

# POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government

Spring 2026

Tuesday and Thursday, 2:55 PM- 4:15

Miller Learning Center (MLC), Room 275

**Instructor:** Karlee L. Kimbrell

**Office:** 109B

**Office Hours:** 11:30 AM -12:30 PM Tuesday, and by appointment

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## Course Description

Fundamentals of the American government, including the philosophical and constitutional foundations, political institutions, 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, and its constitution and political system.

## Learning Objectives

As set by USG, by the end of this course:

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.

## Course Materials

Our main text will be American Government 4e (AG4e), a free open resource produced by OpenStax. While a PDF copy will be posted on eLC, I encourage you to take full advantage of the free resources online. All additional materials will be posted on eLC.

## Office Hours and Help

I will hold office hours every Tuesday. I will be available to meet in my office or via zoom. It is important to me that this course is comprehensible for all. Office hours can be used to talk about lectures, assignments, grades, etc. If you feel like a question could be resolved via email, please allow me 24 hours to respond and until the next school day if over the weekend. If I happen to not respond within 24 school hours, please email me again. All grade disputes should be emailed to me after 24 hours of the grade posting and before 1 week passes (after the initial 24 hour wait). In most circumstances, I am unable to review work that is due in less than 3 school day.

## Grading

In this course, you will be graded on:

- ⇒ Assessment Checks
- ⇒ Reflections
- ⇒ Concept Maps
- ⇒ Participation
- ⇒ Attendance

Descriptions posted on eLC.

Letter Grade	Required Points
<b>A</b>	930 - 1000
<b>A-</b>	900 - 929
<b>B+</b>	870 - 899
<b>B</b>	830 - 869
<b>B-</b>	800 - 829
<b>C+</b>	770 - 799
<b>C</b>	730 - 769
<b>C-</b>	700 - 729
<b>D+</b>	670 - 699
<b>D</b>	600 - 669
<b>F</b>	Below 600

## Participation

Active participation is essential for your learning and contributes to the quality of our classroom discussions about complex political topics. Participation in this course takes multiple forms throughout the semester, including contributing to class discussions, engaging thoughtfully, participating in small group activities, and completing in-class exercises. These varied opportunities ensure that students with different communication styles can demonstrate their engagement with the material. If you miss a class session, you can earn back a portion of your participation points by completing discussion questions posted at the end of that day's lecture slides, which will be available on our learning management system. These make-up questions are designed to help you engage with the missed content while maintaining accountability for class attendance. To receive partial credit for participation, please submit your responses before the next class. If you miss a large participation day (i.e. Concept Maps), you must contact me directly for an alternative assignment that will only be granted in cases of documented absences. If repeated signs of lack of engagement with course material arises, I reserve the right to supplement quizzes for participation supplementation.

## Attendance

A key part of your success is just showing up (it makes the getting-things-done part easier). Showing up for this class means that you have done your part to prepare for class and you're actively preparing for class, drawing connections between the material, and ready to participate in conversation. This said, sometimes life happens, and you can't show up. Absences will be excused in cases of documented illness, official university related representation or events (with documentation from university/program official), death of a loved one, religious holidays, and other circumstances beyond your control. I'm here to talk about situations that may arise. You are asked given two (2) unexcused absences and I will not ask any questions (I may if its two in a row). After the 2 unexcused absences, six (6) points will be deducted from your attendance grade. Starting at five (5) absences, 10 points will be deducted from your attendance grade. Most lecture slides will be posted on eLC for your reference. It is your responsibility to get notes from your peers from in class discussions and activities or come to office hours.

## Late Work, Make-up Work, and Make-up Exams

Late work policy is in accordance with the University's policy on excused absences. Please inform me as soon as possible and I will work on deadlines with you. For assignments, I understand issues arise that may interfere with your work. If this occurs, please contact me at least 48 hours in advance (or what is reasonably possible), and I will try to work with you to turn in your late assignment. For late assignments without prior extension agreement, expect to have 10% of the submission grade deducted per day that it is late starting immediately after the deadline. Make-up work and exams/quizzes will only be given with proper documentation.

## Extra Credit

I do not offer individual extra credit. I reserve the right to offer additional forms of extra credit throughout the semester.

## **Academic Honesty & Artificial Intelligence**

*"I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate the academic dishonesty of others".* The University of Georgia has an academic honesty policy. Academic integrity is required for a positive learning environment. All students enrolled in university 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. This extends to not notifying the instructor of other's academic dishonesty. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a failing grade for the assignment and/or course. Additionally, I will forward your name to the University. You can read the policies in their entirety here: <https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/>

I feel that it's important to teach and model ethical usage of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) tool. These tools can help you brainstorm ideas, polish your writing, and much more. However, as professionals in training, it's important to critically evaluate when and how you use these tools responsibly. There are several GAI tools on the market that have conflated successful learning and efficiency. Learning takes work! It can be slow and frustrating. While you can use GAI for brainstorming, ideation, etc., don't let GAI replace your thinking and critical reflection. We will be using *MadisonAI*. **However, GAI will not be permitted for use on your Concept Maps and Assessment Checks. If you are using as a tool AI, you must identify and describe your use. Use of AI without disclosure or use of AI for an entire assignment or writing will result in a zero for the assignment or activity.** Furthermore, I believe it is important to talk about the environmental impact that GAI tools have. GAI requires massive energy consumption, and this leads to an increase in carbon emission and water usage. Additionally, to continue to produce GAI hardware and machinery, there is an increase in mining of limited earth minerals—which can cause pollution and habitat destruction. If you are unsure if your use of GAI is appropriate, I am happy to chat with you about academically ethical methods.

## **Accessibility, Accommodations, & Preferences**

The purpose of disability accommodations is to provide equal access to the academic material and equal access to demonstrate mastery of the material. Disability accommodations work best starting at the beginning of the semester but can be approved and started at any point in the semester. Accommodations start at the time the accommodation letter is presented to faculty within reasonable timelines; accommodations are not given retroactively. If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Accessibility and Testing Center (ATC). If you need accommodations but are unable to register formally with the ATC, please reach out to me and we will discuss reasonable accommodations that you may need.

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to a collaborative and supportive learning environment. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronouns. Please let me know your preferences at the beginning of the course or via email before the first day of class so that I may adjust my roster.

## **Withdrawal 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 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>

## **Class Recordings and Materials**

I require that you seek my permission if you want to make audio and/or video recordings of any portion of our class (including of my lectures and discussion sections). If you do not have this permission (or an accommodation from ACT), do not take photographs, audio recordings, or video recordings of any person in this class without their express permission. Further, do not take or share audio or video recordings of course lectures or discussions. Violation of this policy may result in you receiving 0% for class participation, and, depending on the severity of the violation, may result in you receiving a grade of "F" in the class. Lectures, course material (presentations, exams, activities, notes, etc.) are my production. You are not to reproduce or distribute this content without written and explicit permission from me.

### **Well-Being Resources**

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports 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](http://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](mailto: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. Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting <https://well-being.uga.edu>.

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

### **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA affords students certain rights with respect to their education records. Specifically, it affords students the right to:

- Inspect and review their education records
- Request the amendment of inaccurate or misleading records
- Consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in their education record
- File a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures of the institution to comply with this law

### **Course Outline**

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

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<i>Week 1</i>	Syllabus Overview and Course Objectives
<i>Week 2</i>	Models of Government & Democracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Articles of Confederation</li><li>• Declaration of Independence</li></ul>

<i>Week 3</i>	Constitution & Separation of Powers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United States Constitution and Bill of Rights</li> <li>• Federalist Papers</li> </ul>
<i>Week 4</i>	Federalism
<i>Week 5</i>	State, City, Local, & Tribal Governments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Georgia Constitution &amp; Bill of Rights</li> </ul>
<i>Week 6</i>	Public Opinion & Media
<i>Week 7</i>	Political Parties & Interest Groups
<i>Week 8</i>	Campaigns & Elections
<i>Week 9</i>	Spring Break
<i>Week 10</i>	The Legislative Branch- Congress
<i>Week 11</i>	The Executive Branch- The Presidency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gettysburg Address</li> <li>• Emancipation Proclamation</li> </ul>
<i>Week 12</i>	The Executive Branch- Agencies & Bureaucracy
<i>Week 13</i>	The Judicial Branch- The Courts
<i>Week 14</i>	Civil Liberties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter From Birmingham Jail</li> </ul>
<i>Week 15</i>	Civil Rights