

American Political Development

Political Science 4105

Spring 2026

Baldwin 101D

TR 9:55-11:15am

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Course Description:

The primary goal of this course is to familiarize the student with American political history and policy development. The class will focus on the development of American political institutions from the late 18th century through the 19th century. Throughout the semester, we will focus on topics including: the failure of the Articles of Confederation, the Constitutional Convention, the creation of American political parties, Congress and the passage and evolution of major policies. Particular attention will be given to how these institutions and policies influence contemporary American politics.

Books and Readings:

The following books are required and can be purchased from amazon.com:

Ellis, Joseph. 2001. *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Ellis, Joseph. 2007. *American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Freeman, Joanne. 2018. *The Field of Blood: Violence in Congress and the Road to Civil War*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Students will not only be expected to have done the reading assignments, but should also be aware of relevant news stories. As such, I recommend reading a daily newspaper – such as the New York Times and/or the Washington Post – or at least checking cnn.com. Other political blogs that students may find useful include FiveThirtyEight, Political Wire, The Monkey Cage, The Upshot, Vox and the Drudge Report.

Some optional books you might want to consider purchasing can be found on amazon.com:

Aldrich, John H. 2011. *Why Parties? A Second Look*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Mann, Robert. 1996. *The Walls of Jericho: Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Richard Russell, and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.

Potter, David M. 1976. *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861*. New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc.

Holt, Michael F. 2004. *The Fate of Their Country*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.

Oleszek, Walter J., Mark J. Oleszek, Elizabeth Rybicki and Bill Heniff, Jr. 2020. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. 11th Edition. CQ Press: Washington, DC.

Schickler, Eric. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Additional readings will be posted on the course website. Many of these readings will be highly technical in nature. As such, students are not expected to understand all aspects of each paper. However, they will be held accountable for a basic understanding of the paper's theory and applications.

Course Grading:

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

1. Background Survey (**5% of final grade**): Students will be asked to fill out a short background survey for the purposes of matching them with a paper topic. A link to the survey will be provided by the instructor. The deadline to fill out the survey is **January 20**.
2. Class Attendance/Participation (**5% of final grade**): One of the goals for this class is for students to become comfortable discussing political institutions, issues, events and research. Hence, they will be encouraged to attend and participate in course discussions. Students will be given one point for attending the class, and an additional point for adequate participation. The lowest two attendance/participation grades will be dropped. A student's participation grade may also include several small quizzes or assignments.
3. Exams (**30% of final grade**): Two examinations (worth 15% each) will be given during the course. The dates are listed on the syllabus as **February 24** and **April 30**. These exams will be given in class. The exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer questions and exercises. The exams will be non-cumulative. If a student is unable to take the exam on the scheduled date, they should contact the course instructor beforehand. A missed exam will only be excused for a documented illness (documentation must be provided by a physician) or a death in the family.
4. Exercises (**10% of final grade**): Two exercises (worth 5% each) will be given during the course. These exercises will consist of questions related to using resources required for students to write their legislative history assignment. The exercises will be made available to students a week before their due date. The due dates are listed on the syllabus as **February 12** and **March 3**.

5. Legislative History (**50% of final grade**): In order to demonstrate an understanding of the historical policy-making process, students are required to complete a paper analyzing the consideration and passage of a major piece of American legislation. Each student will be assigned to a legislative history “teams” on the basis of the course survey and their topic paper. While students are encouraged to work with their legislative history “teammates,” they are not obligated to do so. Each student will be assigned differing questions and duties related to the legislative history and graded separately. Students are also encouraged to use material from their exams in compiling their legislative histories. A final draft of the paper will be due on **May 5**. The legislative history assignment will count for 50% of the final course grade.

The sections and paper grade are discussed below (more detailed discussions of the assignment will be provided in class). While the due dates for the topic paper and final paper are mandatory, all other dates are provided for students looking for comments and feedback.

- (1) A one-page Topic Paper detailing a broader issue the student is interested in analyzing. This paper should include a broad discussion of the policy area, paying close attention to the topic’s importance and relevance. The topic paper accounts for 5% of the final course grade and is due on **January 22**. It will not be combined with the broader legislative history paper.
- (2) A Background section that answers a specific question assigned by the instructor. Typically, this will necessitate contextualizing either the political climate the legislation was considered in or provide a history of the policy. Ideally, it will demonstrate why the legislation was needed. The background section is due **March 17**. It is worth 10% of the final course grade.
- (3) A Member Spotlight section. This is a short, one to two-page discussion detailing a member of Congress associated with the passage of the law. It can include either a broad overview of a member’s career and/or an interesting episode they were involved in. Students are encouraged to focus on whatever details they feel are the most interesting. The Member Spotlight is due on **March 24**. It is worth 5% of the final course grade.
- (4) A Process section that analyzes committee and floor consideration of the measure during a specific period assigned by the instructor. This may involve House or Senate consideration of a bill or conference report and will likely necessitate the discussion of a given rule or legislative procedure. It will also likely necessitate analyzing a roll call vote. The process section is due on **April 2**. It is worth 15% of the final course grade.
- (5) An Aftermath section that analyzes a post-enactment event related to the bill assigned to the student by the instructor. This might include the law being amended by a subsequent piece of legislation, being altered by a series of Supreme Court decisions or its enforcement by the President and bureaucracy. The Aftermath section is due on **April 16**. It is worth 10% of the final course grade.

(6) A Final Paper that combines the background, member spotlight, process, and aftermath sections and incorporates any instructor comments is due on **May 5**. The final paper should also include a brief, three-paragraph Summary detailing the legislation and issue the student will be analyzing. Specifically, the summary section should do three things: Paragraph 1: Tell the reader what the law does/sought to do; Paragraph 2: Tell the reader why both the underlying issue and law are (or are not) considered important today; Paragraph 3: Characterize its passage. Was it controversial? Partisan? What were the key votes/moments that occurred during consideration? The summary section is worth 5% of the final course grade.

Each of the sections mentioned above should be clearly labelled, written in Times New Roman 12-point font (main text) and Times News Roman 10-point font (footnotes). It should be single-spaced and include a Work Cited section. As noted above, students are not obligated to turn each section in at the assigned date. If they do so, they are welcome to respond to any feedback provided on the section. Their final grade for the section will be the average of their initial and revised scores.

Final course grades will be assigned as follows: 100-93 = A, 90-92 = A-, 87-89 = B+, 83-86 = B, 80-82 = B-, 77-79 = C+, 73-76 = C, 70-72 = C-, 60-69 = D, and 60-0. Extra credit will not be given in this course.

Disabilities:

Students with disabilities of any kind are strongly encouraged to contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester, so appropriate accommodations can be made. 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 <http://drc.uga.edu>.

Instructor Availability:

Students seeking to contact the instructor are encouraged to stop by during scheduled office hours. Students who are unable to attend office hours should e-mail ahead of time to ensure instructor availability.

Classroom Behavior:

Students should behave professionally throughout the course. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes cell phone usage, excessive talking and derogatory or offensive comments made during discussion. Students will be held responsible for all material discussed or assigned.

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.

Cheating and Plagiarism:

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will have their names forwarded to the University. It is each student's responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism. Specifically, all course work must meet the standards put forth in the University of Georgia's Student Honor Code. See the Academic Honesty Policy for details on what is expected of you.

Artificial Intelligence:

Students are discouraged, but not prohibited from using Artificial Intelligence in the writing of their Legislative History paper for POLS 4105. However, any factual inaccuracies will result in the instructor awarding a "0" on the accuracy score of the relevant paper section. As we will discuss, these occur at a fairly high rate when applying AI to this assignment.

FERPA Notice:

The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. See the registrar's explanation [here](#).

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.

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading
13-Jan	Course Overview/Syllabus	
15-Jan	What is American Political Development? Institutions Review	Living Hell CRS: Intro to the Legislative Process
20-Jan	Why Rules? The Constitution Qualtrics Survey Due	Cox 2000 U.S. Constitution
22-Jan	Path Dependency Farrand's Records Topic Paper Due	Pierson 2000
27-Jan	Writing a Legislative History	Legislative History Resources
29-Jan	The Founding	American Creation, Prologue-Ch.1
3-Feb	The Argument	American Creation, Ch. 3
5-Feb	Spatial Modeling in Congress	Shepsle and Bonchek Ch. 5
10-Feb	Pivotal Voters and the Constitutional Convention	Dougherty and Heckelman (2006) Robertson (2006)
12-Feb	The Dinner The Silence Using Resources Exercise 1 Due	Founding Brothers, Ch. 2-3
17-Feb	The First Parties	Aldrich and Grant (1993)
19-Feb	Marbury v. Madison	Clinton (1994)
24-Feb	Exam 1	
26-Feb	The Compromise of 1824	Jenkins and Sala (1998) Carson and Engstrom (2005)
3-Mar	Lawmaking in the Contemporary Congress History and Evolution of the House Using Resources Exercise 2 Due	Cooper and Brady (1981) Legislation on the House Floor Field of Blood, Ch. 2

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule (*cont*):

Date	Topic	Reading
5-Mar	A Sectional Rift: The 1830s and 1840s The “Gag Rule” Debate	Meinke (2007) Field of Blood, Ch. 3-4
10-Mar	No Class (Spring Break!)	
12-Mar	No Class (Spring Break!)	
17-Mar	Ideological Scaling Background Section Due	Mapping Congressional Polarization
19-Mar	U.S. Senate History	Senate Floor Process Senate: Origins and Development
24-Mar	Bleeding Kansas Member Spotlight Due	Field of Blood, Ch. 5-7
26-Mar	The Election of 1860	Jenkins and Morris (2006)
31-Mar	Writing a Process Section	Legislation on the House Floor Senate Floor Process
2-Apr	Lincoln Process Section Due	
7-Apr	Lincoln, cont.	
9-Apr	U.S. Immigration Policy	Marinari (2014)
14-Apr	U.S. Education Policy	Jenkins and Peck (2021) Rose (2016)
16-Apr	Gender and APD Aftermath Section Due	Graham (1983) Teele (2018)
21-Apr	Civil Rights	Schickler, Pearson and Feinstein (2010) Jenkins, Peck and Weaver (2010)
23-Apr	Civil Rights (<i>cont</i>)	Rose (2022)
28-Apr	Review	
30-Apr	Exam 2	
5-May	Paper Due Summary Due	