

WHAT

POLS 1105H: Introduction to American Government (Honors)

WHO

Simon Williamson

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Office: Baldwin Hall, office 303A

Office hours: 1.35PM to 2.35PM on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

WHEN AND WHERE

Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 12.40PM to 1.30PM in Baldwin Hall 102.

HOW

This class will be conducted 100% in person. There is no hybrid or online option available for this course, even if you have to quarantine, due to policies from the Board of Regents and the University. I have set up the class with this in mind, and if you are subject to an extended period of quarantine or isolation, it shouldn't substantially affect your ability to take this class. If I get Covid and have to quarantine, I suspect we will be in more trouble.

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. 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

Required texts:

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

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 then 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. I am doing a Ph.D in political science so I have opinions on things. You are not expected to agree with my opinion. The point of this class is not to have you be able to say the things I say, it is to prepare you for a world in which politics will always affect you, and it is to make sure that you are best positioned to engage with the politics of the federal government, state government and your local government.

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.**

Religious holidays, military service, athletics, family obligations and emergencies:

Please let me know if you have an upcoming religious holiday, family obligation, commitments, or any kind of emergency that gets in the way of this class, particularly when it comes to assignments and deadlines. I will do my best to accommodate you. The class is designed with flexibility in mind and so hopefully any conflicts are as minimal as possible.

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 Baldwin Hall; the closest facility is in the Main Library across Jackson St. 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.

>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:

- **4 x short written weekly assignments**. There are ten opportunities, but the six lowest grades will be dropped. In other words, you only have to do 4 of them, but you can do more if you feel you can raise your grade. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis. (40 points)
- **1 x Tiktok** on a piece of American political history (you have a lot of freedom here). (20 points)
- **1 x participation grade**. Since this is an honors class there is going to be a lot of discussion, and participation is therefore a significant part of this semester. Your in-class participation is worth 40 points of your overall grade. Not everyone is comfortable speaking in class, and if you find speaking in public too difficult you are welcome to send me your thoughts and ideas via email if you so choose. I am looking for **engagement** with the topics we cover.

There will be NO exams or extra credit opportunities.

Late assignments:

If you have not made a prior arrangement with me, late work will result in a five percentage point deduction for every day it is late. This means that the first day it is late you can only get a maximum of 95. The second day, a maximum of 90. And so on. If you need more time or are unable to stick to the deadlines, please let me know beforehand.

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.

Course schedule:

The course schedule is designed to be flexible. If there is a lot of interest in a particular section as it comes up, for example, we will spend more time on that. We will also spend time discussing anything that may happen in the news over the course of the semester. If you wish to add anything to this list please email me. This is YOUR class. Over the course of the semester we will cover the following topics:

- Introduction to Introduction to American Government
- Federalism
- Voting
- The Constitution
- Congress
- State and local government
- Courts
- Issues
- Groups and partisanship
- The Presidency
- The Media
- Political systems of other countries.

Important dates:

Drop/add ends Friday January 14th

MLK Day on January 17th (NO CLASS)

Spring Break from March 7th to 11th (NO CLASS)

Withdrawal deadline: March 24th

Last day of class: May 2nd (since we have no exam this will be the end of your semester with this class).