

POLS 1101E-AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Instructor: Dr. Gbemende Johnson

Contact: gbemende.johnson@uga.edu

Office: Baldwin 305B, Office Hours: By appointment

Course Meeting Time and Room: Asynchronous/Virtual

Asynchronous Course: This course does not have a specified daily meeting time; however, there is a structured posting schedule and deadlines/due dates that accompany the assignments.

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 21st 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:

- 1) **FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE:** Throughout the course, students will gain knowledge of political 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).
- 2) **ANALYTICAL ENGAGEMENT:** Beyond amassing knowledge about American politics, students will be able to apply the principles and concepts learned in this course to develop reasoned and **informed** opinions about current issues in American government.
- 3) **CLEAR COMMUNICATION:** Third students will be able to **articulate and express** their opinions with logical arguments in a clear, effective, and persuasive manner. Throughout the semester we will cover complex, controversial, salient, and “difficult” issues. Students will have the opportunity to express their perspectives and knowledge through discussion posts and written assignments.
- 4) **CREATIVITY:** Fourth, we will think beyond the current state of American politics to consider ways in which to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of American governmental institutions. Applying the knowledge learned throughout the course, we will consider and envision alternative policy solutions and institutional frameworks.

Required Texts:

Samuel Kernell et al. *The Logic of American Politics*, 11th edition (TLAP)

Asynchronous Course:

This course is asynchronous meaning that all assignments and lectures will be posted to eLC. Please ensure that you have adequate and accessible internet access to participate in this course. I recommend that you **do not** take quizzes and exams on your phone.

Email:

Please email me at gbemende.johnson@uga.edu or gj87340@uga.edu. **Please do not email me using gj87340@uga.view.usg.edu or any email address with @uga.view.usg.edu.** I do not receive emails sent to this address. I will respond to emails sent Monday-Friday within 24 hours.

Grading Breakdown:

Assignments	Due Date	Percentage
Course/Syllabus Quiz	June 7 th	1%
Discussion Posts	Unit Deadlines	15%
Exam 1	June 13 th	22%
Exam 2	June 25 th	24%
Exam 3	July 3 rd	26%
Reading Quizzes	Unit Deadlines	12%

Unit Deadlines

Unit 1: June 12th

Exam 1: June 13th

Unit 2: June 24th

Exam 2: June 25th

Unit 3: July 2nd

Exam 3: July 3rd

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-	

Course Grading:

Exams

There will be **three exams in this course**. Exams will consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank questions, and short assessment questions. **The exam will be made available on the date specified.** You will have two hours to complete the exam once started (exceptions for accommodations). The exam will be available for 12 hours on the specified due date (9:00am-9:00pm Eastern). You must complete the exams on the specified due date. Make-up exams will not be available unless in case of documented emergency or jury duty.

Course/Syllabus Quiz (due June 7th)

This will be a brief quiz that covers content from the syllabus. Given the asynchronous nature of the course, familiarity with the syllabus content is important.

Quizzes

There will be **two quizzes for each unit**. Once you begin the quiz you will have 1 hour to complete the quiz (exceptions for accommodations). The quizzes will be available during the specified unit period. You must complete the quiz by the end of the Unit Period (the day prior to the exam date).

Discussion Posts

There will be **three 3-paragraph discussion posts (12-sentences minimum)** assignments this semester (one for each Unit). The discussion posts are reflection responses to content from the unit. Each post can focus on one chapter or incorporate content from multiple chapters. Discussions posts are due by the end of the Unit Period (the day prior to the exam date). For full credit, the discussion post must reference specific content from the reading and incorporate at least **1 current news article** (published within the prior 2 weeks, include citation with post). Examples of high-quality discussion posts will be posted on eLC.

Extra Credit Opportunity: Students who post a 1-paragraph response to one of their peer's discussion posts (within the Unit Deadline) will receive 1.5 extra credit points towards the Exam of their choice (maximum of 4.5 extra credit points available).

Deadlines and Late work

Given the pace of this course, it is essential that you submit work by the deadline specified on the syllabus. Late discussion posts will be penalized by 15% for each day late (past the Unit Deadline) and not accepted after 2 days past the Unit Deadline. Quizzes will not be available after the Unit Deadline.

Course Schedule

Unit 1: June 5th -June 12th (Lectures/Quizzes Available by June 5th)

TLAP Chapter 1: The Logic of American Politics

TLAP Chapter 2: The American Founding

The Georgia Constitution (on eLC)

TLAP Chapter 3: Federalism

TLAP Chapter 6: Congress

Government Shutdowns (on eLC)

(Exam June 13th)

Unit 2: June 16th-June 24th (Lectures/Quizzes Available by June 12th)

TLAP Chapter 7: Presidency

Presidential Pardons (on eLC)

The Georgia Executive Branch (on eLC)

TLAP Chapter 9: The Judiciary

The Georgia Judiciary (on eLC)

TLAP Chapter 4: Civil Rights

TLAP Chapter 5: Civil Liberties

(Exam June 25th)

Note: June 19th is a federal holiday (Juneteenth)

Unit 3: June 26th-July 2nd (Lectures/Quizzes Available by June 20th)

TLAP Chapter 10: Public Opinion

Bridging the Political Divided (on eLC)

TLAP Chapter 11: Voting Campaigns and Elections

TLAP Chapter 12: Political Parties

TLAP Chapter 13: Interest Groups

(Exam July 3rd)

Course Decorum

My goal as the instructor is to cultivate an active and respectful learning environment where participants feel that their input is valued. I ask that we “treat others how we want to be treated” as we discuss and share our perspectives in the discussion posts assignment. Insulting and offensive language is not acceptable for discussion posts assignments.

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 \(uga.edu\)](#).

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.

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