, March 30

- Engagement extra credit day 3 (Parties)

Tuesday, March 31

- *Roots & Reform* 10 (Political socialization)

Thursday, April 2

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

Week 13.

Monday, April 6

- Class discussion & reflection – political socialization

Tuesday, April 7

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

Thursday, April 9

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

Week 14.

Monday, April 13

- Class discussion & reflection – Campaigns & elections & voting

Tuesday, April 14

- “Please vote for Me,” film

Thursday, April 16

- Please vote for Me, film

Week 15.

Monday, April 20

- Film discussion

Tuesday, April 21 – Last day of class

- Exam 3

Thursday, April 23

- Wrap up

Week 16.

Monday, April 27

- In-class debates & wrap up

Finals period. Thursday, April 30 – Wednesday, May 6

List of Important Dates

Final exam date/time, Thursday, April 30th , 8:00AM – 11:00AM

Exam 1 – Tuesday, February 4

Exam 2 – Thursday, March 5

Exam 3 – Tuesday, April 21

Engagement extra credit day 1 – Monday, February 10

Engagement extra credit day 2 – Monday, March 16

Engagement extra credit day 3 – Monday, March 30