

POLS 1101H: Introduction to American Government, Honors

Instructor: Karson Pennington Ray

University of Georgia, Spring 2025

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm

Office: Baldwin Hall 101W

Class Hours: T/Th 9:35 – 10:50 am

Classroom: Baldwin Hall 302

Course Description

Introduction to American Government examines fundamentals of the American government, including the philosophical and constitutional foundations, political institutions and main actors, such as Congress and the presidency, democratic practices such as voting, political participation, and civil rights and liberties. It also includes a closer look at the State of Georgia, its constitution, and political system.

Required Materials

- Jillson, Cal. 2023. *American Government: Political Development and Institutional Change*. Routledge. 12th Edition. ISBN-10: 1032293969; ISBN-13: 978-1032293967. Can be purchased through Amazon. Online textbook use is permitted.
- Additional readings will be available on ELC weekly.

Course Objectives

Successful students should be able to:

1. Understand the origins and workings of American government.
2. Analyze American government and consider democratic ideals.
3. Develop a working knowledge of current events in American politics.
4. Improve critical thinking and communication skills by considering various political perspectives, reflecting on the development of personal views, and communicating those views effectively and respectfully.
5. Think about how democracy situates American government and what it means to be an active participant within our political system.

Course Structure

Class Structure

This course is designed to introduce you to American Politics in a generalized way. The abundance and intensity of readings is meant to challenge you; I do not expect you to have a full and complete understanding of the readings before class. What I do expect is for you to come to class with questions, and to leave with a more complete knowledge of the different aspects of American government.

Grades

- **Exams** will be administered three times during the semester. Your highest individual exam grade will count for 20% and the other two exams will count for 15% each; exams will account for 50% of your final grade. These exams will be comprised of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer (2-3 sentences), and essay questions. These exams will not be cumulative. You will have the entirety of the class to take the exam (1 hour and 15 minutes). The dates of each exam are listed in the schedule, but are subject to change dependent upon our pace throughout the semester. **Makeup exams are only permitted in extraordinary circumstances such as documented medical emergencies.**
- **Attendance** will be taken each day of in-person class, sometimes through activities, and will count for 5% of your final grade. You are allotted **two excused absences, no questions asked**. After this, you will need to provide documentation for any days of class missed. A quick tip for success in this course: attending lectures will greatly increase your ability to do well! While I will be summarizing the readings and posting the lecture slides online after class, there is a lot of information to cover in this course...much of which may only be relayed through my lectures. If you have concerns about the attendance policy, please feel free to speak with me during office hours or before/after class.
- The **Choose Your Own Adventure Activity** allows you to choose the way in which you engage with American government. There will be many options from which to choose! You will need to complete enough assignments to fulfill the 15-point (equates to the 15% of your total grade) requirement. Some options will be worth 15 points, some will be worth 10 points, and some will be worth 5 points. For example: you may complete one 15-point assignment, or three 5 point assignments, or one 10 point assignment AND one 5 point assignment to fulfill the activity requirements. The nature of the activities and correlating rubrics will be available on ELC and throughout classroom discussions. You may even have the opportunity to complete these assignments in class, if you so choose!
- **In-class Activities & Participation** will allow you opportunities to engage with American governance during our regular class meetings and will count for 15% of your final grade. These assignments may come in the form of written analyses, mini-simulations, debates, or other engaging activities to be completed during class. If you miss an in-class activity regardless of whether it's a documented or undocumented absence, you should email me as soon as possible to receive a make-up activity. Participation in weekly lectures will also be taken into account under this grading category.

- A **Final Project** will be due in place of a final exam in which you will create your own United States Constitution. The Final Project is due on May 6th by 11:59 pm on ELC and will count for 15% of your final grade.

Grading Summary

I reserve the right to curve the scale dependent on overall class scores at the end of the semester. Your final grade will count these assessments using the following proportions:

- **50%** of your grade will be determined by 3 in-class exams, with the highest exam grade counting for 20% and the other two exams counting for 15% each.
- **15%** of your grade will be the Final Project.
- **15%** of your grade will be the In-class Activities & Participation.
- **15%** of your grade will be your "Choose Your Own Adventure" Activity (or activities).
- **5%** of your grade will be determined by attendance.

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	84-87
B-	80-83
C+	78-79
C	74-77
C-	70-73
D+	68-69
D	64-67
D-	60-63
F	< 60

Class Policies

During Class

I absolutely understand that using laptops to record notes is important, so computers will be allowed in my classroom, as long as the use of these devices does not disturb the learning capability of other students. If laptops are discovered to be used for any other purpose than academics, pertaining to this course, then the privilege of electronic devices will be taken away. I aim to respectfully allow each student the same learning capability, which could be hindered by the use of electronic devices. Phones will not be allowed during class time, except in case of emergency. Eating and drinking are permitted, so long as we can respect our classroom and allow for regular class to be conducted.

Attendance Policy

As mentioned above, attendance will be taken every day of in-person class (excluding exam dates), and this will account for 5% of your grade. You will be allotted two excused absences, no questions asked. After these two absences have been utilized, you will need to provide documentation for your absences. Excused absences will include those with legitimate documentation, which can be sent to my email up to 7 days after the absence.

Policies on Incomplete Grades and Late Assignments

I will accept incomplete or late assignments when a legitimate excuse is provided. This requires documentation, and notice as soon as possible. I am flexible and understanding, but I must be aware of your circumstances to be able to accept incomplete or late work. Incomplete work without an excuse will be graded as such, and late work without an excuse is subject to a 10% reduction in overall grade for every business day after the deadline.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Please see UGA's extensive policies on academic honesty (<http://honesty.uga.edu>). Be aware that under no circumstances will cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty be tolerated in this class. 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 honesty.uga.edu.

Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

Please familiarize yourself with the university's position on artificial intelligence: "Unless explicitly stated, artificial intelligence-based technologies, such as ChatGPT, must not be used to generate responses for student assignments. Use of artificial intelligence or word mixing software to complete assignments is considered unauthorized assistance in this course. We encourage you to use AI tools to explore the field and help you study. However, you must take full responsibility for any AI-generated materials you incorporate in your course products. Information must be verified, ideas must still be attributed, and facts must be true."

Mental Health and Wellness at UGA

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community. Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity. UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

- Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
- Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
- University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
- Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
- Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: drc.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting <https://well-being.uga.edu>.

Disability Accommodations

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). I will accommodate requests from the DRC in this course. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

Prohibition on Class Recordings and Distribution of Course Materials

Please do not take audio or video recordings of course lectures or discussions (live or Zoom) or repost any course materials (recorded, links, written) without my express permission. Doing so violates my and the University of Georgia's intellectual property and the privacy of your fellow classmates as protected under federal and state law.

Schedule

The schedule is tentative and subject to change, though I commit to giving you plenty of advance notice if anything changes. The learning goals expressed in the syllabus above should be viewed as the key concepts you should grasp after each week. Readings should be completed and analyzed prior to Tuesday of each week.

(Week 1) 1/7 and 1/9: Introduction and Origins of American Governance

- SKIM Jillson Chapter 1

(Week 2) 1/14 and 1/16: Revolution

- The Declaration of Independence (can be found in the appendix of your textbook or online).
- Jillson, Chapter 2, pages 27 to 39

(Week 3) 1/21 and 1/23: Constitution

- The United States Constitution (can be found in the appendix of your textbook or online).
- Jillson, Chapter 2, pages 40 to 59

(Week 4) 1/28 and 1/30: Federalism and American Political Development

- Jillson, Chapter 3

(Week 5) 2/4 and 2/6: Public Opinion and Mass Media

- Jillson, Chapters 4 and 5

(Week 6) 2/11 and 2/13: Wrap Mass Media and Exam 1

- Exam 1 review on 2/11 in class if time allows.
- Exam 1 on 2/13 in class.

(Week 7) 2/18 and 2/20: Interest Groups and Political Parties

- Jillson, Chapters 6 and 7

(Week 8) 2/25 and 2/27: Voting, Campaigns, Elections

- Jillson, Chapter 8

(Week 9) SPRING BREAK during March 3-7: NO CLASS

(Week 10) 3/11 and 3/13: Congress and Presidency

- Jillson, Chapters 9 and 10

(Week 11) 3/18 and 3/20: Wrap Presidency and Exam 2

- Exam 2 review on 3/18 in class if time allows.
- Exam 2 on 3/20 in class.

(Week 12) 3/25 and 3/27: Courts

- Jillson, Chapter 12

(Week 13) 4/1 and 4/3: Georgia Politics and Bureaucracy

- GA Politics readings on ELC.
- Jillson, Chapter 11

(Week 14) 4/8 and 4/10: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

- Jillson, Chapters 13 and 14

(Week 15) 4/15 and 4/17: Wrap-Up and Exam 3

- Exam 3 review on 4/15 in class if time allows.
- Exam 3 on 4/17 in class.

(Week 16) 4/22 and 4/24: Last Week of Class

- Jillson, Chapters 15 and 16
- ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES DUE ON May 1st. Submit on ELC by 11:59 pm.
- FINAL PROJECT DUE ON May 6th. Submit on ELC by 11:59 pm.

Withdrawal deadline is April 3rd.

Reading Day is April 29.

Final exam period is April 30-May 6.

Adventure Activities for POLS 1101H are due on May 1st.

Final project for POLS 1101H is due on May 6th.

Assignment	Due Date
Exam 1	February 13
Exam 2	March 20
Exam 3	April 17
Adventure Activities	May 1
Final Project	May 6