

POLS 1105H: American Government, Honors Spring 2020

Instructor

Dr. Michael S. Lynch
Office: Baldwin Hall 416
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:00 AM-11:00 AM and by appointment

Class Schedule

Tuesdays and Thursdays
11:00 AM-12:15 PM
Baldwin Hall 302

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the basic aspects of American politics and government. The emphasis will be on the development of concepts and analytical tools that will help you understand how the institutions within American politics and government interact to produce policy outcomes. Whenever possible, we will relate these concepts and tools to historical or current political issues and events. The course will make use of in-class exercises and simulations to allow the class to “learn by doing.” Using a combination lectures, discussion, and experiential learning, the course seeks to give students a better understanding and appreciation of the American political process.

Required Book

We will be using *American Government, 2nd edition* from OpenStax. This is a free online textbook that is available [here](#).

In addition to the book, you should read the news on a daily basis. The [New York Times](#) and the [Washington Post](#) are two excellent sources of news on politics and government. Each Tuesday we will discuss a weekly newspaper article that I will email to you before class.

Finally, we will have additional readings that I will email to students or that can be downloaded from the internet.

Course Grading

Your grade in this class will be assigned according to the following:

1. **Class attendance and participation** (10% of final grade): I expect you to attend class daily (i.e. excessive absences, regardless of your performance on exams, will result in a lowering of your final grade). If you know for sure that you will be missing class, I ask that you please email me in advance and notify me. Class periods will be part lecture and part discussion. You should be prepared to discuss the reading for the day with your classmates. Additional short readings or articles may be assigned.
2. **Writing and Special Assignments** (40% of final grade): There are four assignments scheduled for this class. Assignments will require you to write short (two to four pages) papers about a specific example of a topic discussed in class. Assignments turned in late will be penalized 10% for each day they are late.

3. **Mid-Semester Exam** (25% of final grade): Please take note of the date for the exam and mark it on your calendar now.
4. **Final Exam** (25% of final grade): Please take note of the date for the final exam and mark it on your calendar now.

Missed exams will only be excused in the most extraordinary circumstances (death in the family, documented illnesses, acts of God, etc.) If you are excused from an exam, I reserve the right to alter the format and substance of the makeup exam (e.g. you may not get the same exam as everyone else).

Course grades will be assigned as follows: 93–100% = A, 90–93% = A-, 87–90% = B+, 83–87% = B, 80–83% = B-, 77–80% = C+, 73–77% = C, 70–73% = C-, 60–70% = D, 0–60% = F.

Other Issues

1. **Disabilities:** Students with disabilities of any kind are strongly encouraged to tell me at the beginning of the semester, so appropriate accommodations can be made. Students with disabilities that have been certified by the UGA Disabilities Services Office will be accommodated according to university policy. Contact Disabilities Services for more information.
2. **Instructor Availability:** I am available to meet with students by appointment if anyone cannot attend my posted office hours. Please email me to schedule a meeting.
3. **Technology in the Classroom:** Technology, used correctly, has the potential to greatly improve the quality of our lives. Technology, used incorrectly, has the potential of making the instructor very angry. Cellphones, tablets, laptops, etc. may be used to take notes in class, but not for playing games, checking email, or surfing the internet. Texting is never appropriate in class, unless it is to give your friends updates on the juicy tidbits you are learning about the U.S. presidency. I will understand if you can't wait until after class to share your new knowledge of Ross Perot's 1992 presidential bid or want to text about the failure of the 1868 Andrew Johnson impeachment trial. I would have done the same, if texting had been available when I was in college.
4. **Cheating and Plagiarism:** All course work must meet the standards put forth in the University of Georgia's [Student Honor Code](#). See the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) for details on what is expected of you.

Tentative Schedule

INTRODUCTION / COURSE OVERVIEW

JANUARY 7

WHY GOVERNMENT?

JANUARY 9 AND 14

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 1.

Axelrod, Robert M. 1984. *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Chapters 1 and 4.

Hardin, Garrett. 1968. [“The Tragedy of the Commons.”](#) *Science*. 162: 1243-1248.

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE FOUNDING

JANUARY 16 AND 21

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 2.

U.S. Constitution

Dougherty, Keith L. and Jac C. Heckelman. 2006. [“A Pivotal Voter from a Pivotal State: Roger Sherman at the Constitutional Convention.”](#) *American Political Science Review* 100(2): 297-302.

Kennedy, John F. 1955. *Profiles in Courage*. Chapter 6 - Edmund G. Ross

FEDERALISM

JANUARY 23 AND 28

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 3.

Sacco, et al. 2017. [“The Marijuana Policy Gap and the Path Forward.”](#) *Congressional Research Service*.

Assignment #1 Due.

CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CIVIL RIGHTS

JANUARY 30, FEBRUARY 4, AND 6

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapters 4 and 5.

Wehle, Kim. 2019. *How to Read the Constitution and Why*, Chapters 6 and 8.

[Gratz v. Bollinger](#), 539 U.S. 244 (2003).

Hartocollis, Anemona. 2019. [“Harvard Does Not Discriminate Against Asian-Americans in Admissions, Judge Rules.”](#) *New York Times*. Oct. 1.

PUBLIC OPINION

FEBRUARY 11

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 6.

Gallup, George. 2008. “Polling the Public.”

ELECTIONS

FEBRUARY 13, 18, AND 20

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 7.

Abramowitz, Alan I. 2008. “[Forecasting the 2008 Presidential Election with the Time-for-Change Model](#).” *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 41(4):691-695

Abramowitz, Alan I. 2016. “[Will Time for Change Mean Time for Trump](#)” *Ps:Political Science and Politics* 49(4):659-660.

Achen, Christopher H. and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*, Chapter 5.

Assignment #2 Due

THE MEDIA AND REVIEW

FEBRUARY 25

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 8.

Groseclose, Tim and Jeffery Milyo. 2005. “[A Measure of Media Bias](#).” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

MIDTERM EXAM

FEBRUARY 27

POLITICAL PARTIES

MARCH 3 AND 5

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 9.

Gelman, Andrew. 2010. *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do*, Chapter 8.

SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS

MARCH 9–13

INTEREST GROUPS

MARCH 17

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 10.

Burstein, Paul. 2009. “Is Congress Really for Sale.”

Assignment #3 Due

CONGRESS

MARCH 19, 24, AND 26

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 11.

Strom, Gerald. *The Logic of Lawmaking*, excerpts.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chapters 1 and 2.

PRESIDENCY

MARCH 31 AND APRIL 2

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 12.

Wehle, Kim. 2019. *How to Read the Constitution and Why*, Chapters 3.

Assignment #4 Due

COURTS

APRIL 7 AND 9

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 13.

Scalia, Antonin. 2009. "Common-Law Courts in a Civil-Law System: The Role of United States Federal Courts in Interpreting the Constitution and Laws."

Breyer, Stephen. 2009. "Our Democratic Constitution."

BUREAUCRACY

APRIL 14

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 15.

Lewis, Michael. 2018 *The Fifth Risk*. Chapter 1.

MPSA CONFERENCE—NO CLASS

APRIL 16

PUBLIC POLICY

APRIL 21 AND 23

American Politics, 2nd ed., Chapter 16 and 17.

Budget Balancing Exercise

FINAL EXAM

MAY 5 (12:00PM –3:00 PM)