

POLS 1101H: American Government, Honors
Spring 2026

Instructor

Dr. Michael S. Lynch
Office: Baldwin Hall 416
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Office Hours: Mondays
2:00 PM-3:30 PM and by appointment

Class Schedule

Mondays and Wednesdays
11:35 AM-12:55 PM
Baldwin Hall 302

Course Description

This course is an introduction to American politics and government. We will explore the origins, development, and functions of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. An introduction to Georgia politics will also be provided. Whenever possible, we will use historical or current political issues and events to better explain the functions of government. Using a combination in-person lectures, in-person breakout sessions, and adaptive learning software, the course seeks to give students a better understanding and appreciation of the American political process. For additional information on Student Learning Outcomes and Institutional Competencies covered by this course please see the course's entry in the [UGA Bulletin](#).

Required Book

The following books are required and should available at the campus bookstore:

Bianco, William T. and David T. Canon. 2025. *American Politics Today, Elections Update* 8th Edition, W.W. Norton and Company.

An Ebook version of this text is available [here](#). Links to the Ebook and supporting materials are also available on the course's [eLC page](#).

We will also make use of *American Politics Today's* InQuizitive software as a graded part of the course. InQuizitive is an adaptive quizzing tool that will help students work through the concepts presented in each chapter of the textbook. You will need access to InQuizitive. You can purchase an Ebook from the publisher that includes access to InQuizitive. New copies of the textbook will be available from the campus bookstore and new copies will include an access code that allows students to access InQuizitive. If you purchase a used textbook, you will need to purchase access to InQuizitive separately.

In addition to the book and InQuizitive software, reading the news on a daily basis will be important for this course. The [New York Times](#) and the [Wall Street Journal](#) are two excellent news sources. University of Georgia students have full digital access to both of these papers through the UGA Libraries (see this [website](#) for more details).

There will be additional readings assigned for the some of the weeks of the course. Some of these appear on the course syllabus now, and some will be assigned as the semester progresses. All of these readings will be provided to students via eLC.

Course Grading

Your grade in this class will be assigned according to the following:

1. **Class attendance and participation** (15% of final grade): I expect you to attend class daily (i.e. excessive absences, regardless of your performance on exams, will result in a lowering of your final grade). If you know for sure that you will be missing class, I ask that you please email me in advance and notify me. Class periods will be part lecture and part discussion. You should be prepared to discuss the reading for the day with your classmates. Additional short readings or articles may be assigned.
2. **Quizzes** (15% of final grade): Students are required to complete online quizzes as part of their course grade. There will be a quiz to complete for each of the assigned textbook chapters using the InQuizitive system. These quizzes are adaptive and should help students both understand the course materials and prepare for exams. Additional information about InQuizitive can be found on the course's [eLC page](#).
3. **Writing and Special Assignments** (30% of final grade): There are four assignments scheduled for this class. Assignments will require you to write short (two to four pages) papers about a specific example of a topic discussed in class. Assignments will be submitted via eLC. Assignments turned in late will be penalized 10% for each day they are late.
4. **Mid-Semester Exam** (20% of final grade): Please take note of the date for the exam and mark it on your calendar now.
5. **Final Exam** (20% of final grade): Please take note of the date for the final exam and mark it on your calendar now.

Missed exams will only be excused in the most extraordinary circumstances (death in the family, documented illnesses, acts of God, etc.) If you are excused from an exam, I reserve the right to alter the format and substance of the makeup exam (e.g. you may not get the same exam as everyone else).

Course grades will be assigned as follows: 93–100% = A, 90–93% = A-, 87–90% = B+, 83–87% = B, 80–83% = B-, 77–80% = C+, 73–77% = C, 70–73% = C-, 60–70% = D, 0–60% = F.

Other Issues (in no particular order)

1. **Syllabus Disclaimer:** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.
2. **Instructor Availability:** I am available to meet with students by appointment if anyone cannot attend my posted office hours. Please email me to schedule a meeting.
3. **Accessibility:** Students in need of accessibility resources of any kind are strongly encouraged to tell me at the beginning of the semester, so appropriate accommodations can be made. If you plan to request accommodations for this course, please register with Accessibility and Testing. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or by visiting their [website](#).
4. **Classroom Behavior:** Students should behave professionally throughout the course. Disruptive behavior in discussion sections will not be tolerated. Laptops and other electronic may be used to take notes in class, but not in a way that is disruptive to other students.

UGA is committed to creating a dynamic, diverse, and welcoming learning environment for all students and has a [non-discrimination policy](#) that reflects this philosophy. Our class will respect all students regardless of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or national origin, religion, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status.

5. **Cheating and Plagiarism:** 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 [Academic Honesty](#).
6. **FERPA Notice:** The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. More information can be found at the registrar’s [website](#).
7. **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 and 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.

8. **Artificial Intelligence-Based Software:** Students are allowed to use generative AI software for academic work, provided they document its use. This includes specifying the software used, the extent of its use, and how it contributed to the final product. AI-generated content must be cited appropriately, and students should include a brief reflection on how the AI tool helped them and what they learned from using it. The work must remain original, with AI not replacing critical thinking or personal effort. Instructors will evaluate both the content and the documentation of AI use, considering proper documentation in grading. Failure to document AI use may result in penalties, including reduced grades or academic disciplinary actions. Cases of suspected misuse will be reviewed by the academic integrity committee. (This paragraph was generated with the assistance of Copilot).

Course Topics

INTRODUCTION / COURSE OVERVIEW

WHY GOVERNMENT?

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 1.

Axelrod, Robert M. 1984. *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Chapters 1 and 4.

Hardin, Garrett. 1968. “[The Tragedy of the Commons](#).” *Science*. 162: 1243-1248.

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE FOUNDING

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 2.

U.S. Constitution

Declaration of Independence and Letter from Birmingham Jail

Articles of Confederation

Dougherty, Keith L. and Jac C. Heckelman. 2006. “[A Pivotal Voter from a Pivotal State: Roger Sherman at the Constitutional Convention](#).” *American Political Science Review* 100(2): 297-302.

FEDERALISM

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 3.

Georgia Constitution

Congressional Research Service 2022. “[The Evolution of Marijuana as a Controlled Substance and the Federal-State Policy Gap](#).” *Congressional Research Service*.

CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CIVIL RIGHTS

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapters 4 and 5.

U.S. Bill of Rights

Wehle, Kim. 2019. *How to Read the Constitution and Why*, Chapters 6 and 8.

[Gratz v. Bollinger](#), 539 U.S. 244 (2003).

Articles on recent Supreme Court civil liberties and civil rights cases, TBD.

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE MEDIA

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 6.

Gallup, George. 2008. "Polling the Public."

Articles on recent polls, TBD.

Groseclose, Tim and Jeffery Milyo. 2005. "A Measure of Media Bias." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

POLITICAL PARTIES

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 7.

Gelman, Andrew. 2010. *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do*, Chapter 8.

ELECTIONS AND REVIEW

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 8.

MIDTERM EXAM

FEDERAL AND STATE ELECTIONS

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 8.

Abramowitz, Alan I. 2008. "Forecasting the 2008 Presidential Election with the Time-for-Change Model." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 41(4):691-695

Abramowitz, Alan I. 2016. "Will Time for Change Mean Time for Trump" *PS:Political Science and Politics* 49(4):659-660.

Achen, Christopher H. and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*, Chapter .5

INTEREST GROUPS

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 9.

Burstein, Paul. 2009. "Is Congress Really for Sale."

U.S. CONGRESS AND GEORGIA LEGISLATURE

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 10.

Strom, Gerald. *The Logic of Lawmaking*, excerpts.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chapters 1 and 2.

U.S. PRESIDENT AND GEORGIA GOVERNOR

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 11.

Emancipation Proclamation

Wehle, Kim. 2019. *How to Read the Constitution and Why*, Chapters 3.

Assignment #4 Due

FEDERAL AND STATE BUREAUCRACIES

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 12.

Gettysburg Address

Lewis, Michael. 2018 *The Fifth Risk*. Chapter 1.

FEDERAL AND STATE COURTS

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 13.

Federalist Papers, No. 78 Scalia, Antonin. 2009. “Common-Law Courts in a Civil-Law System: The Role of United States Federal Courts in Interpreting the Constitution and Laws.”

Breyer, Stephen. 2009. “Our Democratic Constitution.”

PUBLIC POLICY

American Politics Today, 8th ed., Chapter 14 and 15.

Budget Balancing Exercise

CATCHUP AND REVIEW

FINAL EXAM