

POLS 1101  
INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Spring 2021

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<b>Instructor:</b> Jake S. Truscott	<b>Time:</b> 8:00-9:15am
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## Office Hours

Office: Baldwin Hall 109B

In Person: Tuesday 10-11am or By Appointment

ZOOM: By Appointment Only

## Textbooks

The main texts for this course will guide most of our weekly discussions. However, additional materials may be assigned weekly to supplement course material. These may include: journal and newspaper articles, podcasts, or videos. If there are required or recommended materials assigned for any week beyond the textbooks, they will be made available via ELC. It is expected that you will have read all of the assigned readings prior to the start of each class.

- 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 (Recommended)** —
- Georgia Politics in a State of Change (4th custom edition for the University of Georgia) – by Charles S. Bullock III and Ronald Keith Gaddie — **Do Not Purchase Until After First Week** —

## Course Description

This course will introduce you to the fundamentals of the American and Georgia governments. We will primarily discuss how actors and institutions operate within the norms and traditions of modern government at the local, state, and federal levels, as well as why these political norms and traditions exist. Especially as we enter the post-2020 Election period, the goal of this course is to reinforce that political discourse is, at its core, a good thing.

## Course Objectives

- Students will understand the role of public and political actors in framing modern politics.
- Students will understand the origins of the American federal system, and how that system has progressed since the founding period.
- Students will understand the importance of public political knowledge and engagement in shaping political discourse.
- Students will apply their critical understanding of these topics to contemporary social and political issues.

## Evaluation

**Examinations:** Your exams will consist of a Midterm (Tentative: Week 8) and Final Exam (May 6), both of which will be **in person**. The Final Exam will not be cumulative – i.e., the Midterm will only encompass material learned prior to the Midterm date, and the Final will only encompass material learned after the midterm. They will both include a combination of multiple choice questions and short answer prompts.

**Quizzes:** There will be (4) quizzes scheduled throughout the term. These quizzes will primarily include a few multiple choice questions and short answer prompts that will mimic how questions will be presented for your exams. These quizzes, in combination with the recommended InQuizitive modules provided via the textbook, will serve as your best possible study tools to prepare for the exams. They will be **available on ELC** by Thursday at 12:00pm and be due by Sunday at 11:59pm for the week that they are assigned.

**Critical Response Essay:** During the course of the term, you will be required to complete **one** critical response essay prompt that will be submitted via ELC. For each week, a *Prospective Response Paper Topic* will be available and due by Sunday at 11:59pm. A general rubric and essay tips will be made available in the Course Materials section of ELC.

Each response paper should be approximately 6-8 pages double-spaced (12 pt font, Times New Roman). The structure of the paper will ultimately depend on how the question is structured, but they should generally follow the traditional essay format (Thesis → Body Paragraphs → Conclusion → Works Cited). I have no preference for which citation style you use, so long as it is consistent and present. All I ask is that you only use reputable sources (aka, no *Wikipedia*, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, etc.). If you have specific essay questions, please don't hesitate to ask!

*Please note: Again you only need to complete **one** critical response essay from the list of prospective topics. You will self-select your preferred response paper during the first week of class, and you will be held to that due date. If you want to change your paper, you need to clear it with me first. Changes will be considered on a case-by-case basis.*

**Participation:** Your participation will be gauged primarily by your participation in the weekly lecture periods.

*My Advice: Make sure I know your name by the end of the semester. Especially when it comes down to those moments where you are teetering between thresholds for different grades, it really helps if I know who you are because you are an active participant in the course.*

## Grading Breakdown

Midterm .....	25 %
Final Exam .....	25 %
Critical Response Essay 1 .....	20 %
Quizzes (4) .....	20 %
Participation .....	10 %

## Study Recommendations

To prepare for quizzes and examinations, I would definitely recommend that you incorporate:

- InQuizitive: When you purchase the textbook via the bookstore or other retailers, it often comes with access to InQuizitive – The textbook provider's quizzing software. I will not be requiring that you complete these InQuizitive assignments for the course, but they are invaluable study materials.

- Lectures/Course Materials: Lectures and the course materials employed during them are going to be your most valuable resources. If the concept is not discussed in the lectures, textbook, or other course materials on ELC, it will not be tested.

## 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-

86-64 B    69-67 D+

83-80 B-    66-64 D

*Please note: There is no standard policy for rounding grades. Rounding decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis, and your participation level throughout the course can heavily influence that decision.*

## Course Structure

This course is scheduled to be taught entirely in a face-to-face format in a socially distanced setting – As such, I will not be hosting synchronous ZOOM sessions to correspond with every class date. However, I will be posting the lecture slides to ELC after every class period.

If for some reason we need to move class to ZOOM (for one class period or indefinitely), you will be given sufficient notice.

## Communication with Instructor

If you need to contact me for any reason, I do ask that you aim to primarily use your UGA email address rather than ELC. I am generally very good about responding to emails quickly, but please understand that I likely will not respond until the next day if the message is sent late in the night.

## Attendance Policy

As noted, since the course is designated as face-to-face with a classroom capacity that is greater than the section capacity, it is expected that you arrive for the class periods when they are scheduled. Barring any changing circumstances, it is my hope to keep it that way. My goal is to treat this semester as normally as possible. If you need to miss class because of a legitimate reason that would accompany an excused absence (sickness, emergency, or especially anything related to COVID-19), that is entirely fine. I just ask that you keep an open line of communication with me as things happen.

That being said, I understand that life is crazy, and especially so right now. Everyone will be given (3) unexcused absences throughout the term that you are free to use as any point and for any reason without damaging your participation grade. Just know that this does not excuse you from quizzes or exams.

To keep track of attendance, you will be marking yourself present using the Google Form (Available on ELC) that corresponds with each class date.

## Academic Honesty

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](https://honesty.uga.edu/_resources/documents/academic_honesty_policy_2017.pdf)

## 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 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 withdrawalpassing (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/>

## COVID-19 Safety Procedures

**Face Coverings:** Face coverings in public spaces, including classrooms, are mandatory for all. Wearing a face covering is in addition to and not a substitute for also maintaining six feet social distancing. Anyone not using a face covering when required will be asked to wear one or must leave the area

**Keeping A Safe Distance:** Please maintain six feet between you and others. The seating capacity in your classroom has been modified to allow for social distancing. Please sit in designated, marked seats. In all public spaces, including classrooms, you should not remove signage or re-arrange furniture, even if it appears that furniture is not being used. To help maintain distance, please keep right, where possible.

**Don't Congregate:** If you want to spend some time chatting with someone, please take it outside or online. We are also requesting that you enter and exit any building without delay, staying outside of the building as long as practicable before your class begins and then leaving once your class is finished.

**Keeping It Clean:** Cleaning and disinfecting of public spaces are important to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Classrooms are only being cleaned once-per-day. There are sanitation wipes/buckets and stands in proximity to your classroom. Prior to heading in to class, you should take a wipe from the station and wipe down all high-touch surfaces associated with your seat. You should help further slow the spread of the virus by frequently washing your hands.

**Your Health:** You have been provided with a digital thermometer and are required to self-monitor for signs or symptoms of COVID-19. By coming to campus, you are acknowledging that you have checked, and do not

have, symptoms of COVID-19. UGA is using a notification application to remind you daily to check for symptoms prior to coming to campus and self-report in the event you display COVID-19 symptoms. If you report symptoms, the University follows a confidential process for securely notifying health officials who can begin contact tracing and provide appropriate support services. If you have an underlying medical condition or, for any reason, believe that you are at a high risk of developing a serious case of COVID-19, you may request an accommodation through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at [drc@uga.edu](mailto:drc@uga.edu) or 706-542-8719. More information can be found at [https://drc.uga.edu/content\\_page/student-accommodation-guidelines](https://drc.uga.edu/content_page/student-accommodation-guidelines).

Check your email regularly so you don't miss important information, and also check the University COVID-19 website for updates and resources, this web site includes links from student affairs with helpful, up-to-date messages for students and parents.

## Mental Health and Wellness Resources

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at (706) 542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

- UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).
- If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
- Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

## Course Schedule

### Week 0 – January 14

Topic: Introduction & Syllabus

Readings: NA

Recommended: Come prepared with your oldest political memory.

### Week 1 – January 19 & 21

Topic: Syllabus & Introduction: The Citizen and Government

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 1

### Week 2 – January 26 & 28

Topic: The Founding and the Constitution

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 2

### Week 3 – February 2 & 4 ..... Quiz 1 (Chapters 1-3)

Topic: Federalism

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 3

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Think about the COVID-19 crisis, which has put states' power in contention with national power. Write out your stance on whether the pandemic response should be addressed at the national or state level. Justify your decision. (Due: February 7th)

**Week 4 – February 9 & 11**

Topic: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 4

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Imagine you are a legislative staffer. Draft a policy memo on the impact of COVID-19 on existing social and racial discrepancies in American society (e.g. education, income, health, etc.). How can the government address these discrepancies? Justify your decision. (Due February 14th)

**Week 5 – February 16 & 18**

Topic: Public Opinion

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 5

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Take the Political Compass test at [www.politicalcompass.org](http://www.politicalcompass.org) or the Pew Research Center’s political typology quiz at [www.people-press.org](http://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 21st)

**Week 6 – February 23 & 25 ..... Quiz 2 (Chapters 4-6)**

Topic: Media

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 6

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Pick a current political topic and compare how it is reported on one of the national news outlets (ABC, CBS, or NBC), one of the cable news outlets (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 28th)

**Week 7 – March 2 & 4**

Topic: Political Parties, Participation, and Elections

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 7

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Even in 2020, where the United States saw record levels of voter turnout, it is estimated that only 68% of the voting-eligible population actually voted. Why is turnout so low in American elections, and especially so for young people and minority groups? Examine the roles of institutional barriers and different types of elections (special, midterm, general, etc.) in your answer, and propose possible strategies to increase turnout for all Americans. (Due: March 7)

**Week 8 – March 9 & 11 ..... Midterm Exam (Tentative) (Chapter 1-7 Materials)**

Topic: Interest Groups

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 8

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Consider the role of special interests in American politics. Choose (3) interest groups and describe how they are able to influence the political system through lobbying, litigation, or other means. (Due: March 14)

**Week 9 – March 16 & 18**

Topic: Congress

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 9

*Prospective 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 21)

**Week 11 – March 23 & March 25**

Topic: The Presidency

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 10

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Consider two previous executive orders, (1) from the Obama administration and (1) from the Trump administration. Explain how why you think they chose to issue an executive order instead of allowing Congress to pass legislation, how the order was received by the public, as well as whether

you believe President Obama/Trump should or should not have the power to act on those issues. Justify your answer. (Due: March 28)

**Week 12 – March 30 & April 1** ..... Quiz 3 (Chapters 8-11)

Topic: Bureaucracy

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 11

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Choose (3) bureaucratic agencies/institutions in the American government and describe their roles and duties. In your response, consider why they were established, how their responsibilities have changed, and whether they should be reformed or privatized to improve efficiency. Justify your answer. (Due: April 4).

**Week 13 – April 6** ..... **Note: No Class April 8 (Instructional Break Day)**

Topic: The Federal Courts Readings: *We the People* Chapter 12

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Consider the growing dependence on the federal courts to solve policy disputes. In your response, consider (3) policy areas where the Supreme Court has offered rulings in recent years that traditionally might have been left to the elected branches. Is the role of the federal courts in solving policy disputes a good thing? Justify your answer. (Due April 11)

**Week 14 – April 13 & 15**

Topic: Domestic Policy

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 13

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Imagine you are a policy aide working in the White House. Write a policy memo that discusses the (3) most pressing issues in American domestic policy. These can include any assortment of policy areas. In your response, consider how these issues developed, why they are important, and propose solutions that might help fix them in the future. (Due April 18).

**Week 15 – April 20 & 22**

Topic: Foreign Policy

Readings: *We the People* Chapter 14

*Prospective Paper Topic:* Imagine you are a policy aide in the US State Department. Write a policy memo that discusses the (3) most pressing issues facing US foreign policy today. These could be specific issue areas (ex: Climate Change, Oil Dependence), military operations (ISIS, Afghanistan, etc.), poor foreign relations (Russia, North Korea, etc.), international organizations (NATO, UN, etc.), or any other set of policy areas. In your response, consider how the problems developed, and propose solutions that might help fix them in the future. (Due April 25).

**Week 16 – April 27 & 29** ..... Quiz 4 (Chapters 12-14 & Georgia)

Topic: State of Georgia & Final Exam Review

Readings: N/A

**Week 17 – May 4-6**

Topic: Final Exam (May 6 – 8:00am-11:00am)