



**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**

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

POLS 1101E: Introduction to American Government
Spring 2024

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 assignments which you must complete every week by Friday 6 pm. Please note that we cannot re-open assignments after that deadline. It is important that you check eLC on a weekly basis.

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. Please note that this course also requires a reliable internet connection. We are unable to accommodate spotty wi-fi.

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).

Whom To Contact When You Have Questions

This class has multiple sections. Every section is assigned to a specific teaching assistant (short: TA). Please identify your section and your TA by checking Athena. This is an important step since your TA is responsible for grading your paper, discussion assignments, quizzes, and exams. **Thus, if you have any questions about your grades, weekly assignments, papers or eLC, please contact your TA. Their email addresses are listed below.**

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

A Few Words on Emails

Please note that – due to privacy and confidentiality concern – we can only reply to emails sent from your UGA account.

Please give us at least 24 hours to reply to your email.

Please also note that you cannot reply to an email I send out via eLC (ending in @uga.view.usg.edu). If you do, the email will bounce back, and I will not receive it.

Finally, 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?
- ⇒ 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 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>

Teaching Assistants (TAs)

Since there are about 300 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
46233 & 52797	Aidan Gonzalez	aidan.gonzalez1@uga.edu
52799 & 52800	Spencer Hardin	spencer.hardin25@uga.edu
52801 & 52802	Adedotun Seyingbo	aseyingbo@uga.edu
52803 & 52804	Gabriela Padilla	gabriela.padilla25@uga.edu
52805 & 52806	Alejandra Rodas Gaiter	alejandra.rodas@uga.edu
52807 & 54569	Sophia Kiwanuka	sophia.kiwanuka@uga.edu

Evaluation

Short Paper: You will complete **one** short paper in this course. Paper prompts are listed in the syllabus and match each week's theme (see "Course Schedule" below under "Short Paper Topic" for each week). Please make sure to stick with the paper prompt and to rely on factual information and authoritative sources (**at least five different sources**) when crafting your argument such as academic research, established think-tanks, or newspapers (e.g., *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*). Note that the due date of the paper varies according to the paper prompt you choose.

There is a sign-up sheet under your breakout section's tab on eLC where you sign up for a particular paper topic. Once you sign up for a topic, you can change your paper topic only with your TA's approval. 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 Friday, March 1, your TA will assign you to a topic. **Your TA won't be able to accept and grade a paper on a topic that you did not sign up for.**

Short papers range from 5 to 10 pages (double spaced, excluding the bibliography page) and are due by 6pm on Friday the following week (see deadlines in the course schedule). You

can find the rubric for the paper under “Paper Tips” on eLC. Please make sure to discuss the criteria of the paper with your TA in advance if anything is unclear. 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 must be submitted directly to your TA’s email account, while your finalized paper must be submitted via eLC under Tools > Assignments.**

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. We do conduct regular checks of papers to identify whether an assignment was created using generative AI. If we believe a violation of A Culture of Honesty may have occurred, we have a responsibility to report to the Office of Academic Honesty. The same is true for any tutor services. The tutor is NOT supposed to write the paper for or with you. The paper is supposed to reflect 100% of your work.

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. To prepare you, I will upload practice questions and a study guide. *As of now, the first exam is scheduled for Friday, March 1; the second exam is scheduled for Friday, May 3. They will be available on eLC from 8am – 6pm. You will have one hour for the exam. You must complete the exam online in one sitting.* **If you accidentally miss an exam, I will, regrettably, not be able to offer a make-up exam.** Please do not request to take the exam early due to travel plans. It is your responsibility to be at a place with reliable internet access on the day of the 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 the lectures and assigned readings from the prior two weeks, so make sure you are familiar with each chapter’s key terms. *The date for each quiz is listed under “Important Dates and Deadlines”. Quizzes will be available from 8am – 6pm. You will have 30 minutes for each quiz. You must complete the quiz online in one sitting.* We will drop the worst quiz grade at the end of the semester.

***** Please note that it is your responsibility to contact your TA at the beginning**

of the semester to inform them about any DRC-related accommodation such as extended time for quizzes and exams. This is important since the DRC (normally) does not include your TA on any emails. So, please forward your DRC letter to your TA in a timely fashion before the first quiz.***

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 **at least three 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 the discussion prompt specifies otherwise.

Artificial intelligence-based technologies, such as ChatGPT, must not be used to generate responses for student assignments. If we believe a violation of A Culture of Honesty may have occurred, we have a responsibility to report to the Office of Academic Honesty.

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 Friday, April 26.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage

Exam I: 20%

Exam II: 20%

Short Paper: 15%

Quizzes: 15%

InQuizitive: 15%

Participation: 10%

Participation in Online Research Study: 5%

When To Expect Grades

You can expect grades for your quizzes and discussion posts within one week of

submission and grades for your papers within two weeks of submission. Exam grades will be made available right after submission. To improve your InQuizitive score, you can re-do the assignment until its weekly deadline on Friday 6pm. If you do not receive your grades within these time frames, please contact your TA.

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 and are largely determined by your TA.****

Important Class Dates and Deadlines

First Day of Class: Monday, January 8

Drop/Add: January 8 – January 12

MLK Day – No Classes: Monday, January 15

Exam I: Friday, March 1

Spring Break: March 4 – March 8

Withdrawal Deadline: Thursday, March 21

Last Day of Our Class: Friday, April 26

Reading Day: Tuesday, April 30

Exam II: Friday, May 3

Distribution of link to research survey by the end of March

Deadline for completing the research survey: Friday, April 26

Quiz 1: Friday, January 26

Quiz 2: Friday, February 16

Quiz 3: Friday, March 29

Quiz 4: Friday, April 12

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 them, 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. Appeals must be submitted within two weeks of receiving the grade.

If you need to make up a quiz or an exam, it is your responsibility to schedule one with your TA within ONE week of the original quiz/exam date.

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 by 10% 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. To reiterate: We cannot extend deadlines after the deadline has already passed.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (starting January 8)

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 19

Week 2 (starting January 16)

****MLK Day on Monday, January 15****

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 19

Week 3 (starting January 22)

****Quiz #1 on Friday, January 26****

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 26

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 2)

Week 4 (starting January 29)

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 2

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 9)

Week 5 (starting February 5)

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 9

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? Address possible strengths and weaknesses in your proposed strategies. (Due by 6pm on February 16)

Week 6 (starting February 12)

****Quiz #2 on Friday, February 16****

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 16

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. What comes first, political opinions or ideology? In your opinion, what *should* come first and why? Discuss. (Due by 6pm on February 23)

Week 7 (starting February 19)

Topic: The Media

Readings: Chapter 7 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 6 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on February 23

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 evaluate their impact on readers’ understanding of the issue at hand. (Due by 6pm on March 1)

Week 8 (starting February 26)

****Midterm Exam on Friday, March 1****

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 due by 6pm on March 1

Week 9 (starting March 4)

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

Week 10 (starting March 11)

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 15

Short Paper Topic: Consider reasons individuals may not vote. In your answer, examine the role of personal motivation as well as institutional barriers and propose possible strategies to increase turnout. (Due by 6pm on March 22)

Week 11 (starting March 18)

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 22

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 29)

Week 12 (starting March 25)

****Quiz #3 on Friday, March 29****

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 due by 6pm on March 29

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 5)

Week 13 (starting April 1)

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 5

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 12)

Week 14 (starting April 8)

****Quiz #4 on Friday, April 12****

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 12

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 19)

Week 15 (starting April 15)

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 19

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 26)

Week 16 (starting April 22)

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 26

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.