

WHAT

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government

WHO

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Office: Baldwin Hall, office 303A

Office hours: by appointment, in my office or on Zoom

WHEN AND WHERE

Monday, Wednesday and Friday in Benson Hall C010

HOW

This class will be conducted 100% in person. There is no hybrid or online option available for this course due to policies from the Board of Regents and the University.

WHY

There is a common saying in politics: *“you can quit politics, but politics won’t quit you”*. In the previous section, I mentioned we are not allowed to provide hybrid or online options this semester. That is as a result of politics. Almost every single thing you do every day has something to do with politics, from what food you eat, to what medicines you take, to what job you might be training for, and whether that job will continue to exist. Politics determines whether water comes out your taps, and what exactly is in that water. It determines the football schedule. It determines how many students can be accommodated at UGA, and how the HOPE Scholarship can assist you. It determines what course and specializations are available to you here, and the systems and bureaucracy we all interact with every time we sign up for a class or have to deal with the registrar, or the health center, or the gym. Politics determines whether you need to be vaccinated or wear masks in the classroom (politics has also made neither of those a requirement for this semester).

So there is a good reason this is a mandatory course during your time at UGA. Politics is going to happen, and it is important you are equipped to live in a world where you understand how it works. This semester we are going to work through how American politics works, how it affects you, and how you can affect it. It is a vital part of your education, and should help you to go out into the world as a fully prepared person when you graduate.

COVID INFORMATION

Vaccines:

We are all safest when as many people as possible are vaccinated, including me (I have been vaccinated). I highly recommend you get a vaccination against Covid, which is free and easy at the University Health Center. You can book an appointment with very little fuss via the UHC Patient Portal: (https://patientportal.uhs.uga.edu/login_dualauthentication.aspx). If you wish to talk to someone about the vaccine you can call the Health Center at 706-542-1162. Please be aware that there is a multitude of misinformation about the Covid vaccines out on the internet, and you should trust reliable sources of information. Vaccination, according to UGA policy, is not a requirement for your presence on campus or in this class.

Masks:

I encourage you all to wear masks. Although I specialize in American politics, I am South African and have an extremely guttural accent which is further deadened by a mask. I will try to teach wearing a mask while Covid rates are climbing, but if this interferes with any pedagogical element of the class I will take the mask off. Masks are not to protect you as much as they are to protect others. Wearing a mask is encouraged, but not mandated, by the university.

Absences due to Covid/quarantine

We have been instructed by the university to treat any students with Covid or who have to quarantine as we would any student who gets sick. Since we are forbidden from any sort of online or hybrid option, this means you could miss up to two weeks of classes if you have to quarantine, or even more if you contract the virus. I have never been in this sort of situation before and so I am not 100% clear on what my policy will be. I can tell you that we have a series of weekly assignments this semester, and I will drop the lowest grade from your final grade. This should help mitigate any Covid-related absences up to a point. Because of the chance of many people needing to take time off, there is no attendance part of your grade. I do not want to incentivize anyone coming to class who may be sick.

If you are not feeling well:

PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS. Email me and we will make a plan if you have to miss more than one class.

Class Information

Accommodations:

Every student at UGA has the same right to the education provided here. If you need any sort of accommodation please visit the website of the the Disability Resource Center at drc.uga.edu, call them on 706-542-8719, email them at drc@uga.edu, or you can go to their offices at 825 S Lumpkin St, Athens, GA 30602. If the DRC can not make an accommodation you seek, and you are comfortable sharing that accommodation with me, I will do whatever I can to ensure it happens. I am not an expert but I am full of effort. I will move heaven and earth to make sure you get the same opportunity and education as everyone else.

In-class expectations:

You are required to be professional at all times. This isn't really difference from any other class you would take here. If you are polite and respectful to everyone else you are good. I will not entertain arguments or discussion against anyone's character, ideology, race, gender (identity), sex, sexual preference, partisanship and so on.

Attendance:

There is no attendance policy for this class, although I strongly recommend you do not miss more than three classes over the course of the semester if you can help it. As the course instructor I reserve the right to withdraw any student whose number of absences becomes too high, within reasonable and official limits. Before withdrawing any student, however, we will try to work something out, and I will also contact the Office of Student Care and Outreach. Since there is no attendance requirement for your grade I want to make one thing very clear: PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS IF YOU ARE NOT FEELING WELL.

Mandatory Reporting

I am a mandatory reporter. If you disclose to me any experiences of sexual abuse or violence I am required to inform the appropriate people at the university, which will include the EOO.

Experience of sexual assault or violence

If you experience sexual assault or violence you have some options. The University Health Center has a free and confidential program called Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention which has a 24 hour hotline: 706-542-SAFE (706-542-7233). The website is <https://healthpromotion.uga.edu/rsvp/>.

Parents and Pregnancy

There are no lactation facilities in Benson Hall. For a list of lactation facilities at UGA please check out this link: https://eoo.uga.edu/policies-resources/pregnancy_and_parenting_rights_and_resources/

If you are a parent and unable to find childcare on any particular day, please do not hesitate to bring your child/children to class. We will figure something out. Please also feel free to contact me if childcare and parenting obligations get in the way of any class requirements, and we can try to work something out.

If you are pregnant the university has policies for any reasonable accommodations, such as being able to take an Incomplete, improving your physical environment, relaxing deadlines, ensuring the safety of both the parent and the passenger, and so on. You can read more about the policies here: https://eoo.uga.edu/policies-resources/pregnancy_and_parenting_rights_and_resources/

If you are comfortable doing so, please do not hesitate to contact me about any accommodations. A pregnant student has the exact same right to the same education as everyone else.

Grades and Assignments

Grades:

Grades will be assigned on the traditional grade scale. I round everything up. So if you get 89.1 as your final grade, I will round that up to 90, before assigning letter grades.

>94: A
>90: A-
>87: B+
>84: B
>80: B-
>77: C+
>74: C
>70: C-
>64: D
<64: F

Your grade will comprise the following:

- 10 x short written weekly assignments (the lowest grade will be dropped). You will get a small amount of class time for these, but they will also involve you working in your own time. (8 points each)
- 1 x in-class presentation on a piece of American political history (you have a lot of freedom here). (20 points)
- 1 x bonus grade if I feel you have tried and participated to a satisfactory degree. (maximum of 8 points, and all of you will begin on 6).

There will be NO extra credit opportunities.

There are NO midterm or final exams for this class.

Academic Honesty

All students are required to abide by the academic honesty policy as set out by the University, which can be found here: <https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/Student-Honor-Code/>. If you cheat or plagiarize I will proceed through the appropriate channels. You should not need to do any of that for this class. It is not a difficult or particularly time-consuming class, but will require you to do some thinking and a bit of research. This would be a very silly class in which to get caught violating academic honesty rules.

Required texts:

There are NO required texts for this class. I will provide you with all readings if required.

Course schedule:

Week 1: August 18th to 20th

Introduction to Introduction to American Government

Week 2: August 23rd to 27th

Federalism

Week 3: August 30th to September 3rd

Voting

Week 4: September 6th to September 10th

The Constitution

NO CLASS ON SEPTEMBER 6th (Labor Day)

Week 5: September 13th to 17th

Making laws: Congress

Week 6: September 20th to 24th

Making laws: State government

Week 7: September 27th to October 1st

Making laws: Local government

Week 8: October 4th to October 8th

Courts

Week 9: October 11th to 15th

Issues

Week 10: October 18th to 22nd

Groups and partisanship

Week 11: October 25th to October 27th

The Presidency

NO CLASS ON OCTOBER 29th (Fall Break)

Week 12: November 1st to 5th

The Media

Week 13: November 8th to 12th

History

Week 14: November 15th to 19th

History

Week 15: November 22nd to 26th
NO CLASS THIS WEEK (Thanksgiving)

Week 16: November 29th to December 3rd
Presentations

Week 17: December 6th
Presentations (if we need it).