



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

School of Public and International Affairs
Department of Political Science

POLS 1101E: Introduction to American Government
Spring 2022

Instructor: Professor Alexa Bankert

Contact: alexa.bankert@uga.edu

Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom.

Course Description and Objective

This course is important – whether you are a Political Science major or not. You will be introduced to the fundamentals of the American government, such as its political institutions and main actors. Most importantly, this class aims to demonstrate how you are connected to the government in your daily life and present you with tools to become informed and act in politically meaningful ways. For this purpose, we will also examine what being American means in today’s society and how our political institutions and behavior compare to other countries. By doing so, you gain a better understanding of how specific features of the American system shape politics. Ultimately, you will leave this class with a comprehensive understanding of how to critically evaluate and actively participate in the American political system.

Class Format

This class consist of two 50-minute lectures each week which I will post to eLC every Monday by 10am. You will also complete weekly (individual and/or group) assignments that will be the basis of your participation grade.

Feeling Lost?

I will strive to make sure that the course is understandable and that assignments and exams are manageable. **If you have any questions about grades, assignments, papers, eLC, and InQuizitive, please contact your TA. If you have any questions about the course content, structure, or lectures, please do not hesitate to contact me.** This is especially important due to the online delivery of our material. When you email me or your TA, please allow for up to 24 hours for a reply.

Required Text

1) *We the People* (13th essentials edition) – by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Robert J. Spitzer with access to InQuizitive

*****Please note that you can also buy the textbook in an electronic format with the InQuizitive code at a more affordable rate here:**

<https://digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople13ess>. ***

Required Technology & Communication

Our course is administered through eLC. You will find all of our course materials through this website. You will also submit assignments using Dropboxes on eLC. Finally, my primary means of communication with the class will be through announcements posted in eLC. Make sure you receive eLC updates for our class automatically via email (eLC > Click on your profile > Notifications > Instant Notifications). Please note that you cannot reply to an email I send out via eLC (ending in @uga.view.usg.edu emails). Please also note that – due to privacy and confidentiality concern – I can only reply to emails sent from your UGA account.

Teaching Assistants

Since there are 400 students in this class, we have 8 teaching assistants who will be grading your work and help you stay on track with your assignments. If you have any questions about grades, assignments, papers, eLC, NewsQuiz and InQuizitive, please contact your TA. You can identify your TA by checking on Athena which section you are enrolled in.

Sections	Instructor	Email
61363 & 61367	Thomas Deen	thomas.deen25@uga.edu
61368 & 61369	Jeff Hannon	jeffery.hannon@uga.edu
61370 & 61372	Aaron Hitefield	aaron.hitefield@uga.edu
61375 & 61376	Sean Patrick Jankowski	sean.jankowski25@uga.edu
61377 & 61381	Melanie Waddell	melanie.waddell25@uga.edu
61382 & 61767	Karson Pennington	karson.pennington98@uga.edu
61768 & 62019	Doug Perkins	douglas.perkins@uga.edu
62020	Langston Leake	langston97@uga.edu

Evaluation

Response Paper: You will complete **one** short paper in this course. Paper topics are listed in the syllabus and match each week's theme. Please make sure to stick with the paper prompt and to rely on factual information and authoritative sources when crafting your argument. Note that the due date of the paper varies according to the topic you choose. There is a sign-up sheet under your breakout section's tab on eLC where you can sign up for

a particular paper topic. Please note that a maximum number of 5 students can sign up for each topic. If you have not signed up for a topic by February 28, your TA will assign you to a topic. Until that day, you can switch to a different week than you originally signed up for *if there are still open slots*.

Short papers can range from 5 to 10 pages (double spaced) and are due by 6pm on Friday the following week (see deadlines in the course schedule). Please make sure to discuss the criteria of the paper with your TA in advance. You can submit a draft of your paper to your TA for review. This draft must be submitted by the prior Friday at 6pm to get feedback by the following Tuesday. For example, Week 5 on Civil Liberties starts on Monday, February 7 and the corresponding paper deadline is Friday, February 18. That means you can submit a draft of your paper to your TA by Friday, February 11 and expect feedback on your paper by Tuesday, February 15 before you submit your paper on Friday, February 18.

Exams: There will be two online open-book/open-note exams that are **not** cumulative and will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. Some of the test questions may be challenging, but that is necessary when in an open-book and open-note course. *As of now, the first exam is scheduled for Friday, March 4; the second exam is scheduled for Friday, May 6. They will be available on eLC from 10am – 5pm. If you accidentally miss an exam, I will, regrettably, not be able to offer a make-up exam.*

InQuizitive and NewsQuiz: There will be two short weekly assignments **which you should only access via eLC**. The first assignment is called “InQuizitive” and tests your comprehension of the assigned readings. The second assignment is called “News Quiz” and asks you to engage with current affairs. To access these assignments, you will need the code that comes with your textbook. **These assignments need to be completed via eLC and are due every Friday at 6pm of each week. If you complete the assignments through an external website, we will not be able to give you any credit for it. So please access “InQuizitive” and “NewsQuiz” only through eLC.**

Readings and Quizzes: The required readings typically include one chapter of the textbook per week. If any additional readings are assigned, they will be accessible electronically either vial eLC or via the UGA library system (<https://www.libs.uga.edu/>). It is important that you stay current with these readings so that you can follow along with lectures and participate in online discussions. I would strongly recommend you finish the readings before you complete any assignments. Over the course of the semester, there will be 4 short quizzes on eLC (3-5 questions) based on prior lectures and assigned readings so make sure you are familiar with each chapter’s key terms.

Participation: There will be weekly discussion assignments that should demonstrate your critical reflection on the material covered in your readings and in the lectures.

There are certain standards that your discussion posts need to meet to be given a high participation grade. To help you create high quality posts, I specified these standards in the list below:

- 1) When writing your post, please pay attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- 2) Be polite, especially when you disagree with an author, a piece of scholarship, or a classmate.
- 3) A paragraph entails about 3-5 sentences.
- 4) Discussion posts need to address all components of the assignment prompt.
- 5) Discussion posts need to entail references to the assigned readings and/or lecture materials.
- 6) After you post your discussion contribution, please respond to at least one other student's post in the discussion forum.

Online Research Study: You are required to participate in an online research study. The study will take approximately 20-25 minutes and is supposed to provide you with an understanding of political science research.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage:

- Exam I: 15%
- Exam II: 15%
- Response Paper: 20%
- InQuizitive and NewsQuiz Assignments: 15%
- Quizzes: 15%
- Participation: 15%
- Participation in an online research study: 5%

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-	
86-84 B	69-67 D+	
83-80 B-	66-64 D	

****Please note that there is no standard rounding policy. Rounding decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis.****

Important Class Dates and Deadlines

- First Day of Class: Monday, January 10
- Midterm Exam: Friday, March 4
- Spring Break: March 7-11
- Last Day of Our Class: Tuesday, May 3
- Reading Day: Wednesday, May 4
- Final Exam: Friday, May 6
- Distribution of link to research survey by the end of March
- Deadline for completing the research survey: Friday, April 30th

InQuizitive and NewsQuiz deadlines are every Friday
Response paper deadline varies based on the topic you choose

Grade Appeals, Incompletes, Late Assignments, and Make-Up Policy

Any questions you have regarding grades should be directed to the teaching assistant. If you are unable to resolve the matter with him, you may appeal the grade to me. Keep in mind that formal grade appeals must be made in writing, and in the case of a paper, I will re-grade your entire paper. Therefore, your grade can go up or down. A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be presented to the teaching assistant and accepted prior to the exam when feasible. Late assignments will be docked 5 percent per day (including the day of the deadline if you submit the assignment past 6pm and including weekends). Please note that exams and quizzes are not assignments. If you need a (reasonable) extension, please talk to your teaching assistant.

Office Hours

If you experience difficulties with the course materials and/or assignments, you are encouraged to contact your me or your teaching assistant. Don’t be afraid to show up for online office hour. However, please note that these online office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture or asking *extremely* detailed questions about the quizzes or the exam (i.e., “Will this be on the exam?”). If you like to talk to me, feel free to make an appointment via email.

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 withdrawal-passing (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. Please review the policy here: <https://reg.uga.edu/general-information/policies/withdrawals/>

Culture of Honesty Policy

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

Preferred Name and Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

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.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (starting January 10)

Topic: Introduction to the Class & The Citizen and the Government

Readings: Read the syllabus *carefully*. You can find it on eLC under "Course Documents". Chapter 1 in "We The People" & Dudley Poston and Rogelio Sáenz, "[The U.S. White Majority Will Soon Disappear Forever](#)"

Weekly Online Assignment: Syllabus quiz (required but ungraded) on eLC & Chapter 1 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on January 21

Week 2 (starting January 17)

Topic: The Founding and the Constitution

Readings: Chapter 2 in "We The People" & The Constitution of the United States of America pp. A11-A23.

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 2 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on January 21

Week 3 (starting January 24)

Topic: Federalism

Readings: Chapter 3 in “We The People” & Jennifer Selin, “[Trump versus the States](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 3 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on January 28

Short 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 by 6pm on February 4)

Week 4 (starting January 31)

Topic: Civil Liberties

Readings: Chapter 4 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 4 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on February 4

Short Paper Topic: Read “[Free speech in America: is the US approach fit for purpose in the age of social media?](#)” How does the U.S. differ in its free speech protection from other countries and why? How does this difference impact the U.S. ability to address the spread of false information, conspiracy theories, and echo chambers online? Evaluate the costs and benefits of the First Amendment rights. (Due by 6pm on February 11)

Week 5 (starting February 7)

Topic: Civil Rights

Readings: Chapter 5 in “We The People” & listen to Terry Gross “[A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 5 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on February 11

Short Paper Topic: Imagine you are a legislative staffer. Draft a policy memo on the impact of COVID-19 on existing racial discrepancies in American society (e.g., education, income, health, etc.). How can the government address these discrepancies? Justify your decision. (Due by 6pm on February 18)

Week 6 (starting February 14)

Topic: Public Opinion

Readings: Chapter 6 in “We The People” & Nate Cohn and Kevin Quealy “[How Public Opinion Has Moved on Black Lives Matter](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 6 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on February 18

Short Paper Topic: Take the Pew Research Center’s political typology quiz at <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/quiz/political-typology/>. This site identifies your political ideology based on your opinions. Should your ideology help you guide your political opinions, or should your political opinions guide your ideology? Contrast your answer with a description of how ideology is used in the public discourse by voters and politicians. (Due by 6pm on February 25)

Week 7 (starting February 21)

Topic: The Media

Readings: Chapter 7 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 6 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on February 25

Short Paper Topic: Pick a current political topic and compare how it is reported on one of the national news (ABC, CBS, or NBC), one of the cable news (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 by 6pm on March 4)

Week 8 (starting February 28)

Topic: Political Parties and Interest Groups

Readings: Chapter 8 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 8 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on March 4

Short Paper Topic: Imagine you are an aide to a member of Congress. Write a policy memo for or against more regulation of lobbying. In your memo, discuss the impact of the U.S. campaign finance system. (Due by 6pm on March 11)

Week 9 (starting March 7)

*****SPRING BREAK******

Week 10 (starting March 14)

Topic: Participation, Campaigns, and Elections

Readings: Chapter 9 in “We The People” & Kwame Anthony Appiah, “[People Don’t Vote for What They Want; They Vote for Who They Are](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 9 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on March 18

Short Paper Topic: Write a list of reasons individuals may not vote. Examine the role of personal motivation as well as institutional barriers in your answer and propose possible strategies to increase turnout. (Due by 6pm on March 25)

Week 11 (starting March 21)

Topic: Congress

Readings: Chapter 10 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 10 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on March 25

Short 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 by 6pm on April 1)

Week 12 (starting March 28)

Topic: The Presidency

Readings: Chapter 11 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 11 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm

on April 1

Short Paper Topic: Read about President Biden's executive orders [here](#). Compare and contrast the original intent behind executive orders as well as their contemporary use. How has political polarization changed the use of executive orders? Do executive orders further deepen the partisan divide? Why or why not? (Due by 6pm on April 8)

Week 13 (starting April 4)

Topic: The Bureaucracy (it is not going to be as boring as it sounds)

Readings: Chapter 12 in "We The People"

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 11 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on April 8

Short Paper Topic: Read Dan Balz "[Crisis exposes how America has hollowed out its government](#)". Why did the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic differ so much from the European one? What is the role of the bureaucracy in times of crisis? (Due by 6pm on April 15)

Week 14 (starting April 11)

Topic: The Federal Courts

Readings: Chapter 13 in "We The People" & Louis Menand, "[The Supreme Court Case that Enshrined White Supremacy into Law](#)"

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 13 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on April 15

Short Paper Topic: Read "[Here Are 5 Takeaways From The Supreme Court Term](#)". How has SCOTUS changed after the confirmation of Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett? Why and how would conservative judges side with liberal judges (or vice versa)? Cite evidence from SCOTUS cases in your response. (Due by 6pm on April 22)

Week 15 (starting April 18)

Topic: Domestic Policy

Readings: Chapter 14 in "We The People" & Eyal Press "[A Preventable Cancer Is on the Rise in Alabama](#)"

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 14 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on April 22

Short Paper Topic: Describe the level of income inequality in the U.S. and compare it to other countries (<https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm>). Why should or should we not care about income inequality? What are the consequences of income inequality on society and the economy? (Due by 6pm on April 29).

Week 16 (starting April 25)

Topic: Foreign Policy

Readings: Chapter 15 in "We The People" & Oliver Niu "[Why American Voters Should Care More About Foreign Policy](#)"

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 15 on InQuizitive & Weekly News Quiz due by 6pm on April 29

General Expectations

What I expect from you:

- To acknowledge that this is a really big class. We have 400 students! That is a big community of students. That is why we have 8 different TAs. Your TA is the person with the most knowledge about you and your grades.
- To check eLC (esp. announcements) on a regular basis during the week and read my emails. Even better: Enable automatic eLC updates.
- To follow professional norms when writing an email (from your UGA account!) to me or your TA. A professional email includes a concise subject line, a proper greeting, proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation (not every sentence requires an exclamation mark), as well as a clear closing.
- To do the readings even when there is no quiz.
- To submit assignments on time.
- To check the syllabus before you email me or your TA. (In 65% of student emails, the answer is in the syllabus.)
- To post questions about the readings and the lecture to our Q&A board on eLC.
- To email me when neither the syllabus nor the Q&A board have the answer you need.
- To work on your response paper as soon as possible rather than last minute.
- To follow academic honesty policies.
- To be open-minded about the material – even if it is challenging.

What you can expect from me and your TA:

- To be available via email every weekday (at least from 9-5pm) and Zoom (via appointment).
- To provide all additional readings via eLC.
- To communicate learning goals, assignments, and deadlines on a weekly basis and to send out additional reminders.
- To be respectful when you seek help or advice.
- To grade quizzes, exams, and assignments in a timely manner.
- To provide a detailed rubric for your response paper.
- To provide feedback while you work on your response paper.
- To provide relevant course materials on time.
- To be open-minded about your needs and expectations – even if it is challenging. 😊