



**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**

School of Public and International Affairs
Department of Political Science

**POLS 1101: American Government
Spring 2026**

Class Schedule: T/TH 1:15-2:35
Room: Baldwin 264

Instructor: Professor Jason Hawthorne
Contact: jason.hawthorne@uga.edu

Office Hour: 12pm-1pm T/TH, or by appointment.

Course Description:

This course covers the 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, as well as civil rights and liberties. We will also take a closer look at the State of Georgia, its constitution, and political system.

Learning Objectives:

- 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.

Prerequisites:

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Disclaimer:

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

Course Materials:

This course will make use of the following textbook which can be acquired either independently or at the bookstore.

Barbour, Christine. *AmGov: Long Story Short*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, CQ Press. 2025. ISBN: 978-1071930045

It is recommended that you get the digital 180-day digital copy, as this will be sufficient to cover the duration of the course and has significantly reduced cost. If you would like to purchase a physical copy of the book, you may do so at your own discretion.

An additional required materials will be made available to you via the course's eLC page.

Grading and Assignments:*Grading:*

| | |
|----|--------------|
| A | 93 and above |
| A- | 90-92.9 |
| B+ | 87-89.9 |
| B | 83-86.9 |
| B- | 80-82.9 |
| C+ | 77-79.9 |
| C | 70-76.9 |
| D | 65-69.9 |
| F | 0-64.9 |

Course Work:

There will be a number of different types of course work that you are required to complete throughout the semester. This course is split into three major sections; each section will contain an exam and a written assignment.

Exams for this course are not cumulative. All exams will be taken in class. More information about exams will be provided on the first day of class and on lecture days prior to exams.

The written assignments will require you to take specific concepts from the course and apply them in a theoretical way. This is meant to act as a practical application of the information you have learned. All written assignments will be completed on eLC and should be completed in accordance with the Academic Honesty Policy.

Late Work, Make-Ups, and Extra Credit:

Assignments are due on the dates specified in the course schedule. Students with legitimate, documented reasons for missing an assessment or assignment deadline should consult with the instructor prior to the due date to schedule an alternative arrangement. Provided that a student does not have a pre-approved exception or documented emergency, penalties apply for late submissions.

Students will be provided with an extra credit opportunity over the course of this semester, but any student that wishes to receive extra credit is responsible for submitting their assignment by the date specified on eLC. The instructor will not provide additional reminders, and they will not accept late submissions. Information on the extra credit assignment is available through eLC.

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend each scheduled class on time. In this course, students whose number of unexcused absences is more than number of class meetings per week (3 unexcused absences) can be assigned a failing grade for the course. Students are allowed (2) unexcused absences during the semester. Students who have (2) or less unexcused absences will be eligible for a (2) point bonus at the end of the semester, at the instructor's discretion. If the university is closed due to unforeseen circumstances, students will be contacted by the instructor over eLC and given further instructions.

Excused absences are given when your instructor receives one of the following: an official UGA excuse, a medical note, or a student-athlete responsibility. Documentation is required for all of these.

The University's Attendance policy can be reviewed here:

<http://bulletin.uga.edu/bulletin/ind/attendance.html>

Syllabus Policy

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary. Where possible, these changes will be made in consultation with the class so that we can all remain on the same page. Additionally, these changes will be posted in an announcement on the course eLC page.

Culture of Honesty Policy

The University of Georgia has an academic honesty policy. You are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures relating to academic honesty. To understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University, please carefully review the policy here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academichonesty/academic-honesty-policy>. All students enrolled in UGA courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will automatically receive an F in the course.

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.

AI Use:

In accordance with the University of Georgia's Academic Honesty policy, the use of AI in this course is expressly prohibited. The use of AI to complete course work will be considered a violation of the Academic Honesty Policy. Any assignment, exam, or quiz which is determined to have been completed with the use of AI will be assigned a grade of 0. If a second violation occurs, the student will be referred to the Office of Academic Honesty for disciplinary action.

More information about UGA's policy on AI use can be found here: <https://honesty.uga.edu/academic-honesty-policy/prohibited-conduct/>

Disability Resource Center

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. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

Withdraw Policy

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal/passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses 13 during the drop/add period do not qualify as withdrawals. Instructors have the ability to withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences. Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

Preferred Name and Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I would genuinely like to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Email Policy

If you need to get in contact with me, please email me directly. Do not use the eLC internal email system. While I may still see your message, it is much easier to communicate through the University's email system than through eLC.

Please give me at least 24 hours to respond to emails on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. If I do not respond by then, please do follow-up! As instructors, our inboxes can become overwhelmed very quickly and I genuinely want to be available when you have questions or need assistance.

Please be professional and courteous in the construction of your emails, we are in a professional setting and all students are expected to handle themselves accordingly.

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://caps.uga.edu/wellbeing-prevention-programs-mental-health/>) or crisis support (<https://healthcenter.uga.edu/emergencies/>).
- If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://caps.uga.edu/well-being-prevention-programs-mental-health/>) 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.

Important Dates:

Add/Drop Ends: Jan. 16th

Introduce Yourself Quiz: Jan 14th at 11:59pm, on eLC (Completion Grade)

Assignment 1: Jan 29th at 11:59pm, on eLC.

Assignment 2: Feb. 4th at 11:59pm, on eLC.

Exam 1: Feb 5th, in class.

Exam 2: Mar. 5th, in class.

Spring Break: Mar. 9-13.

Assignment 3: Apr. 8th at 11:59pm on eLC.

Withdraw Deadline: Apr. 9th.

Exam 3: Apr. 23, in class.

Course Schedule:¹

Section 1, Modules 1-4: Foundations of American Government

Module 1: Why Government?

Week 1, Jan 13-15:

Syllabus and the Social Contract

- Readings:
 - o Syllabus
 - o AmGov, Chapter 1.
- Assignments:
 - o **Introduce yourself “quiz” on eLC, due by Jan 14th at 11:59pm (completion grade).**

Module 2: Cornerstones of American Politics

Week 2: Jan 20-22, Laying the Foundation:

- Readings:
 - o AmGov, Chapter 2. (Read by Jan 20)
 - o Declaration of Independence. (Read by Jan 20)
 - o Articles of Confederation. (Read by Jan 20)
 - o Federalist #51.
 - o U.S. Bill of Rights.
- Assignment:
 - o **Constitutional Amendment writing assignment, on eLC, due Jan 28 at 11:59pm.**

Module 3: Civil Rights and Liberties:

Week 3: Jan 27-29

- Readings:
 - o AmGov, Chapter 3. (Read by Feb 3)
 - o Letter from a Birmingham Jail. (Read by Feb 3)
 - o The Emancipation Proclamation.
- Assignments:
 - o **Letter from Birmingham Activity, on eLC, due Feb. 4th at 11:59pm, on eLC.**

¹ This outline is a rough guideline for the course and is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

Week 4: Feb 3-5

- **Feb 3, Exam 1 Review**
- **Feb 5, Exam 1 in class.**

Section 2, Modules 4-6: A Government and Its People

Module 4: The Legislative Branch**Week 5, Feb 10-12**

- Readings:
 - o AmGov, Chapter 4.
 - o U.S. Constitution, Article I.
 - o GA Constitution, Article III
- Assignments:
 - o **Legislative activity, in class on Feb. 19th.**

Module 5: The Executive Branch**Week 6, Feb 17-19**

- Readings:
 - o AmGov, Chapter 5.
 - o U.S. Constitution, Article II.
 - o GA Constitution, Article V.

Module 6: The Judicial Branch**Week 7, Feb. 26-29**

- Readings:
 - o AmGov, Chapter 6.
 - o U.S. Constitution, Article III.
 - o GA Constitution, Article VI.

Week 8, Mar. 3-5

- **Exam 2 Review, Mar. 3.**
- **Exam 2, In Class, Mar 5.**

WEEK 9, SPRING BREAK MARCH 9-13

Section 3, Module 7-9: Making a democracy function

Module 7: Political Parties and Interest Groups**Week 10, Mar. 17-19**

- Readings:
 - o AmGov, Chapter 7

Module 8: Public Opinion

Week 11, Mar. 24-26.

- Readings:
 - o AmGov, Chapter 8.1-8.2
 - o TBD, on eLC

Module 9: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Week 12, Mar. 31-Apr. 2.

- Readings:
 - o AmGov, Chapter 8.3-8.6
 - o TBD, on eLC

Module 10: The Media

Week 13, Apr. 7-9

- Readings:
 - o AmGov, Chapter 9
- Assignment:
 - o Media Bias, on eLC, due by 11:59pm on Apr. 8th.

Week 14, Apr. 14-16

- Catching Up/Buffer Week

Week 15, Apr. 21-23

- **Exam 3, Review, Apr. 21.**
- **Exam 3, In Class, Apr. 23.**