POLS 1101E: American Government

Instructor: Dr. Colin French

Online Asynchronous

Thru-Term: June 6th -July 31st

Summer 2024

Virtual Office Hours- Monday 11AM-1PM or by Appointment

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Disclaimer: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

DESCRIPTION

How does the American political system operate? This course provides an introduction to American political ideas, institutions, behaviors, and processes. Topics include (among other things) the Constitution, Congress, the presidency, political ideology, and political participation. Although we will cover the “nuts and bolts” of American government, a major emphasis of this course will be to learn how to discuss and make substantive political arguments. We will also cover the Georgia State constitution.

This course has these major goals:

* To help you understand how American political institutions form and how they function.
* To help you understand how American citizens interact with, shape, and are shaped by the political system.
* To show you how political scientists study politics and introduce you to social science tools.
* To help understand and be able to make cogent and logically consistent arguments, be they positive or normative.
* Improve critical thinking and communication skills by considering various political perspectives, reflecting on the development of personal views, and communicating those views effectively

READINGS

There is one book required for this course that is available through ELC Readings are to be done BEFORE class whenever possible. Lectures and discussions will be based on the readings assigned for that class period. All readings that are included on the syllabus are fair game for exams, even if we do not discuss them at length in lecture or section. Readings will be uploaded late in the week before they are expected to be read.

Books: Ebook: Connect Master for American Government

Discussion & Participation

Interactive discussion and the Socratic method are as important tools in the educational process as lecturing. As such, when listening to the lecture material, also be thinking about what kind of thoughts you have for the weekly discussion posts, as these take the place of classroom discussions and participation for an online course. Always remember to be respectful and considerate of the opinions of your classmates, as my courses are intended to be a forum for polite, intellectual, and objective political discourse. Personal insults, bigotry, and derogatory comments will be removed.

Discussion Posts

Each week is separated into two distinct content topics, each meant to represent the class material from a standard week of class in a typical 16 week semester. These are labeled as x(A) and x(B) in the syllabus. Each subtopic within the week will contain one video lecture and accompanying powerpoint presentation, and will have one open discussion forum.

**As an active participant, each student is expected to contribute, at minimum, two discussion posts per topic.** As a note, this is a minimum requirement, going above in any given week will only help. These can be a response to my original forum prompt, a response to a previous student’s response, or a combination of both. Each post should contain an actual consideration, suggestion, thought or argument: posts such as “This was really interesting” do not count.

Discussion posts for any given topic are expected to be in by the Sunday at the end of the week’s unit. Late posts will be given partial credit, but in order to encourage a decent discussion, too many late posts each week would mean a less interactive dialogue between participants. For that reason, it is usually a good plan for the best possible participation credit to get your discussion posts in earlier, rather than later in the week.

EVALUATION

Your grade in this class will be based on participation from the discussion threads, as well as three distinct multiple choice examinations. The grade breakdown is as follows.

Participation Discussion Posts (Minim 4 per week): 40%

Exams – 60%

Test 1- 20%

Test 2- 20%

Test 3- 20%

**IMPORTANT Assignment dates**

Exam 1- Friday June 28th

Exam 2- Friday July 12th

Exam 3- Wednesday July 31st

At the end of the semester, your grade will be assigned based on the following scale:

A (94-100), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D (60-69), and F (0-59). (Note that there are no +/- grades in the D or F range.)

Participation

Your participation is necessary and vital to the class. You are expected to come to class and be actively engaged, both during your discussion sections, as well as raise questions during the lectures. Your participation grade is determined by discussion posts in the threads that will be posted weekly.

Each week will have two (2) discussion threads open for student responses, each for distinctive topics/concepts that will be enumaerated during the lectures and/or assigned readings.

Exams

There will be 3 exams in this course. Each will consist of essay questions and short-answer identifications. You can find the dates of the exam on the calendar section of the syllabus.

**Part I** – Why Government? Anarchy, Government, & The State of Nature

June 7th-June 14th Week 1

1A Introduction- “Why Government?”

-Syllabus Intro

- Collective versus individual action

- State formation & Anarchy- Olson

- Hobbes State of Nature (ELC)

1B The Constitution

* Ebook: Constitution Articles
* Articles of Confederation (Google or ELC)
* Constitution of the United States (Google or ELC)

June 15th-June 22nd- Week 2

2A: Federalism and Separated Powers

* Ebook Federalism

2B: Representation

Gilens, Martin. 2005. “Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness” The Public Opinion Quarterly. 69(5): 778-796. (ELC)

June 23rd-June 29tth- Week 3

3A- Civil Liberties & Rights

* Ebook: Civil Liberties
* Ebook: Civil Rights

3B: The US Congress

* Ebook Congress Readings

**Test 1- Online, June 28th**

June 30th -July 6th- Week 4

4A: Presidential Roles, Expectations, Tactics

* Presidential Styles & Leadership (ELC)
* Ebook- The Presidency Articles
* Neustadt, Richard, Presidential Power (ELC)
* Brendan Nyhan- “The Green Lantern theory of the Presidency”

4B: The Supreme Court & Court System

* Ebook, The Supreme Court & SCOTUS

July 7th-July 13th- Week 5

5A: Bureaucratic Structure, Development, and Control

* Ebook, Bureaucracy & Policy

5B: Elections & The Electoral College

* Ebook- Elections in the United States

**Test 2- Online, July 12th**

July 14th-July 20th- Week 6

6A: Mass Media & Politics

* Wlezien, C. & Soroka, S. 2018. «Mass Media and Electoral Preferences During the 2016 US Presidential Race» Political Behavior <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9478-0> (ELC)
* Chris Wells, Dhavan V. Shah, et al. 2016. “How Trump Drove Coverage to the Nomination: Hybrid

Ebook- The Role of Media in US Politics

6B: Parties & Partisanship

* Ebook- Modern Political Parties
* Jon Ladd. “Negative partisanship may be the most toxic form of polarization” Vox

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/07/forward-third-party-andrew-yang>

July 21st-July 27th- Week 7

7A and B: Public Opinion (Entire Week)

* Ebook- Public Opinion Articles
* Bryan Caplan- “Rational Ignorance and Rational Irrationality” http://econfaculty.gmu.edu/bcaplan/pdfs/rationalignorancevs.pdf
* John Zaller. The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. (ELC)
* Achen & Bartels- Democracy for Realists (ELC)

July 28th-July 31st- Week 8

: The Georgia State Constitution

<https://www.senate.ga.gov/Documents/gaconstitution.pdf>

<https://georgia.gov/three-branches-georgias-state-government>

**Test 3- Wednesday, July 31st**

COURSE POLICIES

Make-ups for major assignments will only be offered in the case of serious need. Students should not assume an extension or make-up opportunity will be granted in all circumstances. Health and personal issues can be valid reasons. Late assignments will be penalized by ten percent for each day they are late.

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

UGA Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at [www.uga.edu/ovpi](http://www.uga.edu/ovpi)

**Plagiarism:**

Writing and presenting original work in college can be challenging, but this is not an excuse to plagiarize. Any directly taken information, quotations, or work that is not referenced or cited can be counted as plagiarism. Please take not and remember to provide references to any outside materials used in your work or writing.

**Attendance:**

The student is responsible for all assigned course work and cannot be absolved of this responsibility. When enrolled in a particular course, the student is obligated to do all of the work assigned. Punctual and regular attendance is vital to the discharge of this obligation. Absences, excused or not, do not alter this responsibility. Regulations more restrictive than College guidelines, but not in conflict with it, may be established by the instructor for any course.

Instructors are responsible for distributing their individual course attendance guidelines in their syllabi during the first class each term. Absences will be excused for:

• documented illnesses,

• official representation of the College,

• death of a close relative,

• religious holiday, and

• other circumstances beyond the control of the student.

Excuses for official representation of the College must be obtained from the official supervising that activity or event.

Students whose unexcused absences surpass **three** of the scheduled classes may receive a lowered grade or failure at the instructor's discretion.

**Wellness Statement**

This policy statement was added as a requirement during the Spring 2020 semester. UGA syllabi are expected to include the following statement: 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