

POLS 2000: Introduction to Political Science

Spring 2025
Baldwin 101D
MWF 8:00-8:50am

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Course Description:

This course is intended to provide students with a basic understanding of political science. Throughout the semester we will examine different topics of political science research as well as different approaches taken towards understanding those topics. The course involves an in-depth analysis of political actors and institutions. Common modes of scientific analysis in political science will be examined with an emphasis on research design, strategic behavior, rational choice theory and basic statistical techniques. A basic understanding of high school math is assumed.

Course Goals:

The primary goals of this course are two-fold. First, students should be provided with a conceptual background and toolset that they can use to critically analyze what is written in the newspaper or said in the news today, tomorrow, and in the more distant future. Second, it is expected that upon completion of this course students will be able to both understand and conduct scholarly research.

Required Books and Readings:

The following book is required and available on amazon.com:

Van Belle, Douglas. 2020. *A Novel Approach to Politics*. 6th Ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Students will not only be expected to have done the reading assignments, but should also be aware of relevant news stories. As such, I recommend reading a daily newspaper – such as the New York Times and/or the Washington Post – or at least checking cnn.com. Other political blogs that students may find useful include FiveThirtyEight, Political Wire, The Monkey Cage, The Upshot, Vox, the Drudge Report and Roll Call.

Additional readings will be posted on the course website and/or ELC. Many of these readings will be highly technical in nature. As such, students are not expected to understand all aspects of each paper. However, they will be held accountable for a basic understanding of the paper's theory and applications.

Course Grading:

Your grade in this class will be assigned according to the following:

1. Background Survey (**5% of final grade**): Students will be asked to fill out a short background survey for the purposes of matching them with a paper topic. A link to the survey will be provided by the instructor. The deadline to fill out the survey is Wednesday, **January 15th** at 5 pm.
2. Class Attendance/Participation (**10% of final grade**): One of the goals for this class is for students to become comfortable discussing political institutions, issues, events and research. Hence, they will be encouraged to attend and participate in course discussions. Students will be given one point for attending the class, and an additional point for adequate participation. The lowest four attendance/participation grades will be dropped. A student's participation grade may also include several small quizzes or assignments.
3. Midterm Exams (**50% of final grade**): Two examinations (worth 25% each) will be given during the course. The dates are listed on the syllabus as Wednesday, **February 26th** and Monday, **May 5th**. These exams will consist of multiple choice and short essay questions. They may also feature several exercises where students will apply techniques discussed in class. The examinations will be non-cumulative. If a student is unable to take one of the exams on the scheduled date, they should contact the course instructor beforehand. Missed exams will only be excused for a documented illness (documentation must be provided by a physician) or a death in the family. If a student is excused from an exam, their final exam will be weighted accordingly. The May 5th exam (Exam 2) will be held in the regular classroom, Baldwin 101D from 8-11am.
4. Research Paper (**35% of final grade**): Students will be expected to complete either a research design proposal or a detailed legislative history. The paper should be a minimum of 12 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, one inch margins, Times New Roman, 12 point font, Chicago style citations). Students will be allowed to choose the topic of their paper or legislative history. The instructor will be available during office hours and through e-mail for consultation. The paper is due Wednesday, **April 30th** at 5:00pm. Papers will be docked a full letter grade for each day they are late. A more detailed discussion of the paper project will be provided on ELC.

Final course grades will be assigned as follows: 100-93 = A, 90-92 = A-, 87-89 = B+, 83-86 = B, 80-82 = B-, 77-79 = C+, 73-76 = C, 70-72 = C-, 60-69 = D, and 60-0. **Extra credit will not be given in this course.** A grade of a C or higher is necessary in order to be admitted as a Political Science major. The withdrawal date for this semester is Thursday, **April 3rd**.

Disabilities:

Students with disabilities of any kind are strongly encouraged to contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester, so appropriate accommodations can be made. 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>.

Instructor Availability:

Students seeking to contact the instructor are encouraged to stop by during scheduled office hours. Students who are unable to attend office hours should e-mail ahead of time to ensure instructor availability.

Classroom Behavior:

Students should behave professionally throughout the course. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes cell phone usage, excessive talking and derogatory or offensive comments made during discussion. Students will be held responsible for all material discussed or assigned.

UGA is committed to creating a dynamic, diverse, and welcoming learning environment for all students and has a non-discrimination policy that reflects this philosophy. Our class will respect all students regardless of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or national origin, religion, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status.

Cheating and Plagiarism:

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will have their names forwarded to the University. It is each student's responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism. Specifically, all course work must meet the standards put forth in the University of Georgia's Student Honor Code. See the Academic Honesty Policy for details on what is expected of you.

FERPA Notice:

The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. See the registrar's explanation [here](#).

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.

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule:

Week	Topic	Readings
Jan 6	Course Overview/Syllabus	
Jan 8	Bill Becomes a Law, Part 1	Living Hell CRS: Intro to the Legislative Process
Jan 10	Bill Becomes a Law, Part 2	
Jan 13	Introduction <i>Qualtrics Survey Due</i>	Van Belle Ch. 1
Jan 15	Introduction (<i>cont</i>)	
Jan 17	Why Government?	Van Belle Ch. 2
Jan 20	<i>No Class (MLK Day)</i>	
Jan 22	Why Government? (<i>cont</i>)	
Jan 24	<i>No In-Class Meeting</i>	
Jan 27	Governing Society	Van Belle Ch. 3
Jan 29	Government's Role in the Economy	Van Belle Ch. 4
Jan 31	Government's Role in the Economy (<i>cont</i>)	
Feb 3	Structures and Institutions	Van Belle Ch. 5
Feb 5	Structures and Institutions (<i>cont</i>)	
Feb 7	Institutions—The Executive	Van Belle Ch. 6
Feb 10	Institutions—The Executive (<i>cont</i>)	
Feb 12	Institutions—Legislatures	Van Belle Ch. 7
Feb 14	Institutions—Legislatures (<i>cont</i>)	
Feb 17	Institutions—Bureaucracy	Van Belle Ch. 8

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule (*cont*):

Date	Topic	Reading
Feb 19	Institutions—Bureaucracy (<i>cont</i>)	
Feb 21	Institutions—Courts	Van Belle Ch. 9
Feb 24	Review	None
Feb 26	<i>Midterm 1</i>	
Feb 28	Writing a Research Paper or Legislative History	None
Mar 3	<i>No Class (Spring Break!)</i>	
Mar 5	<i>No Class (Spring Break!)</i>	
Mar 7	<i>No Class (Spring Break!)</i>	
Mar 10	Ideological Scaling	None
Mar 12	Ideological Scaling (<i>cont</i>)	
Mar 14	Rational Choice Theory	
Mar 17	Marbury v. Madison	Marbury Game Theory
Mar 19	Marbury v. Madison (<i>cont</i>)	
Mar 21	Game Trees	None
Mar 24	Game Trees (<i>cont</i>)	
Mar 26	Introduction to Statistics	Agresti and Finlay Ch. 3
Mar 28	Ordinary Least Squares	Agresti and Finlay Ch. 9

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule (*cont*):

Date	Topic	Reading
Mar 31	Spatial Modeling	Shepsle and Bonchek Ch. 5
Apr 2	Spatial Modeling (<i>cont</i>)	
Apr 4	<i>No In-Class Meeting</i>	
Apr 7	Applied Spatial Modeling	Supreme Court Appointments
Apr 9	Applied Spatial Modeling (<i>cont</i>)	
Apr 11	Voting Methods	Shepsle and Bonchek Ch. 7
Apr 14	Voting Methods (<i>cont</i>)	
Apr 16	Parties in Congress	Krehbiel Binder et al.
Apr 18	Parties in Congress (<i>cont</i>)	
Apr 21	Campaign Spending	Jacobson Green and Krasno Why Money Still Matters
Apr 23	Campaign Spending (<i>cont</i>)	
Apr 25	Campaign Spending (<i>cont</i>)	
Apr 28	Review	
Apr 30	<i>Paper Due!</i>	
May 5	<i>Midterm 2</i>	

*Readings not from Van Belle are either linked on the syllabus or will be provided via e-mail.
Exam 2 will be held in the regular classroom, Baldwin 101D from 8-11am.*