

POLS 1101: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Spring 2026

Instructor:	Emma Bibina	Class Time:	M&W 2:55 – 4:15 pm
Email:	emma.bibina@uga.edu	Classroom:	Sanford Hall 209
Office Hours:	T 1:30 – 2:30 pm	Office Location:	Baldwin Hall 101W



Emanuel Leutze, Washington Crossing the Delaware, 1851. The Met–NYC.

Course Description

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. Includes a closer look at the State of Georgia, its constitution, and political system. Course prerequisites – none.

Student Learning Outcomes

- 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.
- Students will learn the philosophical and constitutional foundations of the U.S. political system, including the state of Georgia, and examine primary sources over time, including the Declaration of Independence, Federalist Papers, the U.S. and Georgia Constitutions, among others.
- 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.

- Students will learn to articulate competing positions on political topics in assignments.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to engage in respectful discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

Required Course Materials

1. Textbooks

We will use two textbooks this semester. *The Logic of American Politics* provides an excellent overview of U.S. national politics and government and can be purchased from the University Bookstore or your preferred online retailer.

Kernell et al. *The Logic of American Politics* (12th edition)
ISBN: 9781071929568 (e-book) **or** 9781071929537 (paperback)

The second text, *Georgia's Constitution and Government*, is published by the University of Georgia Press and is freely available through the University Library. For your convenience, click on this [link](#) to access the online textbook.

Engstrom et al. *Georgia's Constitution and Government* (9th edition)
ISBN: 9780820347189

2. Primary Sources (available on eLC)

Throughout this course, you will explore a range of historical documents that enhance your understanding of the background and developments that shaped the modern American system of government. These primary sources can be found under the **Content** tab on eLC, organized within their respective weekly folders.

3. Technology Requirements

To fully participate in class activities and complete assignments, students will need access to an internet-connected device—at minimum, a smartphone, though a laptop or tablet is strongly recommended. Many course tasks will involve taking online quizzes, conducting research, creating and editing documents, and collaborating in groups. Students who need access to a laptop can visit the UGA Libraries, which offer free laptop checkouts. More information about this service is available through this [link](#).

Assignments & Grading

Class Attendance and Assignments

Regular attendance is required, as class sessions are essential for your success in this course. During our meetings, we will discuss key concepts and ideas in American politics in detail and clarify any questions you may have. These discussions will greatly enhance your understanding of the material covered in the textbook and prepare you for exams.

Additionally, many class sessions will include group assignments that apply course concepts to real-world problems. These assignments will be completed during class, and group results will be submitted through eLC by 11:59 pm on the due dates mentioned in the course schedule below. Attending and actively

participating in class will help you stay engaged and save time, as students who miss class will need to complete these assignments individually.

Class attendance and participation account for **15%** of your final grade, and the submitted group assignments account for **10%**.

Exams

Because this is an introductory course, we will spend a good amount of time building a strong foundation—learning key terms, fundamental concepts, and the causal relationships that political scientists have identified. To assess your understanding of this material, the course includes three exams that feature multiple-choice and short written-response questions. The exams are not cumulative, meaning each one focuses only on the material from its respective unit. The course is divided into three main units, and each exam will cover the topics discussed within that unit. Each exam is worth **25%** of your final grade.

Exams Schedule and Grade Distribution

Assessment	Weight	Date
Exam 1	25%	February 18
Exam 2	25%	March 25
Exam 3	25%	April 30
Attendance/Participation	15%	Daily
Assignments	10%	Weekly

There will be no rounding or curving at the end of the semester. Grades will be assigned as follows: A (93.00 and above), A– (90.00–92.99), B+ (87.00–89.99), B (83.00–86.99), B– (80.00–82.99), C+ (77.00–79.99), C (70.00–76.99), D (65.00–69.99), and F (64.99 and below).

Course Policies

Absences

Life happens, and sometimes you may need to miss class. Absences will be excused for legitimate reasons, including illness, family or personal emergencies, religious observances, or University-sponsored events (such as athletic or academic competitions). For health-related absences, a doctor's note is sufficient. If you experience a personal or family emergency, please reach out to [Student Care and Outreach](#)—they can provide support and documentation to excuse your absence.

In addition, you have two “no-questions-asked” excused absences that you may use for any reason. You don't need to provide documentation for these. Please use them wisely, as they're meant to give you a bit of flexibility when unexpected things come up.

Make-up Exams

If you miss an exam without an approved excuse, you will receive a **zero**, which will make passing the class very difficult. If you arrive late for an exam, you will need to complete it in the time that remains. Make-up exams are only available to students with legitimate, documented excuses. All make-up exams are administered by the Department of Political Science and require my permission before they can be

scheduled. Whenever possible, make-up exams should be completed within one week of the original exam date to ensure fairness and keep you on track with the course.

Missed / Late Assignments

Missed assignments are awarded a grade of zero. Late assignments will be accepted with a penalty of 10 points for each calendar day late.

Extra-Credit Opportunities

There will be two extra credit opportunities offered during the semester, each applied to your exam scores. These opportunities will be announced after Exam 1 and Exam 2, respectively.

Accessibility and Accommodations

If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Accessibility & Testing. 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/>.

Preferred Name

Class rosters are provided to instructors with each student's legal name, but I want to make sure I address you the way you prefer. If you go by a different name or have specific pronouns you'd like me to use, please let me know early in the semester so I can update my records accordingly. Your comfort and sense of belonging in this class are important to me.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Academic integrity is a core value at the University of Georgia and an important part of our learning community. Therefore, cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. The UGA Student Honor Code states: "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 <https://honesty.uga.edu/>.

Use of AI

UGA's policy is that the use of AI for coursework is not permitted unless explicitly authorized by me (your course instructor) ahead of time.

UGA Well-Being Resources

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
- Accessibility & Testing: accessibility.uga.edu

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

Course Schedule

Please complete the assigned readings before class, so you're ready to participate in discussions and fully engage with the material.

Week	Topic	Dates	Readings	Assignment / Date Due on eLC
Week 1	Why Government?	12-Jan	Syllabus	
		14-Jan	Chapter 1 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	Anarchy Island / 15-Jan
Week 2	Early American Government & The U.S. Constitution	19-Jan	No Class – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (UGA holiday)	
		21-Jan	Chapter 2 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i> The Declaration of Independence Articles of Confederation Constitution of the United States U.S. Bill of Rights	Amending the Constitution / 22-Jan
Week 3	Federalism	26-Jan	Chapter 3 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	
		28-Jan	Federalist #51 Georgia State Constitution Georgia Bill of Rights Chapters 1–3 of <i>Georgia's Constitution and Government</i>	Regulating AI / 29-Jan

Week	Topic	Dates	Readings	Assignment / Date Due on eLC
Week 4	Civil Rights	2-Feb	Chapter 4 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	
		4-Feb	The Emancipation Proclamation Dr. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"	Letters From Our Times / 5-Feb
Week 5	Civil Liberties	9-Feb	Chapter 5 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	
		11-Feb	Chapter 6 of <i>Georgia's Constitution and Government</i>	Claim Your Liberties / 12-Feb
Week 6	Exam 1	16-Feb	Review study guide and notes	
		18-Feb	Exam 1 in class (bring a pen or pencil)	
Week 7	Congress & Political Parties	23-Feb	Chapter 6 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	
		25-Feb	Chapter 12 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	Better Know a District / 26-Feb
Week 8	The Presidency & Bureaucracy	2-Mar	Chapter 7 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	
		4-Mar	Chapter 8 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i> (from "Who controls the bureaucracy?" to end) The Gettysburg Address	Executive Power on Trial / 5-Mar
Week 9		9-Mar	No Classes	
		11-Mar	Have a great Spring Break!	
Week 10	The Federal Judiciary	16-Mar	Chapter 9 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	
		18-Mar	Federalist #78 Chapter 4 of <i>Georgia's Constitution and Government</i>	Supreme Court: You Decide / 19-Mar
Week 11	Exam 2	23-Mar	Review study guide and notes	
		25-Mar	Exam 2 in class (bring a pen or pencil)	
Week 12	Public Opinion	30-Mar	Chapter 10 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	
		1-Apr	Browse SPIA Survey Research Center website	Build-Your-Own-Survey / 2-Apr
Week 13	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections	6-Apr	Chapter 11 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	
		8-Apr	Chapter 5 of <i>Georgia's Constitution and Government</i>	Voting Policy Diffusion to Georgia / 9-Apr

Week	Topic	Dates	Readings	Assignment / Date Due on eLC
Week 14	Interest Groups	13-Apr	Chapter 13 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	
		15-Apr	Federalist #10	Advocate for Your Interests / 16-Apr
Week 15	Media	20-Apr	Chapter 14 of <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>	
		22-Apr	No Class (Instructor at MPSA)	
Week 16	Exam 3	27-Apr	Review study guide and notes	
		30-Apr	Exam 3 in class (bring a pen or pencil)	

Important Dates

Date	Event
January 16	Drop / Add Deadline
April 9	Withdraw Deadline
May 11	Grades Due

Disclaimer

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.