POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government

University of Georgia-Spring 2024

**Instructor:**  **Office Hours:**

Aidan González Tuesdays 12pm-2pm or by appointment

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**Class Meets:** MWF 9:10am-10:00am, Sanford 313

**Course Description**   
This course will introduce you to the fundamentals of the American government –its origins, political institutions, and main actors. Hopefully, the course will also demonstrate how you are connected to the government in your daily life and present you with tools to become an informed and engaged participant. For this purpose, we will also examine what being American means today and how our political institutions and behavior compare to other countries. Ultimately, you will leave this class with a deeper understanding of how to critically evaluate and actively participate in the American political system.

**Course Objectives**   
-Understand the origins and current structure of American government.

-Evaluate aspects of the American political system – its institutions and stakeholders.   
-Be equipped to engage in the American political system – individually and through collective action.

-Improve critical thinking and communication skills by considering various political perspectives, reflecting on the development of personal views, and communicating those views effectively.

**Course Texts**

-Open Government, free online copy but hard copies can be purchased

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-3e?Book%20details>

-Other readings will be made available to you via E-Learning Commons

**Assignments**

1. **Midterm exam:** This exam will cover material from the first 7 weeks of the semester. This exam is NOT open note. Students may not use any materials or notes during the exam period. The exam will consist of 30 multiple choice questions (70%) and 2 short answer questions (30%). The exam will take place at our normal meeting time and in the same room.

1. **Final:** Using an appropriate, yet creative format, students will construct a form of visual or audio media which communicates effectively a concept discussed throughout the course of the semester. This could range from something as simple as a PowerPoint covering a topic to something as complex as a short film illustrating an issue discussed. Students are encouraged to be as creative as possible; submissions will be graded on effort made. However, more abstract submissions should be accompanied by a short write-up explaining the issue/topic conveyed. Students are required to submit a proposal for their project by 4/12.
2. **Quizzes:** Students will have 5 quizzes over the course of the semester with the dates listed on the syllabus. These quizzes ARE open note and consist of 3-4 short answer questions. Students will have 20 minutes to complete each quiz.

1. **Short Paper:** Over the course of the semester, students will write a short paper based on the prompts available on ELC. The finished paper should be a minimum of 5 pages and fulfill the requirements of the rubric posted on ELC. Students may use any citation style so long as it is consistent and uses 6 sources. Students will have to sign up for a prompt by Friday (2/9). If students have not picked a topic, one will be chosen for them by me.

**Paper Prompts**

1. 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 11:59pm February 9th)*
2. How has SCOTUS changed after the confirmation of Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett? Would conservative judges ever side with liberal judges (or vice versa)? Cite evidence from SCOTUS cases in your response. *(Due by 11:59pm March 22nd)*
3. 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 11:59pm March 29th)*
4. 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 11:59pm April 19th)*

**Grade Distribution**

* Tests
  + Midterm 20%
  + Final 25%
* Assignments
  + Quizzes 20%
  + Short Paper 20%
* Participation
  + 15%

**Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades**  
100-94 A 93-90 A- 89-97 B+ 86-84 B

83-80 B- 79-77 C+ 76-74 C 73-70C-

69-60 D 59-0 F  
\*Please note that there is no standard rounding policy. Rounding decisions can be made on a  
case-by-case basis at instructor’s discretion.\*

**Tentative Course & Assignment Calendar**

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| Date | Topic | Readings | Assignments/Reminders |
| Week 1 (1/8-1/12) | Getting started/Why Government? | * Syllabus * Ch. 1 * Readings on eLC |  |
| Week 2 (1/15-1/19) | Founding/Constitution pt. 1 | * Ch. 2 | \*No class Monday |
| Week 3 (1/22-1/26) | Constitution pt. 2/ Federalism | * Ch. 3 |  |
| Week 4 (1/29-2/2) | Constitution pt. 3/ Civil Liberties | * Ch. 4 | -Quiz #1 |
| Week 5 (2/5-2/9) | Constitution pt. 4/ Civil Rights | * Ch. 5 | -Paper sign-up due! (2/9)  -Civil liberties paper due\* |
| Week 6 (2/12-2/16) | Presidency | * Ch. 12 |  |
| Week 7 (2/19-2/23) | Bureaucracy/Executive Agencies | * Ch. 15 * Readings on ELC | -Quiz #2 |
| Week 8 (2/26-3/1) | American Parties Over Time | * Ch. 9 * Readings on eLC | -Midterm Exam (2/28)  -NO CLASS (3/1) |
| SPRING BREAK |  |  |  |
| Week 10 (3/11-3-15) | Congress | * Ch. 11 * Ch. 9 |  |
| Week 11 (3/18-3/22) | Federal Courts | * Ch. 13 | -Quiz #3  -Federal Courts paper due\* |
| Week 12 (3/25-3/29) | Media | * Ch. 8 | -Media Paper due\* |
| Week 13 (4/1-4/5) | Public Opinion/Collective Action | * Ch. 6 * Ch. 10 | -Quiz #4 |
| Week 14 (4/8-4/12) | Domestic and Foreign Policy | * Ch. 16 * Ch. 17 | -Project proposal due! |
| Week 15 (4/15-4/19) | Voting, Elections, and Participation (interest groups) | * Ch. 7 | -Quiz #5  -Voting paper due\* |
| Week 16 (4/22-4/26) | Georgia Constitution and Politics | * Readings on eLC |  |
| Final Projects |  |  |  |
| Final Projects |  |  |  |

**Course policies**

**Grade Appeals, Incompletes, Late Assignments, and Make-Up Policy**   
• A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional   
circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor.   
• Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency,   
or illness) should be presented before the exam/due date if possible.   
• Late assignments will receive a letter grade deduction for every day it is late.

**Office Hours (Tuesdays from 12-2 in Baldwin 305A)**

Students who are having difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments are encouraged to set up an appointment for office hours. I really enjoy meeting with students! However, please note that office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture if you missed class. For that, please get with other students to share notes and get a recap. If you cannot make the designated office hours, email me and we can find an alternative meeting time

**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 going to change.

**Preferred Name and Pronouns**   
Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name – sometimes that does not include your preferred name and/or gender identity. I would genuinely like to address you by your preferred name and/or pronouns. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

**Disability Resource Center**   
If you anticipate needing classroom or exam 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. Instructors can withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences.

**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. Violations of the academic dishonesty rules are grounds for receiving an “F” in the course as well as possible expulsion from the university. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating, academic misconduct, or plagiarism, examine the university policy and /or ask the instructor.

**Email Policy**   
Please give me at least 24 hours to respond to emails on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. If I do not respond by then, please do follow-up! As instructors, our inboxes can become overwhelmed very quickly and I genuinely want to be available when you have questions or need assistance. Please do not expect a response outside of work hours during the week (M-F 8am-6pm) or during weekends.

**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 list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. 