



**UNIVERSITY OF  
GEORGIA**

**POLS 1101: American Government**

**Classroom- 104 Baldwin Hall**

**Instructor: Dr. Colin French**

**Baldwin Hall 104, MWF 1:50-2:40**

**378 Baldwin Hall (Office)**

**Fall 2025**

**Office Hours: MWF 2:45PM-4:30PM**

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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.

**Student Learning Objectives:**

- 1: Students will learn to articulate competing positions on political topics in assignments.
- 2: Students will critically assess the effects of media and public opinion on political processes using analytical tools to interpret data related to the American political system, including public opinion surveys, election results, and demographic trends, and communicate their findings in written, verbal, and graphical formats.
- 3: Students will apply theoretical frameworks, such as federalism, separation of powers, and pluralism, to analyze the organization and functioning of American government, its political institutions, and processes.
- 4: Students will learn the philosophical and constitutional foundations of the US political system, including the state of Georgia, and examine primary sources over time, including the Declaration of Independence, Federalist Papers, the US

and Georgia Constitutions, among others.

5: Students will demonstrate an ability to engage in respectful discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

### **Readings:**

There is one book required for this course that is available through the book store. 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.

**Book:** American Democracy Now: 7th or 8<sup>th</sup> Edition (UGA Bookstore)

ELC Readings (Included but not limited to)

- The Declaration of Independence
- The Articles of Confederation
  - The US Constitution
- The US Bill of Rights
- Federalist Papers
  - The Gettysburg Address
  - Emancipation Proclamation
  - Georgia State Constitution and Bill of Rights
  - Letter From Birmingham Jail

### **Class Structure:**

Interactive discussion and the Socratic method are as important tools in the educational process as lecturing. As such, come to class with an open mind and be willing to explore, critique, and otherwise engage with ideas and theories. While I take attendance, students will receive 3 “free” unexcused absences. Any more will damage participation grades.

### **Evaluation:**

Your grade in this class will be based on class participation, four exams, and a constitution design assignment. The breakdown is as follows:

Participation: 15% (Attendance, Volunteer Discussion, Class Activities)

Exams – 70%

Test 1- 20%

Test 2- 20%

Test 3- 20%

Test 4- 10%

Constitution Design Assignment- 15%

## **IMPORTANT Examination Dates**

**Test 1- Friday 9/19**

**Test 2- Wednesday 10/8**

**Test 3- Wednesday 11/12**

**Test 4- Tuesday 12/2**

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 two parts.

### **Writing**

All assignments are due by midnight on the due date. No hard copies will be required- receipt and grading will both be done digitally. Don't "stretch" your writing simply to meet the page limit of an assignment- if you are struggling for material or content please reach out to me during office hours or by email for advice.

### **Exams**

There will be 4 exams in this course. Each will consist of essay questions and short-answer identifications. You can find the dates of the exam on the calendar section of the syllabus.

### **Class Times & Dates:**

#### **8/13- Class Introduction**

- Class policies & Constitution Design Assignment Details
- Opening Discussions- Anarchy & Early Humanity

#### **8/15- Anarchy and State formation**

- Mancur Olson article (ELC)

#### **8/18 : The US Constitution (1/2)**

- Articles of Confederation (ELC)
- Declaration of Independence (ELC)
- Federalist Papers #10 & #51 (ELC)

8/20: The Constitution (2/2)

- Textbook Chapter 2: The US Constitution
- Constitution of the United States (ELC)

8/22 : Federalism and Separated Powers

- Textbook Chapter 3: Federalism
- Emancipation Proclamation (ELC)
- The Gettysburg Address (ELC)

8/25: Political Norms

- Brendan Nyhan, "Norms Matter." Politico, September 2017.  
<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/05/why-norms-matter-politics-trump-215535/>
- NPR- Merrick Garland Appointment  
<https://www.npr.org/2018/06/29/624467256/what-happened-with-merrick-garland-in-2016-and-why-it-matters-now>

8/27 : Representation

- Gilens Piece on Inequality & Democratic Responsiveness (ELC)

8/29: Congress (1/2)

- Textbook: Congress

No Class 9/1 (Labor Day)

9/3: Congress (2/2)

- No assigned readings

9/5 : The Presidency

- Textbook: The Presidency
- Nyhan- The Green Lantern Presidency (ELC)

9/8: The Judiciary, Supreme Court

- Textbook: The Judiciary

9/10: Elections and the Electoral College

- Textbook: Campaigns, Elections, & Voting

9/12: Civil Liberties

- Textbook: Civil Liberties
- US Bill of Rights (ELC)

9/15: Civil Rights

- Textbook: Civil Rights
- Letter from Birmingham Jail (ELC)

9/17 : The Bureaucracy

- Textbook: The Bureaucracy

### **9/19: Test 1**

9/22: Intro to Ideology, and how we use “Liberal” and “Conservative” wrong in the United States

- Conservatism- Edmund Burke  
<https://daily.jstor.org/edmund-burke-and-the-birth-of-traditional-conservatism/>
- Liberalism- JS Mill
- [https://www.yorku.ca/horowitz/courses/lectures/39\\_mill\\_liberalism\\_democracy.html](https://www.yorku.ca/horowitz/courses/lectures/39_mill_liberalism_democracy.html)

9/24: Modern Ideologies

- Progressivism- John Rawls
- Marxism- Karl Marx
- Libertarianism- FA Hayek
- Ethno Nationalism- Viktor Orban

9/26: Current Political Issues in American Politics

- Textbook: “Economic Policy”

9/29: Current Political Issues in American Politics

- Textbook: “Domestic Policy”

10/1: Current Political Issues in American Politics

- Textbook: “Foreign Policy & National Security”

10/3: Current Political Issues in American Politics: Polarization

10/6: Test 2 Review and Catch-up

### **10/8 - Test 2 (Civil Rights/Liberties, Ideology, Domestic/Economic/Foreign Policy)**

10/10- A History of Political Propaganda, Plato’s Republic, & Making Political Arguments

10/13: Mass Media

- Textbook: The Media

10/15: Parties & Partisanship

- Textbook: Political Parties
- Jon Ladd. "Negative partisanship may be the most toxic form of polarization" Vox <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/07/forward-third-party-andrew-yang>

10/17: Parties as a Social Identity

- Huddy & Bankert- Parties as Identities
- [https://calgara.github.io/Pol157\\_Spring2019/Huddy%20&%20Bankert%202017.pdf](https://calgara.github.io/Pol157_Spring2019/Huddy%20&%20Bankert%202017.pdf)

10/20: Interest Groups

- Textbook : Interest Groups & Social Movements

10/22: Public Opinion 1/4- Socialization and Origins of Views

- Textbook: Political Socialization & Public Opinion

10/24- Public Opinion 2/4 - Problems with Opinions in Democracy- Ideological Innocence

- [https://adambrown.info/p/notes/converse\\_the\\_nature\\_of\\_belief\\_systems\\_in\\_mass\\_public\\_s](https://adambrown.info/p/notes/converse_the_nature_of_belief_systems_in_mass_public_s) - Rational Irrationality (No assigned reading)

10/27: Public Opinion 3/4- Spatial Analysis & Ideological Dimensions

- Downs: An Economic Theory of Democracy
- [https://moodle2.units.it/pluginfile.php/550589/mod\\_resource/content/1/Downs%2C%20Economic%20theory%20of%20democracy.pdf](https://moodle2.units.it/pluginfile.php/550589/mod_resource/content/1/Downs%2C%20Economic%20theory%20of%20democracy.pdf)

10/29: Public Opinion 4/4- Context in Public Opinion –

- [https://adambrown.info/p/notes/zaller\\_the\\_nature\\_and\\_origins\\_of\\_mass\\_opinion - - https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/for-2016-0037/html?lang=en&srsltid=AfmBOoroHtyvfM1tE4HMeKnwTci\\_hkuptLmbx6vIKb2WWK\\_Ef7TuCiEr](https://adambrown.info/p/notes/zaller_the_nature_and_origins_of_mass_opinion_-_https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/for-2016-0037/html?lang=en&srsltid=AfmBOoroHtyvfM1tE4HMeKnwTci_hkuptLmbx6vIKb2WWK_Ef7TuCiEr)

10/31: No Class (Fall Break)

11/3: Comparative Constitution Unit 1/3- Parliamentary vs Presidential Systems

- <https://testbook.com/key-differences/difference-between-parliamentary-and-presidential-form-of-government>

11/5: Comparative Constitution Unit 2/3- First Past the Post, Proportional Representation

- <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12567>
- <https://fairvote.org/archives/proportional-representation-voting-systems/>

11/7: Comparative Constitution Unit 3/3- Bicameral vs Unicameral Legislatures, Comparative Courts

- No assigned readings

11/10- Review Session & Catch Up

### **11/12: Test #3 (Media, Parties, IG, Public Opinion, Comparative Constitutions)**

11/14: The Georgia State Constitution Unit: History

<https://www.senate.ga.gov/Documents/gaconstitution.pdf> <https://georgia.gov/three-branches-georgias-state-government>

11/17: The Georgia State Constitution: Legislative Process & Executive Branch

<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/legislative-process-overview>  
<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/executive-branch-overview>

11/19: The Georgia State Constitution: The Bill of Rights & Judicial Branch

<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/judicial-branch-overview>  
 Bill of Rights (ELC)

11/21: The Georgia State Constitution: Final Thoughts

11/24: Constitution Design Assignment Discussion & Debate

11/26 and 11/28- No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

12/1: Politics in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century- challenges and new issues to come, Review Session

### **12/2: Exam 4**

**12/5: Constitution Design Activity Due to ELC**

## 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](http://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.

### **Generative AI:**

Use of AI is banned for this course and will be counted as plagiarism

### **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