



**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**

**School of Public and International Affairs
Department of Political Science**

**POLS 1101E: Introduction to American Government
Spring 2023**

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. Your TA and I are here to help.

If you have any questions about the lectures or exams, please do not hesitate to contact me at alexa.bankert@uga.edu.

If you have any questions about grades, assignments, papers, eLC, and InQuizitive, please contact your TA. Their email addresses are listed below.

Please give us at least 24 hours to reply to your email. Please note that you cannot reply to an email I send out via eLC (ending in @uga.view.usg.edu emails).

Email Etiquette

Please be professional and polite when you email me or your TA. It is not just a sign of respect but also a reflection of you. Poorly written emails are a quick way to make yourself look bad.

Before you hit send, read your email aloud and ask yourself:

- ⇒ Does it sound professional?
- ⇒ Does it sound like it could be a letter (not a text)?
- ⇒ Does it sound respectful?
- ⇒ Is everything spelled correctly?
- ⇒ Do I use proper punctuation and grammar?
- ⇒ Do I identify myself clearly, so my professor knows who I am and which class I'm in?
- ⇒ Do I address my instructor properly?
- ⇒ Is the subject line conveying the purpose of my email succinctly?
- ⇒ Am I using my official UGA email address? (Note that we can only reply to emails sent from your official UGA account)
- ⇒ Did I check the syllabus for an answer beforehand? ☺

Office Hours

If you have difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments, please come talk to me or your teaching assistant. We are here to help you. We are available for in-person and Zoom meetings.

Required Text

We the People (14th 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/wethepeople14ess>

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 on eLC.

My primary means of communication with the class will be through announcements posted

in eLC. Makes 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). When emailing is, please only use the email addresses listed in the syllabus. 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 360 students in this class, we have 6 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, 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 & 62019 & 62020	Elise Blasingame	elise.blasingame@uga.edu
61368 & 61369	Deana Neaves	deana.neaves@uga.edu
61370 & 61372	Qingyan Wang	qywang@uga.edu
61375 & 61376	Minjin Choi	minjinchoi@uga.edu
61377 & 61381	Lou Vedel	lou.vedel@uga.edu
61382	Karson Pennington	karson.pennington98@uga.edu

Evaluation

Short 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 24th, your TA will assign you to a topic.

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. Drafts can be submitted directly to your TA's email account, while your finalized paper should be submitted via eLC.

Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence software or word mixing software to write your paper or disguise plagiarized work is considered unauthorized assistance in this course.

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 3; the second exam is scheduled for Friday, May 5. They will be available on eLC from 8am – 6pm. If you accidentally miss an exam, I will, regrettably, not be able to offer a make-up exam.*

InQuizitive: “InQuizitive” tests your comprehension of the assigned readings. To access it, you will need the code that comes with your textbook. These assignments must 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” only through eLC. (Note that bookmarking the InQuizitive website does not work either. You need to use the link I post on eLC every Monday).

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 via 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. The date for each quiz is listed under “Important Dates and Deadlines”.

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.

Unless explicitly stated, artificial intelligence-based technologies, such as ChatGPT, must

not be used to generate responses for student assignments

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. The study is a simple online survey that consists of multiple questions about your political opinions. All answers remain completely anonymous. The link to the online survey will be distributed via email by the end of March. You can complete the survey until Monday, May 1.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage:

Final Exam: 20%
Midterm: 20%
Short Paper: 15%
Quizzes: 15%
InQuizitive: 15%
Participation: 10%
Participation in 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 9
Drop/Add: January 9 – January 13
Midterm Exam: Friday, March 3
Spring Break: March 6 – March 10
Withdrawal Deadline: Thursday, March 23
Last Day of Our Class: Monday, May 1
Reading Day: Tuesday, May 2
Final Exam: Friday, May 5
Distribution of link to research survey by the end of March
Deadline for completing the research survey: Monday, May 1
Quiz 1: Friday, January 27
Quiz 2: Friday, February 17
Quiz 3: Friday, March 31
Quiz 4: Friday, April 14

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 within two weeks of receiving your grade. 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. In your written appeal, elaborate on how you fulfilled the rubric's criteria so that I can compare your assessment to your TA's.

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/quiz when feasible.

Late paper submissions will be docked a half letter grade per day, for each day that a paper is late (including weekends). Weekly assignments (such as InQuizitive or discussion posts) cannot be submitted late for credit unless you arranged an extension with your TA in advance.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (starting January 9)

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 due by 6pm on January 20

Week 2 (starting January 17)

****MLK Day on Monday, January 16****

Topic: The Founding and the Constitution

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

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 2 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on January 20

Week 3 (starting January 23)

****Quiz #1 on Friday, January 27****

Topic: Federalism

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

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 3 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on January 27

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 3)

Week 4 (starting January 30)

Topic: Civil Liberties

Readings: Chapter 4 in "We The People" NPR: "[Music Midtown pulls the plug over Georgia's gun laws](#)"

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 4 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on February 3

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 10)

Week 5 (starting February 6)

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 & Discussion Post due by 6pm on February 10

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 17)

Week 6 (starting February 13)

****Quiz #2 on Friday, February 17****

Topic: Public Opinion

Readings: Chapter 6 in "We The People" & learn about [Georgians' views on abortion](#)

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 6 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on February 17

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 24)

Week 7 (starting February 20)

Topic: The Media

Readings: Chapter 7 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 6 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on February 24

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 3)

Week 8 (starting February 27)

****Midterm Exam on Friday, March 3****

Topic: Political Parties and Interest Groups

Readings: Chapter 8 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 8 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on March 3

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 10)

Week 9 (starting March 6)

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

Week 10 (starting March 13)

Topic: Participation, Campaigns, and Elections

Readings: Chapter 9 in “We The People” & “[Ballot drop box access in Georgia](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 9 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on March 17

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 24)

Week 11 (starting March 20)

Topic: Congress

Readings: Chapter 10 in “We The People” & identify and learn [about your Georgia state legislator](#)

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 10 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on March 24

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 March 31)

Week 12 (starting March 27)

****Quiz #3 on Friday, March 31****

Topic: The Presidency

Readings: Chapter 11 in “We The People” & “[The reason why presidents can't keep their White House records](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 11 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on March 31

Short Paper Topic: Read about a couple of 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 7)

Week 13 (starting April 3)

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

Readings: Chapter 12 in “We The People” & “[Georgia Abortion Law Says a Fetus Is Tax Deductible](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 11 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on April 7

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 14)

Week 14 (starting April 10)

****Quiz #4 on Friday, April 14****

Topic: The Federal Courts

Readings: Chapter 13 in “We The People” & read about the [Justices of the Georgia Supreme Court](#)

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 13 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on April 14

Short Paper Topic: Read “[A Transformative Term at the Most Conservative Supreme Court in Nearly a Century](#)”. 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 21)

Week 15 (starting April 17)

Topic: Domestic Policy

Readings: Chapter 14 in “We The People” & “[In Her Hands – A Guaranteed Income Initiative in Georgia](#)”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 14 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on April 21

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 28)

Week 16 (starting April 24)

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 due by 6pm on April 28

General Expectations

What I expect from you:

- 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. 😊

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.