

POLS 1101E: American Government

Instructor: Dr. Colin French

Online Asynchronous

Thru-Term: June 5th -July 31st

Summer 2025

Virtual Office Hours- Monday 11AM-1PM 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 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 (PDFs will be uploaded to ELC a week before they are due for class discussions)

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 discussion questions, 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, one discussion post per week. Students can choose which of the two topics interests them more to initiate their response. As a note, this is a minimum requirement, going above in any given week will only help and can make up points if students have missed a post in a previous week. 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.

As for length, the typical full credit discussion post runs from 2-6 sentences. Length requirements are something that as a professor I don't generally favor, as the content and thoughtfulness of a response should matter substantially more than the quantity of words used to make it. So, in some cases, a more terse submission that includes real world data or a compelling theoretical argument can be more substantive and valuable than a lengthier one that rambles.

EVALUATION

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

Participation Discussion Posts (Minimum 1 per week, one of the two threads): 30%

Exams – 70%

Test 1- 15%

Test 2- 15%

Test 3- 15%

Final Test- 25%

IMPORTANT Assignment dates

Exam 1- Monday, June 23

Exam 2- Monday, July 7

Exam 3- Monday, July 21

Final Test- Thursday, July 31

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 introduced during the lectures and/or assigned readings.

Exams

There will be 4 exams for this course. The first three are shorter (25-35 questions,) and the final is longer (45-55 questions) Each will consist of multiple choice and short-answer identifications. You can find the dates of the exam on the calendar section of the syllabus. These are closed book, and will require you to use “Respondus” lockdown browser on ELC in order to take them.

Tests are available for a 15 hour window (9AM to Midnight) on the scheduled day of the test, but each have a window (1 hour for the first 3 tests, 2 hours for the final.) You can choose the time of day to take the test that works best for you, but once you begin, the timer will run until it is complete- they cannot be taken in parts over the course of the day.

Class Schedule

June 5th-June 13th Week 1

1A: Introduction- “Why Government?”

-Syllabus Intro

- Collective versus individual action- Why do anything together?
- State formation & Anarchy- Mancur Olson Article (ELC)

1B: The Constitution

- Ebook: The Constitution of the United States
- The Federalist #10 (ELC)
- The Federalist #51 (ELC)

June 14th-June 21st- Week 2

2A: Federalism and Separated Powers

- Ebook Federalism
- Ebook: Modern Federalism

2B: Representation/Interest Groups

- Ebook: Interest Groups in American Politics

Test 1- June 23rd (Online via ELC, 1 Hour)

June 23rd-June 29th- Week 3

3A- Civil Liberties & Rights

- Ebook: The Evolution of Civil Liberties
- Ebook: Political Equality
- Ebook: Contemporary Civil Rights in the United States

3B: The US Congress

- Ebook: The Origins and Structure of Congress
- Ebook: Representation in the US Congress
- Ebook: The Legislative Process

June 30th -July 6th- Week 4

4A: Presidential Roles, Expectations, Tactics

- Ebook- The Executive Branch
- Neustadt, Richard, Presidential Power (ELC)
- Brendan Nyhan- “The Green Lantern theory of the Presidency” (ELC)

4B: The Supreme Court & Court System

- Ebook: The role of the Judicial Branch
- Ebook: The Supreme Court

July 7th- Test 2 (Online via ELC, 1 Hour)

July 7th-July 13th- Week 5

5A: Bureaucratic Structure, Development, and Control

- Ebook: The Development of the Federal Bureaucracy
- Ebook: Bureaucrats and Policy

5B: Elections & The Electoral College

- Ebook: Elections in the United States
- Ebook: Political Campaigns

July 14th-July 20th- Week 6

6A: Mass Media & Politics

- Ebook: The Role of Media in US Politics
- Polarization in Media: <https://sites.bu.edu/pardeeatlas/advancing-human-progress-initiative/back2school/how-the-american-media-landscape-is-polarizing-the-country/>

6B: Parties & Partisanship

- Ebook- Political Parties
- Huddy & Bankert- Party ID as a Social Identity (ELC)

July 21st- Test 3 (Online via ELC, 1 Hour)

July 21st-July 27th- Week 7

7A and B: Public Opinion (Entire Week)

- Ebook- Public Opinion Articles
- John Zaller. The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. (ELC)
- Converse- Mass Publics (ELC)

July 28th-July 31st- Week 8

The Georgia State Constitution (ELC)

Final Test- Wednesday, July 31st (Online via ELC, 2 hours)

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