

## POLS 1101H-AMERICAN GOVERNMENT-Honors

Instructor: Dr. Gbemende Johnson

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Meeting Time and Room: T-TH 9:35-10:50 am, Baldwin 202

### Course Overview:

The purpose of this course is to give students an introduction to the features of the American political system. The study of American Government involves learning about the rules and processes that govern American institutions. In addition, learning about American government involves understanding individual and group conflict over resources, policy and political power. These conflicts shape the development of American government, continue to influence the decision-making of political leaders, and the distribution of political and economic resources.

This course will trace the development and foundations of the main institutions of American government as envisioned by the founders and expressed in the US Constitution. Students will also learn how these institutions, such as Congress and federal courts, have developed procedures to adapt to modern day issues and challenges. Additionally, students will gain an understanding of how elections, interest groups, and the media facilitate public interaction with the American political system. We will also discuss the Georgia state political and institutional environment.

In this course we will also discuss many of the current “controversies and crises” facing the American political system. Some of these controversies/crises include party polarization, Supreme Court decision-making, and presidential power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will also give particular attention to recent and upcoming elections and discuss their implications for executive-congressional relations, domestic policy outcomes, and public opinion. Discussion of current events in conjunction with course material is essential to becoming an informed student of American politics.

### Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:

I hope for students to achieve three main goals by the end of this course. **FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE:** Throughout the course we will examine and analyze the history, conflicts, institutional structures, partisan components, and overall features of American government. **Facts matter** and having an informed factual foundation is essential to effective navigation of the world of American politics (and the world in general). Beyond amassing knowledge about American politics, students will be expected to apply the principles and concepts learned in this course to develop reasoned and **informed** opinions about current issues in American government. **CLEAR COMMUNICATION:** Second, students should also be able to **articulate and express** their opinions with logical arguments in a clear, effective, and persuasive manner. Throughout the semester we will discuss complex, controversial, salient, and “difficult” issues. I expect everyone to not only to contribute in an informed manner, I also expect that students respect the voices, opinions, and perspectives of their peers. **CREATIVITY:** Third, students should be able to think beyond the current state of American politics to consider ways in which to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of American governmental institutions. Students are encouraged to think “creatively” and “out of the box” when envisioning alternative policy solutions and institutional frameworks. Overall, I hope that students end the course with an appreciation of the value and importance of understanding how their government operates and affects their daily lives.

### Required Texts:

Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser. *The Logic of American Politics, 11<sup>th</sup> edition* (TLAP)

## Grading Breakdown:

<i>Assignments</i>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Political		
Autobiography	08/25/2023	2%
Dahl Analysis Paper	09/08/2023	10%
Reading Quizzes	Varies	12%
Debate Assignment:		20%
Participation	N/A	13%
Midterm	10/03/2023	20%
Final	12/12/2023	23%

## *Grading Scale*

100-94 A	89-87 B+	79-77 C+	69-67 D+	59-0 F
93-90 A-	86-83 B	76-73 C	66-63 D	
	82-80 B-	72-70 C-	62-60 D-	

## Attendance

Students are granted three free absences. No explanation is required for use of free absences; however, I recommend notifying the instructor in advance if possible. Unexcused absences will reduce your overall participation grade by a 1/3 of a letter grade. Excused absences include doctor's visit, religious observance, death in the family, etc. Students are also expected to arrive to class on time. Tardiness will also negatively affect your overall course grade. **A 3<sup>rd</sup> tardy (and subsequent tardies) will count as an unexcused absence.**

## Classroom Decorum

My goal as the instructor is to cultivate an active and respectful learning environment where participants feel that their presence and input are valued. With this mind, I ask that we "treat others how we want to be treated" as we discuss and share our perspectives in class. Also to reduce distractions, I ask that students minimize travel in and out of room during class time. In addition, please use technology responsibly during class. Ensure that your cell phones are on silent before coming to class. Students are expected to refrain from texting and/or surfing the internet on their phones while in class. Students can use laptops to take notes and are expected to remain **attentive and active participants in class.**

## Academic Honesty

You are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures relating to academic honesty. I expect all students to abide by the University of Georgia Academic Honesty policy. Academic dishonesty can include plagiarism, unauthorized assistance on assignments, and falsifying academic work. For more detail about what constitutes academic honesty, and consequences for engaging in dishonest conduct be sure to revisit [Academic Honesty Policy | Home \(uga.edu\)](http://academic.honesty.policy.uga.edu).

## Recording

Prohibition on Class Recordings and Distribution of Course Materials: Please do not take audio or video recordings of course lectures or discussions (live or Zoom) or repost any course materials (recorded, links, written) without my express permission or a formal accommodation.

## Student Accommodations

If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <http://drc.uga.edu>.

**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.
- Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App

COURSE SCHEDULE			
Date		Topic	Readings
Thursday	08/17/2023	Introduction (Course Overview, Expectation)	
Tuesday <b>(Week 1)</b>	08/22/2023	Collective Action	TLAP: Chapter 1 Hardin Garrett, "The Tragedy of the Commons" (on eLC)
Thursday	08/24/2023	Salient Issues in American Politics	Readings on eLC
<b>Friday</b>	<b>08/25/2023</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>	<b>Political Autobiography 11:59pm</b>
Tuesday <b>(Week 2)</b>	08/29/2023	The Founding and the Constitution	TLAP: Chapter 2 Georgia Constitutional Conventions (on eLC)
Thursday	08/31/2023	The Founding and the Constitution	Robert Dahl (2003): <i>How Democratic Is the American Constitution?</i> (excerpt on eLC)
Tuesday <b>(Week 3)</b>	09/05/2023	Congress	TLAP: Chapter 6
Thursday	09/07/2023	Congress	Congressional tensions and polarization (articles on eLC) <b>Quiz 1</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>09/08/2023</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>	<b>Dahl Paper 11:59pm</b>
Tuesday <b>(Week 4)</b>	09/12/2023	Presidency	TLAP: Chapter 7
Thursday	09/14/2023	Class Cancelled	Assignment on eLC
Tuesday <b>(Week 5)</b>	09/19/2023	Presidency	GA Executive Power & Understanding presidential power (articles on eLC)
Thursday	09/21/2023	Presidency	Executive Power Controversies (articles on eLC)
Tuesday <b>(Week 6)</b>	9/26/2023	Bureaucracy	TLAP: Chapter 8
Thursday	09/28/2023	Judiciary	TLAP: Chapter 9
Tuesday <b>(Week 7)</b>	10/03/2023	Judiciary	Federal and Georgia judiciary: institutional design and outcomes (articles on eLC) <b>Quiz 2</b>
Thursday	10/05/2023	Discussion and Documentary	Divided States of America (2 <sup>nd</sup> half)
Tuesday <b>(Week 8)</b>	10/10/2023	Exam Review Session	Catch-up & Exam Review Session
Thursday	10/12/2023	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
Tuesday <b>(Week 9)</b>	10/17/2023	Civil Rights	TLAP: Chapter 4
Thursday	10/19/2023	Civil Liberties	TLAP: Chapter 5
Tuesday <b>(Week 10)</b>	10/24/2023	Civil Liberties	Contemporary Civil Liberties and conflicts (readings on eLC) <b>Quiz 3</b>
Thursday	10/26/2023	Public Opinion	TLAP: Chapter 10
Tuesday <b>(Week 11)</b>	10/31/2023	Public Opinion	Public Polarization (readings on eLC)
Thursday	11/2/2023	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections	TLAP: Chapter 11
Tuesday <b>(Week 12)</b>	11/07/2023	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections	Understanding Elections (readings on eLC)
Thursday	11/09/2023	Debate 1	<b>Debate 1 Essay Due Before Class</b>
Tuesday <b>(Week 13)</b>	11/14/2023	Debate 2	<b>Debate 2 Essay Due Before Class</b>
Thursday	11/16/2023	Debate 3	<b>Debate 3 Essay Due Before Class</b>

Tuesday <b>(Week 14)</b>	11/21/2023	Research Day	Research Day (assignment on eLC)
Thursday	11/23/2023	Thanksgiving Break	Thanksgiving Break
Tuesday <b>(Week 15)</b>	11/28/2023	Political Parties and Election 2024 Outlook	TLAP: Chapter 12 (excerpt) Election articles on eLC <b>Quiz 4</b>
Thursday <b>(Final Class)</b>	11/30/2023	Course Review & Wrap-Up	Course Review & Wrap-Up
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>12/12/2023</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM (8:00am)</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM (8:00am)</b>

These dates are approximate. The content of the syllabus is tentative and subject to change with notice.

## Writing Assignments

### Political Autobiography

Each student should submit a 400-500 word narrative of their own political development. Here are questions you should consider in biography: When and how did you become aware of politics? Were politics regularly discussed in your environment (school/home/social) growing up? What issue or event made you aware of the impact of laws and policies and how they affect you and others? Have you had a moment when you have felt politically efficacious?

### Analytical Essay

This assignment consists of a 750-word essay that analyzes Robert Dahl's main premise in his work *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* This assignment is not a book report; rather students must have a clear and precise thesis regarding their position on Dahl's argument. Students should engage directly with claims in Dahl's text and explain the strengths and weaknesses of Dahl's critique of the U.S. Constitution.

### Debate Prep Sheet

There will be three debates this semester. Students will be randomly assigned to a topic and to the affirmative and negative position. Prior to the debate, students will submit a debate prep sheets (no more than 3 pages) that discusses the affirmative and negative positions on their debate topic.

### Notes on Assignments

#### *Writing Format*

I prefer that students use Chicago Style or MLA citations. IMPORTANT: I will not grade papers with missing or improper citations. Students should also use Times New Roman or Garamond 12-point font. All writing assignments should have 1-inch margins. All writing assignments must be submitted via Word Document. **Please do not submit papers as PDFs.**

#### *Late Assignments and Exams*

Late papers and assignments will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade for every 12-hour period that they are late (i.e. a B becomes a B-). You are expected to take exams on the day/time they are assigned. Make-up exams will be considered in cases of jury duty and emergency.

#### *Assignment Authorship*

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

### Participation

Maintaining an open and vigorous class discussion is essential to the success of this course. Students are expected to make frequent and informed contributions to classroom discussions and dialogue. Participation grades will be assigned on the basis of knowledge of the readings, before class preparation, in-class discussion, and active learning activities the instructor may define. In addition to in class discussion/questions, participation assignments can also include discussion board posts, in-class simulations, and review questions periodically assigned by the instructor.

- A Repeated excellent comments, demonstrated engagement with the literature
- B Good, solid participation
- C Some comments but shows lack of preparation
- D Attends but does not participate