

Political Science 1101

American Government

Spring 2026

Professor: Stephen Nicholson

E-mail: snicholson@uga.edu

Class Schedule: Tuesday/Thursday 1:15-2:10 (Sanford 213)

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:00 in 309D Baldwin and by appointment

Lead TA: Mckinley Frees

Email: mckinley.frees@uga.edu

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the institutions and processes of American national government and the state of Georgia. Over the course of the semester, we will examine explanations of how our political system operates and how well it meets its democratic aspirations. The purpose of the course is to promote learning and critical thinking about U.S. politics that goes beyond much of what we hear and read in the news, social media, and everyday conversation. One of my primary goals then is to have you reevaluate commonly held assumptions and criticisms of the American political system. In some instances, what you learn will run counter to commonly held views about American government (regardless of your political beliefs). We will also focus on many basics of U.S. government, history, and the U.S. Constitution that are not well known or understood (e.g., the Electoral College). Lastly, we will cover the Georgia constitution and political system.

Course Readings:

Janda, Kenneth, Jeffrey M. Berry, Jerry Goldman, Deborah Schildkraut, and Paul Manna. 2026. *The Challenge of Democracy: American Government in Global Politics 16th Edition*. Boston. Cengage.

****You must purchase a version of the textbook with access to MindTap****

There are also required (free) online readings for most weeks that are listed under the semester schedule.

Class Website:

The class will be administered through the eLC website and you will use it to submit assignments, take quizzes, and to receive class announcements. My primary means of communication with you will be through announcements posted in eLC so be sure to check *frequently* (at least daily). To ensure you automatically receive eLC updates for our class via email you will need to do the following: eLC > Click on your profile > Notifications > Instant Notifications. Please note that you cannot reply to an email I send via eLC (ending in @uga.view.usg.edu emails) so contact me by my standard email address instead (snicholson@uga.edu).

Courseware:

We will be using **Top Hat** for class participation (both lecture and discussion sections). You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or through text message. For instructions on how to download and use the Top Hat app, please click [here](#) for instructions on how to get started. You will need access to your Top Hat account during the lecture either through your laptop or your phone. Our class is called "POLS1101 Spring 2026 Prof. Nicholson." I

will provide the join code during our first day of class. There is an additional TopHat course for your breakout section. Your TA will provide the join code for that course in your first breakout session. Professor Nicholson or your teaching assistant will not be able to help with technical issues.

Course Requirements:

To complete the course successfully, students are required to take weekly online quizzes, three in-class exams, and regularly participate in breakout section. Students will apply theoretical frameworks, including political values and democratic theories, to analyze the organization and functioning of American government, its political institutions, and processes. The purpose of the quizzes and exams is to assess student understanding of the structure and operation of the American political system and demonstrate knowledge of the central theories, approaches, and findings.

Lecture Participation and Extra Credit:

Students should attend class regularly and, ideally, have read the material before class. Given the large amount of material we will cover, it is important to not get behind or miss class. If you anticipate missing more than a few classes or are unable to keep up with the reading, please drop the class. Although class slides will be available to you during and after class, students who attend class typically receive higher grades. If you care about your grade, come to class!

Students who attend class and participate will receive extra credit (up to 2 percentage points of your final grade!). Using Top Hat, I will periodically ask questions to gauge student learning. Each time you answer a question, you receive extra credit. The extra credit is added to your final grade *at the end of the semester*. Since in-class participation points are extra credit, there are no opportunities to make up missed points due to absence (regardless of why you missed class).

Students are also expected to be courteous. Please do not eat, sleep, read, arrive late to, or leave during, class time (if you must leave early, please sit in the back row and exit discretely). Do not text, surf the web, or otherwise do anything on your phone, tablet, or computer that is not class related. Other than answering class questions with the Top Hat app, students are not to be on their phones during class.

Breakout Section:

You are required to regularly attend the breakout session you are enrolled in (attendance will be taken). One of the learning outcomes associated with the breakout sessions is for students to demonstrate an ability to engage in informed, respectful discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

Please identify your section and your Teaching Assistant (TA) by checking your class schedule. This is an important step since your TA is responsible for leading the breakout session and grades. Attendance in breakout session is mandatory and part of your grade. Your TA will discuss expectations with you. All breakout sessions are on Friday.

Section	Time	Place	Instructor	Email
22484	8:40	PSYCH 309	Maddox Fenell	maddoxfenell@uga.edu
22485	8:40	BALDWIN 322	Siyuan Zhao	Siri.Zhao@uga.edu
22486	8:40	BALDWIN G41	Jordan Myrick	Jordon.Myrick@uga.edu
22487	9:55	PARK 115	Maddox Fenell	maddoxfenell@uga.edu
22488	9:55	BALDWIN 104	Jordan Myrick	Jordon.Myrick@uga.edu
22489	9:55	JOUR 516	Mckinley Frees	mckinley.frees@uga.edu
22490	9:55	JOUR 509	Siyuan Zhao	Siri.Zhao@uga.edu
22491	12:00	BALDWIN 264	Caitlin O'Kelley	Caitlin.OKelley@uga.edu
22492	12:00	JOUR 511	Kate Kraft	Kathlyn.Kraft@uga.edu
22493	1:15	BALDWIN 102	Caitlin O'Kelley	Caitlin.OKelley@uga.edu
22494	1:15	PSYCH 111	Kate Kraft	Kathlyn.Kraft@uga.edu

Grading

The final grade is made up of weekly chapter quizzes (open book/note), three in-class exams (two midterms and a final), and breakout section participation. The weekly chapter quizzes are worth 15%, the in-class exams are worth 25% each, and participation in discussion section is worth 10%. Although the third exam is held during finals week, it will be non-cumulative and be worth the same amount as the other in-class exams. *Weekly quizzes need to be completed no later than midnight on Thursday, the night before discussion section.*

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A = 94 and above	B- = 80-83	D+ = 67-69
A- = 90-93	C+ = 77-79	D = 64-66
B+ = 87-89	C = 74-76	D- = 60-63
B = 84-86	C- = 70-73	F < Below 60

Any questions you have regarding grades should be directed to the teaching assistant. If you are unable to resolve the matter with them, *you may appeal the grade to me within a week of receiving it.* Keep in mind that formal grade appeals must be made in writing. I will re-grade the entire assignment or exam. Therefore, your grade may go up or down. In your written appeal, elaborate on how you fulfilled the criteria, so that I can compare your own assessment to your TA's assessment of your paper.

Whom To Contact When You Have Questions

If you have questions regarding lecture or administrative concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at snicholson@uga.edu. *Questions regarding grades should be directed to your teaching assistant.*

Late Work and Makeups

Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam or quiz (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness, student-athlete responsibilities) must be presented to the teaching assistant and accepted prior to the exam/quiz when feasible. If you need to make up a quiz or an exam, it is your responsibility to schedule a date with your TA within ONE week of the original quiz/exam date.

Academic Honesty:

You are expected to adhere to the 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 policies and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi. Unless explicitly stated, artificial intelligence-based technologies, such as ChatGPT, must not be used to generate responses for student assignments. If you are unclear what constitutes plagiarism, please consult Professor Nicholson or your teaching assistant.

Prohibition on Recording Classes:

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 including lectures and discussion sections. I require that you seek my permission if you want to make audio and/or video recordings of any portion of class. If you do not have permission (or an accommodation from DRC), 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 will 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.

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://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).

If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/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.

Use of AI

UGA's policy is that the use of AI for coursework is not permitted unless explicitly authorized by me ahead of time.

Semester Schedule:

1/13 & **Introduction & Political Values**
1/15 Janda, Chapter 1 & Online Quiz
Ideology quiz (not graded) at <http://www.idealogy.org> (Choose *self-test*).
[Does college turn people into liberals?](#)

- 1/20 &
1/22 **Democracy**
Janda, Chapter 2 & Online Quiz
[-The 'sore loser effect': Rejecting election results can destabilize democracy and drive terrorism](#)
- 1/27 &
1/29 **Constitutional Foundations**
Janda, Chapter 3 & Online Quiz
[Declaration of Independence](#)
[Articles of Confederation](#) (towards the bottom of the page)
[Federalist papers](#) (read Federalist 10)
[The United States Constitution](#)
- 2/3 **Federalism & Georgia politics**
Janda, Chapter 4 & Online Quiz
[The Georgia Constitution](#)
- 2/5 **Civil Liberties**
Janda, Chapter 15 & Online Quiz
[Bill of Rights](#) (towards the bottom of the page)
[-Supreme Court overturns constitutional right to abortion](#)
- 2/10 **Civil Rights** & Online Quiz
Janda, Chapter 16
[Gettysburg Address](#)
[Emancipation Proclamation](#)
[Letter from Birmingham Jail](#) (the original typeset version is [here](#))
- 2/12 **Midterm 1**
- 2/17 &
2/19 **Congress**
Janda, Chapter 11 & Online Quiz
[Congress began losing power decades ago – and now it's giving away what remains to Trump](#)
[Term limits aren't the answer](#)
- 2/24 &
2/26 **Presidency**
Janda, Chapter 12 & Online Quiz
[Key facts from the Supreme Court's immunity ruling and how it affects presidential power](#)
- 3/3 &
3/5 **Bureaucracy**
Janda, Chapter 13 & Online Quiz
[Supreme Court strikes down Chevron, curtailing power of federal agencies](#)
- 3/9-3/13
3/17 **Spring Break**
Courts
Janda, Chapter 14 & Online Quiz
[-Does Oral Argument Matter?](#)

- 3/19 **Midterm 2**
- 3/24 **Interest Groups and Pluralism**
Janda, Chapter 10 & Online Quiz
- 3/26 **Political Parties**
Janda, Chapter 8 & Online Quiz
- 3/31 &
4/2 **Mass Media**
Janda, Chapter 6 & Online Quiz
[-Claims of ideological bias among the media may be overblown](#)
- 4/7 &
4/9 **Public Opinion**
Janda, Chapter 5 & Online Quiz
[-Explainer: How abortion became a divisive issue in U.S. politics](#)
[-Congress is considering making same-sex marriage federal law-a political scientist explains how this issue became less polarized over time](#)
- 4/14 &
4/16 **Participation & Voting**
Janda, Chapter 7 & Online Quiz
[-Did shark attacks eat into Woodrow Wilson's votes in 1916?](#)
- 4/21 &
4/23 **Campaigns & Elections**
Janda, Chapter 9 & Online Quiz
[Partisan or not? Local election officials don't tilt elections in favor of their party's candidate](#)
- 4/30 **Final Exam 12:00-3:00**
This syllabus provides a general plan for the course, deviations may be necessary.