

## FALL 2025: POLS 1101H-AMERICAN GOVERNMENT-Honors

Instructor: Dr. Gbemende Johnson

Contact: [gbemende.johnson@uga.edu](mailto:gbemende.johnson@uga.edu)

Office: Baldwin 305B

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00-2:00pm and by appointment

Course Meeting Time and Room: T-TH 9:35-10:50 am, Baldwin 202

### 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.

### Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:

**FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE:** Throughout the course we will examine and analyze the history, conflicts, institutional structures, partisan components, and overall features of American government. **Facts matter** and students will **develop an informed factual foundation**, which is essential to effective navigation of the world of American politics (and the world in general).

**ANALYSIS:** 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.

**CLEAR COMMUNICATION:** Students should also be able to **articulate and express their opinions with logical arguments in a clear, effective, and persuasive manner**. Throughout the semester we will discuss complex, controversial, salient, and “difficult” issues and students will be able to express their knowledge and opinions in written and spoken form. I also expect that students respect the voices, opinions, and perspectives of their peers.

**CREATIVITY:** Third, students should be able to think beyond the current state of American politics to consider ways in which to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of American governmental institutions. Students are encouraged to think “creatively” and “out of the box,” and will be able to **envision alternative policy solutions and institutional frameworks**.

Overall, I hope that students end the course with an appreciation of the value and importance of understanding how their government operates and affects their daily lives.

### Required Texts:

Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser. *The Logic of American Politics*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition (TLAP)

## Grading Breakdown:

<i>Assignments</i>	Percentage
Political Autobiography	2%
Current Event Presentation	2%
Document Response Paper	10%
Photo Analysis Project:	18%
<i>Paper</i>	10%
<i>Presentation</i>	5%
<i>Photo Submission</i>	3%
Reading Quizzes (3)	9%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	29%
Participation	10%

## 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-	

## Attendance

Students are granted four free absences. No explanation is required for the use of free absences; however, I recommend notifying the instructor in advance if possible. Unexcused absences will reduce your overall participation grade by a 1/3 of a letter grade. Tardiness will also negatively affect your overall course grade. **A 3<sup>rd</sup> tardy (and subsequent tardies) will count as an unexcused absence.**

## Classroom Decorum

My goal as the instructor is to cultivate an active and respectful learning environment where participants feel that their presence and input are valued. With this mind, I ask that we “treat others how we want to be treated” as we discuss and share our perspectives in class. Also to reduce distractions, I ask that students minimize travel in and out of room during class time. In addition, please use technology responsibly during class. Ensure that your cell phones are on silent before coming to class. Students are expected to refrain from texting and/or surfing the internet on their phones while in class. Students can use laptops to take notes and are expected to remain **attentive and active participants in class.**

## 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.

### 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. For more detail about what constitutes academic honesty, and consequences for engaging in dishonest conduct be sure to revisit [Academic Honesty Policy | Home \(uga.edu\)](#).

**Recording**

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 or a formal accommodation.

**Student Accommodations**

If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Accessibility and Testing Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <https://accessibility.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.

COURSE SCHEDULE			
Date		Topic	Readings
Thursday	08/14/2025	Introduction (Course Overview, Expectation)	
Tuesday (Week 1)	08/19/2025	Collective Action	TLAP: Chapter 1  Hardin Garrett, "The Tragedy of the Commons" (on eLC)
Thursday	08/21/2025	Salient Issues in American Politics	Readings on eLC
Friday	08/22/2025	Assignment Due	Political Autobiography due by 11:59pm (Turnitin)
Tuesday (Week 2)	08/26/2025	The Founding and the Constitution	TLAP: Chapter 2  The Articles of Confederation, The Declaration of Independence (on eLC)
Thursday	08/28/2025	The Founding and the Constitution	TLAP Chapter 2 ctd. Federalist Paper 10, 51 (on eLC)
Tuesday (Week 3)	09/02/2025	Congress	TLAP: Chapter 6
Thursday	09/04/2025	Congress	TLAP: Chapter 6 ctd  Georgia Constitution: Legislative Branch  Congressional tensions and polarization (articles on eLC) Quiz 1
Friday	09/05/2025	Assignment Due	Paper due: Founding Document Response Paper by 11:59pm (Turnitin)
Tuesday (Week 4)	09/09/2025	Presidency	TLAP: Chapter 7
Thursday	09/11/2025	Class Cancelled	Assignment on eLC
Friday	09/12/2025	Assignment Due	Preliminary Photo Submission and Paragraph due by 11:59pm (Turnitin)
Tuesday (Week 5)	09/16/2025	Presidency	Understanding presidential power (articles on eLC)  GA Constitution: Georgia Executive Branch
Thursday	09/18/2025	Bureaucracy	TLAP: Chapter 8

Tuesday <b>(Week 6)</b>	9/23/2025	Judiciary	TLAP: Chapter 9
Thursday	09/25/2025	Judiciary	TLAP: Chapter 9 ctd Supreme Court Conflicts (articles on eLC) Georgia Constitution: Georgia Courts (on eLC)
Tuesday <b>(Week 7)</b>	09/30/2025	Discussion and Documentary	Divided States of America (2 <sup>nd</sup> half) <b>Quiz 2</b>
Thursday	10/02/2025	Exam Review Session	Catch-up & Exam Review Session
Tuesday <b>(Week 8)</b>	10/07/2025	Midterm Exam	Midterm Exam
Thursday	10/09/2025	<b>Photo &amp; Analysis Assignment Discussion</b>	<b>Photo &amp; Analysis Assignment Discussion</b>
Tuesday <b>(Week 9)</b>	10/14/2025	Civil Rights	TLAP: Chapter 4 Emancipation Proclamation (eLC) Gettysburg Address (eLC)
Thursday	10/16/2025	Civil Rights	TLAP: Chapter 4 ctd Letters from a Birmingham Jail (on eLC) Contemporary Civil Rights conflict (articles on eLC)
Tuesday <b>(Week 10)</b>	10/21/2025	Civil Liberties	TLAP: Chapter 5 U.S. Bill of Rights/GA Bill of Rights (on eLC)
Thursday	10/23/2025	Civil Liberties	TLAP: Chapter 5 ctd Contemporary Civil Liberties and conflicts (readings on eLC)
Tuesday	10/28/2025	Public Opinion	TLAP: Chapter 10
Thursday <b>(Week 11)</b>	10/30/2025	Public Opinion	TLAP: Chapter 10 ctd Public Polarization (readings on eLC) <b>Quiz 3</b>

Tuesday	11/04/2025	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections	TLAP: Chapter 11
Thursday (Week 12)	11/06/2025	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections	TLAP: Chapter 11 ctd Understanding Elections (readings on eLC)
Tuesday (Week 13)	11/11/2025	Political Parties	TLAP: Chapter 12
Thursday	11/13/2025	Presentations	Presentations
Tuesday (Week 14)	11/18/2025	Presentations	Presentations
Thursday	11/20/2025	Presentations	Presentations
Tuesday (Week 15)	11/25/2025	Research Day	Research Day (assignment on eLC)  <b>Final Photos &amp; Analysis Essay due by 11:59pm (Turnitin)</b>
Thursday	11/27/2025	Thanksgiving Break	Thanksgiving Break
Tuesday	12/02/2025	Final Class Day	Course Review
Thursday	12/09/2025	<b>FINAL EXAM (8:00am)</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM (8:00am)</b>

These dates are approximate. The content of the syllabus is tentative and subject to change with notice.

### Writing Assignments

#### Political Autobiography

Each student should submit a 400-500 word narrative of their own political development. Here are questions you should consider in biography: When and how did you become aware of politics? Were politics regularly discussed in your environment (school/home/social) growing up? What issue or event made you aware of the impact of laws and policies and how they affect you and others? Have you had a moment when you felt politically efficacious?

#### Founding Document Response Paper

Each student should submit a 750-800 word essay that examines a current political issue (issues) in juxtaposition/conversation with a founding document. Each essay is required to cite at least 2 academic/peer review articles and at least 2 journalistic/news articles. Each essay should also have a clear guiding thesis that previews the structure of their discussion. Additional details on eLC.

#### American Government News Minute

Once during the semester, each student will find a current news article related to American politics (specifically the topic for a given week). Students upload a link to the article, and a 2-paragraph summary of the article and how it relates (broadly) to topic/issue pertinent to our course. Students will present their current event article and summary to the class.

### **Photo Analysis Project**

This assignment will involve an analysis of contemporary American politics, and an explicit discussion of the writer's prospective vision/goal/hope for American politics using student-created photos (taken on UGA's campus) as a prompt. Each essay is required to cite at least 3 academic/peer review articles and at least 3 journalistic/news articles. Each essay should also have a clear guiding thesis that previews the structure of their discussion. Additional details on eLC.

### **Notes on Assignments**

#### *Writing Format*

IMPORTANT: I will not grade papers with missing or improper citations. Students should also use Times New Roman or Garamond 12-point font. All writing assignments should have 1-inch margins. All writing assignments must be submitted via Turnitin.

#### *Late Assignments and Exams*

Late papers and assignments will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade for every 12-hour period that they are late (i.e. a B becomes a B-). You are expected to take exams on the day/time they are assigned. Make-up exams will be considered only in cases of jury duty and emergency.

#### *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.

#### *Participation*

Maintaining an open and vigorous class discussion is essential to the success of this course. Students are expected to make frequent and informed contributions to classroom discussions and dialogue. Participation grades will be assigned on the basis of knowledge of the readings, before class preparation, in-class discussion, and active learning activities the instructor may define. In addition to in class discussion/questions, participation assignments can also include discussion board posts, in-class simulations, and review questions periodically assigned by the instructor.

- A Repeated excellent comments, demonstrated engagement with the literature
- B Good, solid participation
- C Some comments but shows lack of preparation
- D Attends but does not participate