



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

Pols 1101E: Introduction to American Government

Summer 2025

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Course Description and Objectives.

Although many students walk away from high school civics class with a mixture of boredom and horror, the study of American Government as an undergraduate should never be anything but intriguing and relevant. The Constitution, after all, persists as the reflection of our (conflicting) fundamental values—liberty, order, justice, participation, democracy, power, efficiency, individualism, capitalism, equality, and due process, to name a few. The pleasure is that many of these values are highly desirable to citizens within a government. The pain is that many of them clash, are difficult to obtain, and sometimes are mutually exclusive.

Take for example the ability to vote (participation). Although clearly a value within our system, there is **no absolute right to vote**. States determine voter eligibility in the U.S. system. Thus, for decades and even centuries, denying the vote has been a tool of oppression against women and blacks. States still attempt to constrict the vote for one party to maintain power. Sometimes states prevail, but sometimes the countervailing value—equality and “equal protection”—opens access to the vote. For example, in June 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court demanded Alabama redraw their district lines since it was clear they were drawn to deny representation for blacks.

More generally, consider two pillars of U.S. society, liberty and equality, are in reality mutually exclusive. Perfect liberty will not yield economic equality; people are free to amass unlimited wealth. Perfect equality quashes the freedom to unleash individual ambition, talent, and one’s definition of happiness. The United States undoubtedly favors more freedom than equality, but these values are always explored and compete through policy.

In this course, we will explore the powers conferred to institutions within the Constitution, as well as the liberties listed and the processes and actors involved in the system (e.g. campaigns, candidates, money, media, etc.). Also, we will examine the big picture. What kind of system is the United States? And, as the media says every day, is our “democracy under attack?”

Maybe.

Course Format.

Because this is a compressed and “asynchronous” course, it will be presented in a manner that allows you to consume the material and work at your own pace. Included in each week will be presentations by me (posted on eLC), 2-3 assigned chapters from the text, and a posted documentary. From all of these, you will be asked to write a couple short essays and answer some basic questions worth a total of 50-60 points. For example, the first week (Friday) you will watch my presentation regarding American Attitudes and Democracy and I will post the subject matter for the next week.. There will be two 20 point essays drawn from my presentation, articles from the AJC or Washington Post, or documentaries. There. That’s a week. The exact reading assignments and lecture/presentation will be posted each Friday.

Optional Text.

We the People, Fourteenth Core Edition, by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, Andrea L. Campbell, and Megan Ming Francis (2022). This richly written text will provides all the basic information regarding American Government. I would recommend the e-text for affordability, quick access, and ease of use.

Required Technology: eLC

Our course is administered through eLC. You will find all our course materials through this website. You will also submit assignments on eLC. That means that a reliable internet connection is an absolutely requirement for this course (I mean, it is an on-line course) If you decide to travel during the compressed June course, I cannot provide accommodations for unreliable internet connections.

My primary means of communication with the class will be through announcements posted in eLC. Makes sure you receive eLC updates for our class automatically via email (eLC > Click on your profile > Notifications > Instant Notifications). All documents will be posted in “Content;” all assignments will be posted in (surprise!) “assignments” with due dates and a portal to submit your work.

You are welcome to send me questions or information via e-mail or any social media messaging tool, if you dare track me down (NOTE: any remarks on social media reflect my own thoughts and are NOT affiliated with UGA). I can be found on X, Instagram, but rarely on Tik Tok because it scares me.

NOTE: I am currently trying to create discussion threads on eLC. This would NOT be a requirement but a means to communicate about what is going on in American and the world. Topics would include national issues, state issues, international issues, interplanetary issues, relationship tips, campus issues, local issues, sports, entertainment, and conspiracy theories.

Grade Breakdown.

There's a little flexibility here—each week may have slightly different writing assignments depending on current events or documentaries included. As stated, a typical week will have 40 points assigned—a couple 2 page short essays/response papers. ALL OF YOUR GRADE IS BASED ON WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS, including a 40 point final essay.

Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades

100-94 A 89-87 B+ 83-80 B- 76-74 C 69-67 D+ 63-60 D-
93-90 A- 86-84 B 79-77 C+ 73-70 C- 66-64 D 59-0 F

OBLIGATORY RESOURCES and ASSORTED POLICIES

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. Instructors have the ability to withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences (see course attendance policy).

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

Prohibition on Recording Lectures

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the

Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

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.

***SUBJECTS for EACH WEEK WILL BE POSTED EACH FRIDAY