

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government

Meeting times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 – 11:50 am plus Wednesday section

Room: Sanford Hall, Room 213

Instructor: Professor Alexa Bankert

Contact: alexa.bankert@uga.edu

Office: Baldwin Hall 380F

Office Hour: Tuesdays 1:30–2:30 or by appointment

Course Description and Objective

This course is important – whether you are a Political Science major or not. You will be introduced to the fundamentals of the American government, such as its political institutions and main actors. Most importantly, this class aims to demonstrate how you are connected to the government in your daily life and present you with tools to become informed and act in politically meaningful ways. For this purpose, we will also examine what being American means in today's society and how our political institutions and behavior compare to other countries. By doing so, you gain a better understanding of how specific features of the American system shape politics. Ultimately, you will leave this class with a comprehensive understanding of how to critically evaluate and actively participate in the American political system.

Required Text And Technology

We the People (12th essentials edition) – by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Robert J. Spitzer **with access to InQuizitive**

Georgia Politics in a State of Change (4th custom edition for the University of Georgia) – by Charles S. Bullock III and Ronald Keith Gaddie

******Please do not buy this book until after the first breakout session******

You are also required to purchase a *Top Hat account*. If you already have one from a prior class, you won't need to create a new one. If you do not have an account yet, please go to <https://support.tophat.com/s/article/Student-Top-Hat-Overview-and-Getting-Started-Guide> for instructions on how to get started with Top Hat. You will need access to your Top Hat account during the lecture either through your laptop or your phone. The join code for this class is 010000.

Sections

You are expected to attend one section in addition to the main lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Please note that section attendance is mandatory. All sections take place on Wednesday.

| Sect. | Time | Place | Instructor | Email |
|-------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 21552 | 8:00-8:50 | Journalism | Sarah Brechin | Sarah.brechin@uga.edu |
| 21548 | 9:05-9:55 | Leconte Hall | Sarah Brechin | Sarah.brechin@uga.edu |
| 21555 | 9:05-9:55 | Journalism | Hannah Morris | hgm52425@uga.edu |
| 21545 | 10:10-11:00 | Journalism | Hannah Morris | hgm52425@uga.edu |
| 21550 | 10:10-11:00 | Leconte Hall | Shayla Lee | Shayla.lee@uga.edu |
| 21544 | 11:15-12:05 | Leconte Hall | Shayla Lee | Shayla.lee@uga.edu |
| 21568 | 11:15-12:05 | Journalism | Melanie Waddell | Melanie.waddell25@uga.edu |
| 21537 | 12:20-1:10 | Leconte Hall | Melanie Waddell | Melanie.waddell25@uga.edu |
| 21563 | 12:20-1:10 | Baldwin Hall | Hagen Gurley | hbgurley@uga.edu |
| 21558 | 1:25-2:15 | Baldwin Hall | Hagen Gurley | hbgurley@uga.edu |
| 21566 | 1:25-2:15 | Journalism | Sam Marcotte | marcotte@uga.edu |

Evaluation

Response Paper: You will complete **one** short paper in this course. Topics are listed in the syllabus and match each week's theme. Note that the due date of the paper varies according to the topic you choose. Short papers can range from 5 to 10 pages (double spaced) and are due at the end of a week's theme as listed on the syllabus. Please make sure to discuss the criteria of the paper with your TA in advance.

Midterm: The midterm will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. These questions will cover material from the first half of the semester. *As of now, the midterm exam is scheduled for Thursday, February 27th, 11:00 – 11:50 am in Sanford Hall, Room 213.*

Final Exam: The final exam is **not** cumulative and will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. *As of now, the final exam is scheduled for Tuesday, May 5th, 12 – 3 pm in Sanford Hall, Room 213.*

Weekly Assignments: There will be short weekly assignments which you can access on the **InQuizitive** website that accompanies your textbook (you can find their website here: <https://digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople12ess>) You will need to create an account in order to submit your assignments, **which are due every Friday at 6pm of each week.**

When you create your InQuizitive account, you will be asked for a Student Set ID, which is linked to the section you chose when you registered for this class. The set IDs and their corresponding breakout sections are listed below. If you have trouble with the registration process, please contact your TA.

Student Set ID is **201635** for section 21552 from 8:00am to 8:50am (TA Sarah Brechin)
 Student Set ID is **201639** for section 21548 from 9:05 to 9:55am (TA Sarah Brechin)

Student Set ID is **201641** for section 21555 from 9:05 to 9:55am (TA Hannah Morris)
Student Set ID is **201642** for section 21545 from 10:10am to 11am (TA Hannah Morris)

Student Set ID is **201644** for section 21550 from 10:10am to 11am (TA Shayla Lee)
Student Set ID is **201645** for section 21544 from 11:15am to 12:05pm (TA Shayla Lee)

Student Set ID is **201646** for section 21568 from 11:15am to 12:05pm (TA Melanie Waddell)
Student Set ID is **201647** for section 21537 from 12:20pm to 1:10pm (TA Melanie Waddell)

Student Set ID is **201648** for section 21563 from 12:20pm to 1:10pm (TA Hagen Gurley)
Student Set ID is **201649** for section 21558 from 1:25pm to 2:15pm (TA Hagen Gurley)

Student Set ID is **201650** for section 21566 from 1:25pm to 2:15pm (TA Sam Marcotte)

Readings and Quizzes: The required readings typically include one chapter of the textbook per week. If any additional readings are assigned they will be made available electronically on eLC. It is important that you stay current with these readings so that you can follow along with lectures and participate in discussions in your sections. I would strongly recommend you finish the readings before your section takes place since *there will be unannounced short quizzes (3-5 questions) based on the lectures and assigned readings for that week so make sure you are familiar with each chapter's key terms.*

Lecture and In-Section Participation: Please note that attendance in the breakout section is required. Your participation grade (10%) will primarily be based on your performance in the section. There will be group discussions that should demonstrate your critical reflection on the material covered in class as well as on weekly assignments. While attendance in the lecture is not required, there will be unannounced opportunities to earn extra-credit through your participation in *Top Hat* questions and polls.

Online Research Study: You are required to participate in an online research study. The study will take approximately 20-25 minutes and is supposed to provide you with an understanding of political science research.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage:

Final Exam: 20%

Midterm: 20%

Response Paper: 15%

Quizzes: 15%

Weekly Assignments: 15%

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Participation in Online Research Study: 5%

Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades

| | | |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 100-94 A | 79-77 C+ | 63-60 D- |
| 93-90 A- | 76-74 C | 59-0 F |
| 89-87 B+ | 73-70 C- | |
| 86-84 B | 69-67 D+ | |
| 83-80 B- | 66-64 D | |

Please note that there is no standard rounding policy. Rounding decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis and are largely determined by your TA.

Grade Appeals, Incompletes, Late Assignments, and Make-Up Policy

Any questions you have regarding grades should be directed to your teaching assistant. If you are unable to resolve the matter with him or her, you may appeal the grade to me. Keep in mind that formal grade appeals must be made in writing, and in the case of a paper, I will re-grade your entire paper. Therefore, your grade can go up or down. A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be presented to the teaching assistant and accepted prior to the exam when feasible. Late assignments will be docked 5 percent per day (half letter grade), for each day that a project is late (including weekends). If you need a (reasonable) extension, talk to your teaching assistant.

Office Hours

Students who are having difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments are encouraged to contact their teaching assistant. Don’t be afraid to come by. However, please note that office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture if you skipped class. If you like to talk to me, feel free to stop by my office during office hours or make an appointment via email.

Syllabus Policy:

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary. I will give you fair notice (at least a week) if something, such as a reading assignment, is to change.

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 (see course attendance policy). Please review the policy here:

<https://reg.uga.edu/general-information/policies/withdrawals/>

Culture of Honesty Policy

You are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures relating to academic honesty. To understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University, please carefully review the policy here:

https://honesty.uga.edu/resources/documents/academic_honesty_policy_2017.pdf

Course Schedule

First Week (starting January 7th)

Topic: The Citizen and the Government

Readings: Chapter 1 in “We The People”

Second Week (starting January 14th)

Topic: The Founding and the Constitution

Readings: Chapter 2 in “We The People” & The Constitution of the United States of America pp. A11-A23.

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 1 and 2 on *Inquizitive*

Third Week (starting January 21st)

Topic: Federalism

Readings: Chapter 3 in “We The People”. Also, listen to

<http://www.npr.org/2013/03/28/175596229/the-road-to-the-supreme-court-arguments-on-gay-marriage>.

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 3 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Think about the medical marijuana issue, which puts state power in contention with national power. Write out your stance on whether the issue should be addressed at the national or state level. Justify your decision. (Due: January 28th)

Fourth Week (starting January 28th)

Topic: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Readings: Chapter 4 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 4 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Imagine you are a legislative staffer. Draft a policy memo on the extent of government surveillance of American citizens. Should there be limits on government surveillance in the fight against terrorism? If so, which ones? Justify your decision. (Due: February 4th)

Fifth Week (starting February 4th)

Topic: Public Opinion

Readings: Chapter 5 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 5 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Take the Political Compass test at www.politicalcompass.org or the Pew Research Center’s political typology quiz at www.people-press.org. These sites rate your political ideology based on your opinions. Can ideology help you to guide your political opinions or should your political opinions guide your ideology? Discuss. (Due: February 11th)

Sixth Week (starting February 11th)

Topic: The Media

Readings: Chapter 6 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 6 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Pick a current political topic and compare how it is reported on one of the national news (ABC, CBS, or NBC), one of the cable news (CNN, MSNBC, or FOX NEWS), and one newspaper (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, or The Washington Post). Identify the different frames and describe their impact. (Due: February 18th)

Seventh Week (starting February 18th)

Topic: Political Parties, Participation, and Elections

Readings: Chapter 7 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 7 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Write a list of reasons individuals may not vote. Examine the role of personal motivation as well as institutional barriers in your answer and propose possible strategies to increase turnout. (Due: February 25th)

Eighth Week (starting February 25th)

Topic: Interest Groups

Readings: Chapter 8 in “We The People”. Also, read:

<http://themonkeycage.org/2013/05/shadow-lobbyists-and-the-revolving-door-or-what-anthony-weiner-and-newt-gingrich-have-in-common/>

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 8 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Imagine you are an aide to a member of Congress. Write a policy memo for or against more regulation of lobbying. In your memo, discuss the impact of the U.S. campaign finance system. (Due: March 3rd)

Ninth Week (starting March 3rd)

Topic: Congress

Readings: Chapter 9 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 9 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Look up your representative’s recent voting records and

ideological placement (<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes>). Make a list of five issues he or she voted on, and state whether you would have voted the same way on behalf of your district taking into account your district's economic and socio-economic characteristics. Justify your decisions. (Due: March 10th)

Tenth Week (starting March 17th)

Topic: The Presidency

Readings: Chapter 10 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 10 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Consider President Trump's travel ban. Explain why you think the president should or should not have the power to act on this issue. In your answer, discuss the reaction of the international community to the travel ban as well as its impact on America's image abroad. (Due: March 24th)

Eleventh Week (starting March 24th)

Topic: The Bureaucracy (it is not going to be as boring as it sounds)

Readings: Chapter 11 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 11 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Read <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/04/gsa-employees-spend-taxpayer-money-in-vegas/>. Why do federal and state government need bureaucracies? Why do bureaucratic agencies have such a bad reputation? Is it justified? (Due: March 31st)

Twelfth Week (starting March 31st)

Topic: The Federal Courts

Readings: Chapter 12 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 12 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Read <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/7/9/17537808/supreme-court-brett-kavanaugh-right-cartoon>. How will SCOTUS change after the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh? What are potential consequences of that change for the ideological trajectory of the U.S? To what extent could they personally affect you? (Due: April 7th)

Thirteenth Week (starting April 7th)

Topic: Domestic Policy

Readings: Chapter 13 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 13 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Describe the level of income inequality in the U.S. and compare it to other countries (<https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm>). Why should or should we not care about income inequality? What are the consequences of income inequality on society and the economy? (Due: April 14th)

Fourteenth Week (starting April 14th)

Topic: Foreign Policy

Readings: Chapter 14 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 14 on *Inquizitive*

Potential Short Paper Topic: Why should we care about foreign policy? Is Isolationism possible in today’s world? In your answer, describe the role of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. (Due: April 21st)

Fifteenth Week (starting April 21st)

Topic: Final Exam Review

Sixteenth Week (Monday, April 28th)

Topic: Final Exam Review II