

## POLS 1101H-AMERICAN GOVERNMENT-Honors

Instructor: Dr. Gbemende Johnson

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-2:30pm and by appt

Course Meeting Time and Room: MWF: 11:30-12:20, Baldwin 104

### 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*, 1<sup>1th</sup> edition (TLAP)

### Grading Breakdown:

<i>Assignments</i>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Political Autobiography	1/12/24	2%
Current Event Presentation	Varies	2%
Dahl Analysis Paper	02/03/24	10%
Debate Assignment:		17%
<i>Debate Prep Sheet</i>	Varies	12%
<i>Debate Performance</i>	Varies	5%
Reading Quizzes (3)	Varies	9%
Exam 1	02/16/24	15%
Exam 2	03/22/24	15%
Exam 3 (cumulative)	05/03/24	20%
Participation	n/a	10%

### *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 four free absences. No explanation is required for the 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. 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 \(uga.edu\)](#).

**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
Monday (Week 1)	01/08/2024	Introduction (Course Overview, Expectation)	
Wednesday	01/10/2024	Collective Action	Hardin Garrett, "The Tragedy of the Commons" (on eLC) "AI is a "tragedy of the commons." We've got solutions for that. (on eLC)
Friday	01/12/2024	No Class (Conference)	<b>Assignment Due on eLC: Political Autobiography</b>
Monday (Week 2)	01/15/2024	No Class (MLK Holiday)	
Wednesday	01/17/2024	Collective Action	TLAP: Chapter 1 (Section 1.1-1.4; pgs 1-21)
Friday	01/19/2024	Collective Action	TLAP: Chp 1 ctd (Section 1.5-outro; pgs 21-30) American National Identity articles (on eLC)
Monday (Week 3)	01/22/2024	The Founding and the Constitution	TLAP: Chapter 2 (Section 2.1-2.4; pgs 35-65)
Wednesday	01/24/2024	The Founding and the Constitution	TLAP: Chp 2 ctd (Section 2.6-2.8; pgs 69-77) & Dahl (excerpts on eLC)
Friday	01/26/2024	The Founding and the Constitution	Dahl ctd (excerpt on eLC) "The Constitution is Very Hard to Amend" (on eLC)
Monday (Week 4)	01/29/2024	Congress	TLAP: Chapter 6 (Section 6.1-6.4; pgs 235-260)
Wednesday	01/31/2024	Congress	TLAP: Chp 6 (Section 6.5-outro; 260-298) The 5 M's for Describing why Congress is Broken (on eLC) <b>Quiz 1 due</b>
Friday	02/02/2024	Congress	Understanding Congress Shutdowns (articles on eLC) "How Congress was Saved" (on eLC)
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>02/03/2024</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>	<b>Assignment Due on eLC: Dahl Essay</b>
Monday (Week 5)	02/05/2024	Presidency	TLAP: Chapter 7 (Section 7.1-7.4; pgs 301-327)
Wednesday	02/07/2024	Presidency	TLAP: Chp 7 ctd (Section 7.5-outro; pgs 327-348 ) Georgia Executive Branch (readings on eLC)
Friday	02/09/2024	Presidency	Understanding Executive Power (readings on eLC)
Monday (Week 6)	02/12/2024	Presidency	Executive Power Controversies and Crises (readings on eLC)
Wednesday	02/14/2024	Review	
<b>Friday</b>	<b>02/16/2024</b>	<b>Exam 1</b>	<b>Exam 1 (In Class)</b>
Monday (Week 7)	02/19/2024	Judiciary	TLAP: Chapter 9 (Section 9.1-9.3; pgs 395-418)
Wednesday	02/21/2024	Judiciary	TLAP: Chp 9 ctd (Section 9.4-otro; pgs 418-439) Understanding the Georgia Judiciary
Friday	02/23/2024	Judiciary	Redesigning the Supreme Court? (readings on eLC)
Monday (Week 8)	02/26/2024	Civil Rights	TLAP: Chapter 4 (Section 4.1-4.3; pgs 135-162)
Wednesday	02/28/2024	Civil Rights	TLAP: Chp 4 ctd (Section 4.3.-outro; pgs 162-185)
Friday	03/01/2024	Civil Rights	Contemporary Voting Rights: Conflicts and Controversies (readings on eLC)
<b>Spring Break</b>	<b>03/04/2024- 03/08/2024</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
Monday (Week 9)	03/11/2024	Debate Overview & Discussion	<b>Quiz 2 due</b>
Wednesday	03/13/2024	Civil Liberties	TLAP: Chapter 5 (Section 5.1-5.3; pgs 187-205)
Friday	03/15/2024	Civil Liberties	TLAP: Chp 5 ctd (Section 5.6-5.9; pgs 212-231)
Monday (Week 10)	03/18/2024	Civil Liberties	Salient Issues in American Politics (readings on eLC)

Wednesday	03/20/2024	Review Session	
<b>Friday</b>	<b>03/22/2024</b>	<b>Exam 2</b>	<b>Exam 2 (In Class)</b>
Monday (Week 11)	03/25/2024	Public Opinion	TLAP: Chapter 10 (Section 10.1-10.4; pgs 441-463)
Wednesday	03/27/2024	Public Opinion	TLAP: Chp 10 (Section 10.4-outro; pgs 463-476)
Friday	03/29/2024	Public Opinion	Polarization in American Politics (articles on eLC)
Monday Week 12)	04/01/2024	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections	TLAP: Chapter 11 (Section 11.1-11.4; pgs 479-499)
Wednesday	04/03/2024	No Class (Conference)	
Friday	04/05/2024	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections	TLAP: Chp 11 ctd (Section 11.4-outro; pgs 499-508)
Monday (Week 13)	04/08/2024	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections	Look ahead to 2024 Elections (articles on eLC)
Wednesday	04/10/2024	Political Parties	TLAP: Chapter 12 (Section 12.1-12.2; pgs 511-518, 525-535)
Friday	04/12/2024	Political Parties	TLAP: Chapter 12 (Section 12.3-12.4; pgs 535-546) Why Parties? (articles on eLC) <b>Quiz 3 due</b>
Monday (Week 14)	04/15/2024	Divided States of America Documentary	Documentary and Discussion
Wednesday	04/17/2024	Divided States of America Documentary	Documentary and Discussion
Friday	04/19/2024	In-Class Debate Preparation	
Monday (Week 15)	04/22/2024	<b>Debate: Essay 1 Due</b>	
Wednesday	04/24/2024	<b>Debate: Essay 2 Due</b>	
Friday	04/26/2024	<b>Debate: Essay 3 Due</b>	
Monday (Last Day of Class)	04/29/2024	Course Review	
FRIDAY	05/03/2024	FINAL EXAM 12:00-2:00	

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 750-800 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 or negative position. Prior to the debate, students will submit a debate prep sheets

(no more than 3 single-spaced pages) that discusses the affirmative and negative positions on their debate topic.

### **American Government News Minute**

Once during the semester, each student will find a current news article related to American politics (specifically the topic for a given week). Students upload a link to the article, and a 2-paragraph summary of the article and how it relates (broadly) to topic/issue pertinent to our course. Students will present their current event article and summary to the class.

### **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 only 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                                         |