

POLS 1101: American Government

Department of Political Science, University of Georgia

Course Instructor Information:

Dr. Erin Little

Little.Erin@uga.edu

Office hours:

Fridays from 1-3pm, 217 Candler Hall

Course Meeting Information:

101 LeConte Hall

MW, 1:15-2:35

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The United States offers a significant case example on the global stage toward understanding both how stable democracies develop and how challenges to democratic governance can evolve toward either reform or democratic decline. This course begins with a theoretical and practical understanding of the patterns that motivated revolution, contrasting the American experience with that of France, both at the end of the 18th century. We will explore the U.S. Constitution and its Amendments, devoting particular attention to the language it uses to define the actors, rights, obligations, and conditions of U.S. institutions and civil rights and liberties. We then discuss the institutions that characterize our separation of powers, contextualized within a scope of other developed democracies, particularly the United Kingdom. The remainder of the class will be dedicated to the relationship between civil society and the State, including political parties, mass media, interest groups, and political movements, and domestic and foreign policy.

By the end of the semester, students will:

1. Understand the foundational principles of the American government, including federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances.
2. Identify and analyze the roles and functions of key governmental institutions such as the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches.
3. Evaluate political processes such as elections, policymaking, and the influence of interest groups, political parties, and media at the federal level and at the state level in Georgia.

4. Examine the significance of civil society, including NGOs, advocacy groups, and social movements, in shaping public policy and civic engagement.
5. Compare the U.S. governance system with those of other developed democracies, focusing on electoral systems, party dynamics, and citizen participation.
6. Communicate effectively about American government through coherent arguments, respectful dialogue, and proficiency in research and citation.

EXAMS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Quizzes and Exams

You will have 4 module quizzes throughout the semester concerning lectures and readings. All readings for these quizzes will be made available on eLC. In addition, you will have two non-cumulative midterms covering the U.S. and Georgia's respective constitutions, foundations of democratic governance, and liberal theory. Details and a study guide for all exams will be made available the week prior to each exam.

Primary Sources Discussion Thread

Throughout the semester, we will have discussion topics concerning a set of primary sources provided on eLC. For full credit, you are required to engage with 2 of these topics, including both your post (~150 words) and at least one response to another student in the same thread (~50 words). **All discussion posts will be due April 27th.** Each primary source below will have its own discussion topic:

- Declaration of Independence
- Articles of Confederation
- U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights
- Federalist Papers
- Gettysburg Address
- Emancipation Proclamation
- Letter from Birmingham Jail
- Georgia Constitution and Bill of Rights

Reacting to the Past: Chicago, 1968

As we move into the course modules on Civil Society and Public Policy, we will supplement lecture with a series of guided simulation sessions as part of the *Reacting to the Past* pedagogy. The "Chicago, 1968" simulation takes place during the Democratic Convention in August 1968, following the policy debates of the time - including the Vietnam War, civil rights, infrastructure, and poverty. Students will take on various roles among government, journalism and media, and the population. More guidelines and a grading rubric will be provided in class and on eLC prior to the start of the simulation. Part of your grade will be consistent participation, as attendance will be taken every session (separately from your overall attendance grade).

Your only required text is the booklet for this simulation, best purchased through the link below (this booklet is not available at the UGA bookstore):

<https://uncpress.org/book/9781469670706/chicago-1968>

Constitutional Amendments Activity

During the first half of the semester, you will be divided into groups (or individually if enrollment is under 30 students) and asked to write a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Along with your amendment, you must submit a report indicating evidence of need for the amendment and what your amendment will do to resolve the issue. Evidence may come in many acceptable forms, some examples include: statements and trends associated with political movements on the issue; reports from relevant interest groups; and academic research from political science scholars, think tanks, and/or policymakers. All reports will be made available to the class preceding an in-class debate and vote. More details and a rubric will be made available on eLC.

CLASS PARTICIPATION POLICY

This class is designed to offer ample opportunities for learning, commensurate to your level of engagement in class discussions and activities. All students are therefore expected to engage in *respectful, mindful dialogue* throughout the semester. Participating in class by asking questions, making thoughtful comments, and adding new information is important for everyone's continuing education. Discussions are intended for the mutual benefit of all students; disrespectfulness will not be tolerated.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance will be taken randomly 5 times during the semester (worth 2% each) and on simulation days. Absences will be excused for the following, discussed with me in advance: observance of a religious practice, documented (by a doctor or health clinic/hospital) sickness, death of a relative or close friend, or some other issue evaluated on a case-by-case basis. While attendance is not taken for each class session, the fast-paced nature of this course and the use of supplemental materials in class (which will also appear on exams) will make it more difficult to do well in this course without being present.

GENERATIVE AI POLICY

Generative AI tools, such as Chat GPT and Grammarly, are permitted for all assignments in this course to assist in spelling, grammar, and diction. For any final research papers or projects, students may be required to submit a generative AI version of the assignment populated from their research question and a prompt of their choice,

noted on the submission. This version will be submitted separately alongside the final document. Only the final document will be graded.

GRADING POLICY

The breakdown of your grades and the scoring rubric for this course are below (P/F indicates a Pass/Fail grade):

8% - Attendance (2% per day)

20% - *Reacting to the Past*

12% - *Module Quizzes (3% each)*

15% - *Constitutional Amendments Activity*

15% - *Discussion posts (3% each)*

- 5% for debate participation
- 10% for amendment proposal

30% - *Midterm Exams (15% each)*

94 to 100 – A

80 to 83 – B-

60 to 69 – D

90 to 93 – A-

77 to 79 – C+

59 and below – F

87 to 89 – B+

74 to 77 – C

84 to 87 – B

70 to 73 – C-

OUTLINE OF TOPICS

Note: All due dates are by 11:59pm on the date listed

MODULE I: FOUNDATIONS OF U.S. GOVERNANCE	
1/12-14	Week 1 – Introduction and Liberal Theory before 1765
Topics	Review the syllabus and course requirements “Norton I, Emperor of the United States” (aka, why don’t we have an emperor?) John Locke’s <i>Second Treatise of Civil Government</i>
	<i>Nothing due this week</i>
1/21	Week 2 – Liberal Theory before 1765 (cont.) <i>1/19 - NO CLASS; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</i>
Topics	Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s <i>The Social Contract</i> Montesquieu’s <i>The Spirit of Laws</i>
<i>Due by 1/22</i>	<i>Module I.1 Quiz</i>
1/26-28	Week 3 – Political Movements and Revolution
Topics	Analyzing the American and French Revolutions Social movements cycle from absolutist monarchies to representative governments
	<i>Nothing due this week</i>
2/2-4	Week 4 – Institutional Bargaining (1777-1789)
Topics	The Articles of Confederation and negotiating constitutional reform The bargaining model and early American political actors

<i>Due by 2/5</i>	<i>Module I.2 Quiz</i>
MODULE II: THE U.S. AND GEORGIA CONSTITUTIONS	
2/9-11	Week 5 – The Bill of Rights and Constitutional Amendments
Topics	Civil Rights and Liberties in the Constitution Evolution of Actors, Rights, Obligations, and Conditions in the Constitution Judicial
	<i>Nothing due this week</i>
2/16-18	Week 6 – Articles I – VII and Federalism
Topics	Constitutional powers on paper and Limits of Executive power and authority Ratification and implementation by U.S. states (special emphasis on Georgia)
<i>Due by 2/19</i>	<i>Module II Quiz</i>
2/23-25	Week 7 – Georgia state constitution and Amendments Activity overview
Topics	Specifics of Georgia state politics and constitutional provisions over time Group assignments and overview for Constitutional Amendments activity
<i>Due by 2/27</i>	<i>Midterm Exam 1 (available on eLC beginning at 8am on 2/26)</i>
MODULE III: U.S. GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS	
3/2-4	Week 8 - Drafting Constitutional Amendments
	Work in groups to develop your draft proposals for a Constitutional Amendment

<i>Due by 3/5</i>	<i>Constitutional Amendment Proposals (submit on eLC)</i>
3/9-11	Week 9 - NO CLASS; SPRING BREAK!
3/16-18	Week 10 – Congress & The Executive
Topics	Judicial interpretations of the Speech or Debate Clause U.S. Presidential democracy vs. U.K. Parliamentary democracy
	<i>Nothing due this week</i>
3/25	Week 11 - The Judiciary <i>3/23 - NO CLASS; ISA Conference</i>
Topics	The federal court system (district courts, circuit courts, and the Supreme Court) State courts, private international law, and the military justice system
<i>Due by 3/26</i>	<i>Module III Quiz</i>
3/30-4/1	Week 12 – Constitutional Amendment Debate
Topics	Debating, revising, and selecting amendments from your submitted proposals (More details will be made available on eLC)
	<i>Nothing due this week (any revised Amendments will submitted as part of the activity)</i>
MODULE IV: CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE U.S. STATE	
4/6-8	Week 13 – Political Parties, Elections, and Public Opinion
Topics	Election processes, voting behavior and public opinion The changing role of political parties and political polarization
<i>Due by 4/9</i>	<i>Module IV Quiz</i>

4/8	<p><i>Receive your Reacting to the Past roles</i></p> <p>- <i>Have your game booklets by this date!</i></p>
4/13-15	Week 14 – Domestic Policy, Political Movements, and Reform
Topics	<p>Mechanisms for local, state, and federal legislative reform</p> <p>Major economic and social movements of the 21st century</p>
<i>Due by 4/16</i>	<i>Midterm Exam #2 (available on eLC beginning at 8am on 4/15)</i>
MODULE V: REACTING TO THE PAST: CHICAGO, 1968	
4/20-22	Week 15 – RtP Simulation: Setting the Convention Agenda
Topics	<p>Reacting to the Past (RtP) Parts 1-3</p> <p>- Note: I will be running a modified version that incorporates role activities from Parts 4-6. Check eLC for more detailed guidelines</p>
<i>Due by 4/22</i>	<i>Deliverables for Parts 1-3 (requirements per session vary by role)</i>
4/27	Week 16 – RtP Simulation: Debrief and Review
Topics	<p>Discuss potential ramifications of the actions taken during simulation versus what transpired historically, taking note of implications for our understanding of modern American governance</p>
<i>Due by 4/30</i>	<i>Final essay for RtP Simulation (descriptions and qualifications vary by role; see your booklet and eLC for more detailed rubric and guidelines)</i>
4/28	Reading Day (NO CLASS)
	Dedicated office hours in 217 Candler Hall from 3-5pm for any final questions

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

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 the website of Office of Instruction. We expect that the Student Honor Code will guide your efforts in this course. A lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy does not explain a violation. Please direct any questions to the instructor.

COURSE POLICIES

The following is taken verbatim from the University Council: “The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.”

The following is taken verbatim from LINK: “In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms my subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.”

FERPA STATEMENT

The following is taken verbatim from the Syllabus Checklist:

“The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. See the registrar’s explanation. FERPA allows disclosure of directory information (name, address, telephone, email, date of birth, place of birth, major, activities, degrees, awards, prior schools), unless requested in a written letter to the registrar.”

DISABILITY SERVICES

The following is taken verbatim from the Disability Resource Center:

“If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting the Disability Resource Center”

The following is taken verbatim from the document of Syllabus Creation:

“Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor or designate during regular office hours or by appointment.”

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESOURCES

The following is taken verbatim from the University Council:

“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 the website of Student Care and Outreach. 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 or crisis support. If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit 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.”