



**UNIVERSITY OF  
GEORGIA**

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

**POLS 1101E: Introduction to American Government  
Spring 2025**

Instructor: Professor Bankert  
Contact: [alexa.bankert@uga.edu](mailto:alexa.bankert@uga.edu)

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## **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 are expected to watch these lectures in a timely fashion. There will also be weekly reading and discussion/reflection assignments that will be due every Friday. Since this is an online class, a reliable internet connection is a necessity. I would discourage you from completing quizzes or assignments on your phone or public Wi-Fi spots like the airport.

Please note that this class has a main instructor (that’s me – Dr. Bankert! ☺) and six Teaching Assistants (TA). Each TA is responsible for two of the twelve sections in this class (see their names, email addresses, and sections below). You can identify your sections by checking your Athena registration for this course. Your TA is responsible for grading your assignments, paper, exams, and quizzes, so please make sure you know who your TA is in case you have questions.

## **Feeling Lost? Here Is How To Reach Us and Stay Informed!**

Our course is administered through eLC. You will find all of our course materials through this website. You will also submit assignments on eLC.

**My primary means of communication with the class will be through announcements posted in eLC. Make sure you receive eLC updates for our class automatically via email (eLC > Click on your profile > Notifications > Instant Notifications).**

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

If you have any questions about grades, assignments, papers, eLC, and InQuizitive, please contact your TA. Their email addresses are listed below.

Please give us at least 24 hours to reply to your email. Please note that you cannot reply to an email I send out via eLC (ending in @uga.view.usg.edu emails). When emailing us, please only use the email addresses listed in the syllabus. Please also note that – due to privacy

and confidentiality concerns – we can only reply to emails sent from your UGA account.

### **Email Etiquette**

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? (Note that we can only reply to emails sent from your official UGA account)
- ⇒ Did I check the syllabus for an answer beforehand? ☺

### **Virtual Student Drop-In Hour**

I will strive to make sure that the course is understandable, and that assignments and exams are manageable. Your TA and I are here to help, so if you need support or if you have difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments, please reach out. We are available for in-person and Zoom meetings. I will also hold a virtual drop-in hour every Wednesday from 1pm – 2 pm. You can enter the Zoom waiting room, using [this link](#). The meeting ID is: 949 4185 2071 and the passcode is 023167. Your TA's office hours are listed on their eLC page.

### **Required Text**

*We the People (14<sup>th</sup> 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

Since there are over 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	Teaching Assistant	Email
46233 & 52797	Aislinn Beak	aislinn.beak@uga.edu
52799 & 52800	Brad Bilsback	bbilsback@uga.edu
52801 & 52802	Aidan Gonzalez	aidan.gonzalez1@uga.edu
52803 & 52804	Shang Yat Lam	shangyat.lam@uga.edu
52805 & 52806	Aidan McShane	aidan.mcshane@uga.edu
52807 & 54569	Dotun Seyingbo	aseyingbo@uga.edu

## Evaluation

Short Paper: 20%

Multiple-Choice Exam: 20%

Short-Answer Quizzes: 20%

InQuizitive: 15%

Discussion Assignment: 20%

Participation in Online Research Study: 5%

**Short Paper:** You will complete **one** short paper in this course. Short papers range from 5 to 10 double spaced pages as well as a bibliography page that lists your references. 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.

You can find the rubric for the paper 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 Friday (the week prior to the deadline) 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 "Short Paper" > "Short Paper Submission Folders". Accepted file types include .docx, .pdf, .txt, .rtf.**

Please note that you need to sign up for a paper topic ahead of time. There will be a sign-up

sheet under your breakout section's site on eLC. Once you sign up for a topic, you can change your paper topic only with your TA's approval. Please note that a maximum of 5 students can sign up for each topic. If you have not signed up for a topic by Friday, February 14, your TA will assign one to you. Your TA won't be able to accept and grade a paper on a topic that you did not sign up for. The sign-up sheet is an online Excel document that tracks changes. It is considered a case of academic dishonesty if you try to change your paper topic on the sign-up sheet without your TA's approval or if you remove another student's name from the sheet.

**Multiple-Choice Exam:** There will be one cumulative online open-book/open-note exam that 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. *As of now, the exam is scheduled for Friday, May 2. It will be available on eLC from 8am – 6pm. If you accidentally miss the exam, I will, regrettably, not be able to offer a make-up exam.*

### **Quizzes & Exams for Students Registered with the DRC**

If you are registered with the DRC and you need extended exam and quiz time, please make sure to email your TA at least 48 hours before the exam/quiz date.

**InQuizitive:** “InQuizitive” tests your comprehension of the assigned readings. To access it on eLC, you will need to enter 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 vial 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 prior lectures and assigned readings so make sure you are familiar with each chapter's key terms. The date for each quiz is listed under “Important Dates and Deadlines”.

**Discussion Assignments:** 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 and professional, especially when you disagree with an author, a piece of scholarship, or a classmate.
- 3) A paragraph entails about 4-5 sentences.
- 4) Discussion posts need to address all components of the assignment prompt.
- 5) Discussion posts need to entail 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 explicitly stated, artificial intelligence-based technologies, such as ChatGPT, must not be used to generate responses for student assignments

**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 Monday, April 28.

**Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades**

100-94 A	79-77 C+	
93-90 A-	76-74 C	<i>***Please note that there is no standard rounding policy.</i>
89-87 B+	73-70 C-	<i>Rounding decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis,</i>
86-84 B	69-60 D	<i>and are largely determined by your TA.***</i>
83-80 B-	59-0 F	

**Important Class Dates and Deadlines**

- First Day of Class: Monday, January 6
- Drop/Add: January 6 – January 10
- Paper Sign-Up Deadline: Friday, February 14
- Spring Break: March 3 – March 7
- Withdrawal Deadline: Thursday, April 3
- Last Day of Our Class: Monday, April 28
- Deadline for completing the research survey: Monday, April 28
- Reading Day: Tuesday, April 29
- Final Exam: Friday, May 2
- Quiz 1: Friday, January 24
- Quiz 2: Friday, February 21
- Quiz 3: Friday, March 21
- Quiz 4: Friday, April 11

## **When To Expect Grades**

You can expect grades for your quizzes, exams, and discussion assignments within one week of submission and grades for your paper within two weeks of submission. To improve your InQuizitive score, you can re-do the assignment until its weekly deadline on Friday 6pm. Your InQuizitive score will automatically appear in the eLC gradebook assuming you used the link I posted to eLC. If you do not receive your grades within these time frames, please contact your TA.

## **Use of Generative AI Technology for Coursework**

The use of Generative AI (GAI) tools is **not** generally permitted in this course but will be permitted for select assignments. Specific assignments will include details about whether use of GAI tools is allowable or not, and why. If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with me before using it. We do conduct AI checks of every paper and assignment to determine 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. If we do, you will be informed of our report, so you can look out for an email from the Office of Academic Honesty who will schedule a facilitated discussion between you and your TA to review your case. The goal will be an agreement reached about what occurred, and if it involved dishonesty, an appropriate sanction. To protect your rights, we cannot discuss your case outside of that facilitated meeting.

Whenever an assignment **explicitly allows** for the use of GAI, please keep the following in mind: You may not represent output generated by a GAI tool as your own work. Any such use of GAI output must be appropriately cited or disclosed, including quotation marks and in-line citations for direct quotes. Including anything you did not write in your assignment without proper citation will be treated as an academic misconduct case. Suspected unauthorized assistance, plagiarism, or other violations of UGA's "A Culture of Honesty," will be reported to the Office of Academic Honesty. For full details on how to properly cite AI-generated work, please see the [APA Style article: How to Cite ChatGPT](#). Finally, GAI is highly vulnerable to inaccuracy and bias. You should assume GAI output is wrong unless you either know the answer or can verify it with another source. It is your responsibility to assess the validity and applicability of any GAI output used.

## **Grade Appeals**

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 own assessment to your TA's assessment of your paper. Appeals must be submitted within two weeks of receiving the grade.

**Incompletes**

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.

**Late Submissions**

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) cannot be submitted late for credit unless you arranged an extension with your TA in advance. Generally, we cannot extend deadlines after the deadline has passed.

**Excused Absences from Quizzes & Exams**

Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam or quiz (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness, student-athlete responsibilities) must be presented to the teaching assistant and accepted prior to the exam/quiz when feasible. If you need to make up a quiz or an exam, it is your responsibility to schedule a date with your TA within ONE week of the original quiz/exam date.



## Course Schedule

### **Week 1 (starting January 6)**

*Topic:* Introduction to the Class

*Readings:* Read the syllabus *carefully*. You can find it on eLC under “Course Documents”.

### **Week 2 (starting January 13)**

*Topic:* The Citizen and the Government

*Readings:* Chapter 1 in “We The People” & NPR [“In this election, demographics did not determine how people voted”](#)

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Syllabus quiz (required but ungraded) on eLC & Chapter 1 on InQuizitive due by 6pm on January 17

### **Week 3 (starting January 21)**

**\*\*MLK Day on Monday, January 20\*\***

**\*\*Quiz #1 on Friday, January 24\*\***

*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 24

### **Week 4 (starting January 27)**

*Topic:* Federalism

*Readings:* Chapter 3 in “We The People” & The Brookings Institution [“Why federalism has become risky for American democracy”](#)

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 3 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on January 31

*Short Paper Topic:* Analyze how the principles of federalism influence the legalization and regulation of marijuana in the United States. Examine the conflicts and challenges that arise from the differences between state and federal laws, and discuss the implications for policymaking, law enforcement, and public health (Due by 6pm on February 7)

### **Week 5 (starting February 3)**

*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 7

*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 14)

### **Week 6 (starting February 10)**

*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 14

*Short Paper Topic:* Examine how the socioeconomic status of a neighborhood affects the quality of education that students receive in the United States. Discuss the various factors that contribute to educational disparities, such as funding for schools, access to resources, teacher quality, and extracurricular opportunities. Can you think of any potential solutions or policies that could mitigate these disparities and promote educational equity? (Due by 6pm on February 21)

### **Week 7 (starting February 17)**

**\*\*Quiz #2 on Friday, February 21\*\***

*Topic:* Public Opinion

*Readings:* Chapter 6 in “We The People” & Pew Research Center “[Why public opinion matters and how to measure it](#)”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 6 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on February 21

*Short Paper Topic:* Evaluate whether election polls are beneficial or detrimental to democratic systems. Discuss the role of election polls in shaping public opinion, influencing voter behavior, and guiding campaign strategies. Analyze potential positive as well as negative effects. Use specific examples from recent elections to illustrate your points (Due by 6pm on February 28)

### **Week 8 (starting February 24)**

*Topic:* The Media & The Brookings Institution “[How social media platforms can reduce polarization](#)”

*Readings:* Chapter 7 in “We The People”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 6 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on February 28

*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). Use specific examples to illustrate differences in reporting, such as the depth of coverage, use of multimedia, and editorial bias. Consider the role of each type of media outlet in shaping public discourse and informing the public. (Due by 6pm on March 10)

### **Week 9 (starting March 3)**

**\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\*\***

### **Week 10 (starting March 10)**

*Topic:* Political Parties and Interest Groups

*Readings:* Chapter 8 in “We The People” & Lawrence Gostin “[‘Big Food’ Is Making America Sick](#)”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 8 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on March 14

*Short Paper Topic:* Analyze the phenomenon of the revolving door in US politics, where individuals move between roles in government and positions in the private sector. Discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks of this practice. Examine how the revolving door can influence policymaking, regulatory decisions, and public trust in government. explore the ethical considerations and propose potential reforms to address any negative impacts of the revolving door on democratic governance. (Due by 6pm on March 21)

### **Week 11 (starting March 17)**

**\*\*Quiz #3 on Friday, March 21\*\***

*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 21

*Short Paper Topic:* Examine the impact of voter ID laws on electoral participation in the United States. Discuss the arguments for and against these laws. Analyze how voter ID laws affect different demographic groups, particularly minorities, low-income individuals, and the elderly. Use specific examples and research studies to illustrate the effects of these laws on voter turnout and election outcomes. (Due by 6pm on March 28)

### **Week 12 (starting March 24)**

*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 28

*Short Paper Topic:* Examine how political polarization has shaped Congress’ relationship with the executive branch, particularly in the context of divided and unified government. How does polarization influence the ability of Congress to cooperate with, check, or challenge the president, depending on whether one party controls both the executive and legislative branches, or when control is split? How do these differing dynamics impact legislative effectiveness, executive accountability, and the overall functioning of checks and balances? (Due by 6pm on April 4)

### **Week 13 (starting March 31)**

*Topic:* The Presidency & NPR “[How the vice presidency went from an 'insignificant office' to a political powerhouse](#)”

*Readings:* Chapter 11 in “We The People”

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 11 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on

April 4

*Short Paper Topic:* Analyze the long-term impact of executive actions in recent U.S. presidencies. How have presidents used executive orders, proclamations, and memoranda to address key policy issues, and what has been the political and legal response to these actions? Evaluate the successes and limitations of executive actions under recent administrations (e.g., Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Trump's travel bans, Biden's climate-related executive orders). (Due by 6pm on April 11)

### **Week 14 (starting April 7)**

#### **\*\*Quiz #4 on Friday, April 11\*\***

*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 11

*Short Paper Topic:* Examine the role of the federal bureaucracy in interpreting ambiguous Congressional statutes. How do agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Labor (DOL), and others exercise discretion when faced with laws that lack clear guidelines? In your answer, discuss the concept of delegated authority and Chevron deference. To what extent should agencies be given flexibility in interpreting laws, and when does their discretion overstep the legislative intent of Congress? (Due by 6pm on April 18)

### **Week 15 (starting April 14)**

*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 18

*Short Paper Topic:* Analyze the implications of lifetime tenure for U.S. Supreme Court justices. Discuss the advantages and drawbacks of lifetime tenure, considering factors such as judicial impartiality, accountability, and the potential for politicization. Should lifetime tenure be reformed? Explore alternatives, such as term limits or mandatory retirement ages, and evaluate their potential impact on the Court's functioning and legitimacy. (Due by 6pm on April 25)

### **Week 16 (starting April 21)**

*Topic:* Domestic Policy

*Readings:* Chapter 14 in "We The People" & Bigger Vision "[Homelessness in Athens – How bad is the problem?](#)"

*Weekly Online Assignment:* Chapter 14 on InQuizitive & Discussion Post due by 6pm on April 25

## **Other Policies and Resources**

### **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](https://honesty.uga.edu/resources/documents/academic_honesty_policy_2017.pdf)

### **Preferred Name**

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name. 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.