

POLS 1101: American Government
104 Baldwin Hall
Instructor: Dr. Colin French
Class T/TH 12:45-2PM
378 Baldwin Hall (Office)
Fall 2024

Office Hours: MWF 3:15-4:45 or By Appointment
Email: Colin.French@uga.edu or frenchc197@gmail.com (Emergencies)

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 the book store. 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.

Books: Ebook: Connect Master for American Government

CLASS STRUCTURE

Interactive discussion and the Socratic method are as important tools in the educational process as lecturing. As such, come to class with an open mind and be willing to explore, critique, and otherwise

engage with ideas and theories. While I take attendance, students will receive 2 “free” unexcused absences. Any more will damage participation grades.

EVALUATION

Your grade in this class will be based on class participation, three exams, and a research design assignment. The breakdown is as follows:

Participation: 30%

Exams – 60%

Test 1- 20%

Test 2- 20%

Test 3- 20%

Research Question Assignment- 10%

IMPORTANT Examination Dates

Test 1- 9/19

Test 2- 10/24

Test 3 12/5-12/10 (Online)

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 two parts.

In Class Discussion- 30%

As previously noted, one of the key elements to making this class work well will be participation and an active classroom discussion environment. Students that have shown they can engage in discussion will benefit, as will demonstrating that you have done the reading in the discussions.

Writing

All assignments are due by midnight on the due date. No hard copies will be required- receipt and grading will both be done digitally. Don't “stretch” your writing simply to meet the page limit of an assignment- if you are struggling for material or content please reach out to me during office hours or by email for advice.

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 – A government by the people: The structures of government

Week 1 &2 Introduction- “Why US Politics’

-Syllabus Intro

-Why take American Politics? Careers, citizenship, and critical thought

- State formation & Anarchy

<https://1000wordphilosophy.com/2021/07/14/hobbes-on-the-state-of-nature/>

<https://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-20-2-c-hobbes-locke-montesquieu-and-rousseau-on-government.html>

8/27: The Constitution

- Ebook Constitution Articles
- Articles of Confederation (Google)
- Constitution of the United States (Google)

8/29 : Federalism and Separated Powers

- Ebook Federalism

9/3: Political Norms

- Brendan Nyhan, “Norms Matter.” Politico, September 2017.
- Bernard Avishai. “A Survey Finds that All Americans Favor Democratic Norms Over Politics – Except in the Case of Voting” The New Yorker. December 26, 2018.

9/5 :Representation

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

9/10- Civil Liberties

- Ebook Civil Liberties

9/12: The US Congress

- Ebook Congress Readings

9/17: 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”
- Review for test 1

Test 1- September 19th

9/24: The Supreme Court & Court System

- Ebook, The Supreme Court & SCOTUS

9/26: Bureaucratic Structure, Development, and Control

- Ebook, Bureaucracy & Policy

10/1: Civil Liberties

- Ebook- The Evolution of Civil Liberties

10/3: Civil Rights

- Ebook- Contemporary Civil Rights in the United States

10/8 : Ideology and ideals in American Politics

- What are “Liberals” and “Conservatives”
- Ideological Dimensionality

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/388988/political-ideology-steady-conservatives-moderates-tie.aspx>

10/10: Current Political Issues in American Politics

- Issue salience & elite rhetoric

https://csdp.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf2376/files/media/covid_19_partisanship_gadarian_goodman_pepinsky.pdf

- Ebook- Domestic Policy

10/15: Elections & The Electoral College

- Ebook- Elections in the United States

10/17: Mass Media

- 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

10/22 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>

Test 2- October 24th

Part II – Of the people: Citizens and Politics

10/29: Interest Groups

- Ebook- Interest Groups in American Politics

10/31: Public Opinion

- Ebook- Public Opinion Articles
- Bryan Caplan- “Rational Ignorance and Rational Irrationality” <http://econfaculty.gmu.edu/bcaplan/pdfs/rationalignorancevs.pdf>

11/5- Election Day (No Class)

11/7: Reactions to Election Day- Analysis and Reflections

11/12 The Role of Public Opinion

- John Zaller. The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. (ELC)
- Achen & Bartels- Democracy for Realists (ELC)

11/14: Political Participation – Who participates? Why?

11/19 and 11/21: The Georgia State Constitution

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

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

11/26 – Thinking forward- Democracy and Small ‘l’ liberalism

11/28- Thanksgiving Break (No Class)

Exam 3- December 5th-10th (Online)

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

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 note 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