

POLS 1101E: Introduction to American Politics

Course and Instructor Information

- **Instructor:** Teena Wilhelm
- **Email:** twilhelm@uga.edu
- **Virtual Office Hours:** just email, we can figure something out

This course examines government and politics in the United States, both at the national and state level. Beginning with our Constitutional foundations, we examine our system of federalism, as well as civil rights and liberties. We explore the institutional rules and human behaviors that shape government, including elections, public opinion, parties and interest groups, and our separate branches of government. American politics are a fascinating, evolving storm of information and concepts. I'm sure I don't have to convince you that the overview material you'll work with here is important and interesting.

This is a great opportunity to learn about American politics in an online class forum. I'm so glad you've signed up to join us here.

REQUIRED Textbook:

American Politics Today, Sixth Essentials Edition by William T. Bianco and David T. Canon

ISBN: 978-0-393-67994-6

Support for WW Norton resources can be requested at support.wwnorton.com.

Course Requirements

The assignments listed below are intended to provide each student with several opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the course objectives.

1. Module quizzes- 10 percent of final grade
2. Writing/ Discussion work- 15 percent of final grade
3. Module activities- 10 percent of final grade
4. Unit summative exams (3 total)- 50 percent of final grade
5. Final project presentations- 15 percent of final grade

Unit One summative exam will cover information presented in modules 1-4. Unit Two summative exam covers information presented in modules 5-8. Unit Three summative exam will cover information presented in modules 9-12.

Unit summative exams are **TIMED**. They will require you to have **GOOD NOTES**. They will require you to **STUDY**. **Don't be surprised about the preparation they will require.** These are the only "tests" that you'll be given in the traditional format for the course. You've been forewarned.

Due Dates

Each module will have specific and noted due dates for corresponding assignments. Pay attention to the due dates, as late assignments accrue a 10 percent deduction per day. Given the flexible nature of online coursework, there is virtually no acceptable reason for late assignments. Keep that in mind, as all illnesses will require doctor's notation and all grandmother deaths will be met with healthy skepticism. In the spirit of successful adulting, please communicate if some insurmountable obstacle prevents you from making progress in your coursework. All due dates/times are Eastern Standard Time (EST).

Discussion Guidelines / Netiquette

Specific discussion assignments have certain expectations for discussion behaviors. In each module, these are noted. Above all, remember the golden rule. And don't be a jerk.

Communication Expectations

Communication is best conducted over email. By and large, you can expect a same-day response during regular business hours (M-F, 8-5). Similarly, your instructor and TAs will be on campus at times, and will occasionally be available for face-to-face meetings. Please email for an appointment if you'd like to schedule one of those. During the occasional holiday, emails will not be immediately returned.

Important Dates

- Student Intro Survey completed- June 15
- Introduction Material completed- June 7
- Module 1-4 completed – June 18
- **Unit One Summative Exam completed- June 19**
- Module 5 -8 completed- June 25
- **Unit Two Summative Exam completed- June 26**
- Module 9 -12, GA Constitution Material completed-July 1
- **Unit Three Summative Exam completed- July 2**
- **Online Zoom Final Project Presentations- July 6-8**

Academic Honesty

[Academic Honesty Policy](#)

Accessibility

[Accessibility](#)

Course outline

Introduction Module: Understanding American Politics

Module 1: The Constitution and the Founding

- Historical Context of the Constitution
- The Politics of Compromise and Ratification
- The Constitution as a Framework
- The Constitution as a Living Document

Module 2: Federalism

- Balancing National and State Power
- The Evolving Concept of Federalism
- Federalism Today

Module 3: Civil liberties

- Defining Civil Liberties
- Freedom of Religion
- Freedom of Speech/Assembly/Press
- Rights of the Criminally Accused
- Right to Privacy

Module 4: Civil rights

- The Context of Civil Rights
- The Racial Divide Today
- The Policymaking Process and Civil Rights
- Civil Rights Issues Today

Module 5: Public Opinion and the Media

- Defining Public Opinion and Where it Comes From
- Measuring Public Opinion
- What Americans Think about Politics
- The Media

Module 6: Political Parties

- Political Parties and Where they Come From
- American Political Parties Today
- The Role of Political Parties in American Politics

Module 7: Elections

- How American Elections Work

- Electoral Campaigns
- How Voters Decide
- Understanding the 2016/2018 Elections

Module 8: Interest Groups

- Defining Interest Groups
- Interest Group Strategies
- Interest Group Power

Module 9: Congress

- Congress and the People
- The Structure of Congress
- How a Bill becomes a Law/ Oversight

Module 10: The Presidency

- Presidential Power and Job Description
- Presidency as an Institution
- Presidential Power Today

Module 11: The Bureaucracy

- Defining American Bureaucracy
- How American Bureaucracy has Grown
- Modern Federal Bureaucracy
- Controlling the Bureaucracy

Module 12: The Courts

- Development of the Federal Judiciary
 - American Legal and Judicial System
 - Supreme Court: Access, Cases, and Decisionmaking
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