

POLS 1101E: Introduction to American Government

Dr. Karson P. Ray

University of Georgia

E-mail: karson.ray@uga.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Office: Baldwin Hall 305A

Class Hours: Asynchronous & Online

Term: Short Session II (July 6–31)

Course Description

Introduction to American Government examines fundamentals of the American government, including the philosophical and constitutional foundations, political institutions and main actors, such as Congress and the presidency, democratic practices such as voting, political participation, and civil rights and liberties. It also includes a closer look at the State of Georgia, its constitution, and political system.

Required Materials

- Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser, Vavreck, and Johnson. 2025. *The Logic of American Politics*. CQ Press. 12th Edition. ISBN: 9781071929537 (paperback) or 9781071929568 (e-book). Can be purchased through UGA Bookstore, Amazon or CQ Press. Online textbook use is permitted. **Access to SAGE Vantage platform is required to complete coursework.** Our course ID is RAYDQM-1863.
- Engstrom et al. 2014. *Georgia's Constitution and Government*. UGA Press. 9th Edition. ISBN: 9780820347196. This is a free resource through the UGA Library and is linked on ELC.
- Primary source readings and any additional readings will be available on ELC weekly.

Course Objectives

This course introduces students to the history, processes, and institutions of American Government. Students will learn how laws are made, enforced, and interpreted by the three branches of the U.S. government, as well as the importance of political parties, interest groups, and civil rights and civil liberties in the American political system. Similar topics will be studied with regard to Georgia's state government, with particular attention to the Georgia state constitution. Throughout the course, students will demonstrate their understanding through a critical

examination of the facts and principles of American government, they will learn theories about American government and how to evaluate them, they will practice their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and they will learn to apply these skills to ethical problems in the community. Students may be evaluated based on examinations, research papers, and/or homework.

This course applies to Area V Social Sciences requirements of UGA's General Education Curriculum. It also satisfies the USG graduation requirements for demonstrating knowledge of both the U.S. and Georgia Constitutions.

Student Learning Objectives:

Successful students should...

1. learn to articulate competing positions on political topics in assignments.
2. 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. 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. 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. demonstrate an ability to engage in respectful discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

Course Structure

Class Structure

This course is designed to introduce you to American Politics in a generalized way. The abundance and intensity of readings is meant to challenge you; I do not expect you to have a full and complete understanding of the readings before engaging with class content. What I do expect is for you to have questions, and to leave the course with a more complete knowledge of the different aspects of American government.

All assignments and assessments should be submitted and/or accessed on ELC.

Grades

- **Multiple Choice Exams** will be administered three times during the semester in alignment with the three-module structure. These exams will not be cumulative and will be comprised of material from the entire module. Exams will count for 45% of your final grade (15%

each). You will have 60 minutes to take each exam, and exams will be open on ELC during the last two to three days (business week dependent) of each module; exams will not be opened early. Once you begin a multiple choice exam, you will have 60 minutes to complete the exam (aka you will not be able to begin the exam and walk away; it will be submitted after 60 minutes). Multiple choice exams will not be reopened if submitted late or not submitted at all (aka no late work is accepted without documented, legitimate excuse). You may use your class notes, but are expressly prohibited from using AI/generative AI or classmates on this exam. **If found to be using any of these resources, you will be dropped from the course and a report will be filed with the Office of Academic Honesty.**

- **Position Papers** will be due three times throughout the semester (corresponding with each module), meaning that each short paper is worth 10% of your final grade (30% total). The intention of these papers is to challenge you to form your own opinions about relevant topics in American government. A rubric is available on ELC and the due dates for each paper are within the syllabus and on ELC, and correspond with the end of each module. The most important aspects of these papers is to be able to justify your position, whatever it may be, with appropriate, peer-reviewed research. Each position paper should be no less than two pages double-spaced, not including headers or citations.
- **SAGE Vantage work** will account for 10% of your final grade. This engagement with your textbook in an online platform will allow opportunities to keep up with the quick learning pace of our classroom in a more detailed way. These assignments will be graded by completion, not accuracy. Any deadlines missed on SAGE Vantage assignments will not be accepted late; the only exception here are missed assignments with a documented excuse.

SAGE Vantage work within each chapter includes: Knowledge Checks, Video Activities, Data Activities, Chapter Critical Thinking Checks, and the Chapter Quizzes. All of these assessments are due for each chapter within each module. These are graded for completion and can be accessed at any time throughout the semester (aka you could finish all these assignments as early as you want, but they are absolutely due at the end of each corresponding module).

- A **Final Essay Exam** will open from 8 am to 5 pm on the last day of our semester, July 31st, and serve as a final reflection on all that you've learned throughout the semester. This final essay exam will count for 15% of your grade.

Grading Summary

I reserve the right to curve the scale dependent on overall class scores at the end of the semester. Your final grade will count these assessments using the following proportions:

- **45%** of your grade will be determined by three multiple-choice exams; each will count for 15%.
- **30%** of your grade will be the Position Papers (10% each, 3 short papers total).
- **10%** of your grade will be your SAGE Vantage work.
- **15%** of your grade will be determined by the Final Essay Exam.

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	88-89
B	84-87
B-	80-83
C+	78-79
C	74-77
C-	70-73
D	60-69
F	< 60

Module Work

For each module, you should listen to lectures and read all textbook chapters and any assigned articles (on ELC). Lectures will be available beginning on July 7th and posted daily (Monday through Friday) at 8 am on ELC. Lectures are brief but essential to your performance on the Multiple Choice Exam. All lectures for each module will be posted by the day before the Multiple Choice Exam is due (at the latest). **Modules and/or assessments within will not be opened early.**

For each module, you should submit by the due dates outlined below:

- Multiple Choice Exam
- Module Research Paper
- SAGE Vantage Work

Class Policies

Communication

Email is the best way to contact me. I ask that you give me at least 24 hours during the week and at least 48 hours over the weekend to respond. **You must include "1101E" in the email subject.** Please only email me using your UGA email address, and do not email me through ELC (I will likely not see it). Requests for meetings must be made at least 24 hours in advance of the proposed meeting time.

Policies on Incomplete Grades, Late Assignments, and Makeup Assessments

Given the vast accessibility of assessments during this online course, late work will not be accepted. **I will only accept incomplete or late assignments and will administer makeup assessments when a documented excuse is provided.** Makeup exams or assessments require documentation, and notice as soon as possible. Under no circumstances will makeup assessments be given without documentation, and makeup assessments must be scheduled within one week (at maximum) of the original assessment date. I am flexible, and understanding, but I must be aware of your circumstances to be able to accept incomplete or late work. Incomplete work without a legitimate excuse will be given a "0" and late work (when accepted) without an excuse is subject to a 10% reduction in overall grade for every day after the deadline. Assignments will not be accepted if submitted 7 days or more after the deadline and will receive a "0".

Policies on Grades

I automatically round final numerical grades that are 0.5 and above to the next highest numerical grade.

If you have questions about grading on assignments/assessments, please reach out via email to schedule a meeting (in person or via Zoom) about the assignment. I will not discuss grading specifics over email.

Please do not email me asking when grades will be posted. Under most circumstances, grades are returned one to two weeks after assessments take place. Emailing to ask when grades will be posted will delay grades being posted.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Please see UGA's extensive policies on academic honesty (<http://honesty.uga.edu>). Be aware that under no circumstances will cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty be tolerated in this class. 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 honesty.uga.edu.

Please note that in my class, the use of unauthorized devices on assessments will result in an automatic report to UGA's Office of Academic Honesty and severe grade penalties.

Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

To ensure you develop and master the foundational knowledge and skills in this course, the use of generative AI (GAI) tools is strictly prohibited. This includes all stages of your work process, even the preliminary ones. This prohibition extends to AI writing tools like Grammarly and Wordtune, as well as GAI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, Writesonic, Rytr, and Rytutor. If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with me before using it.

The use of Artificial Intelligence on assignments/assessments will result in an automatic report to UGA's Office of Academic Honesty, a 0 on the assignment/assessment, and severe grade penalties.

Mental Health and Wellness at UGA

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 & 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.

Disability Accommodations

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Accessibility and Testing Center (A&T), formerly the Disability Resource Center (DRC). I will accommodate requests from A&T in this course. Additional information can be found here: <https://accessibility.uga.edu>

Prohibition on Class Recordings and Distribution of Course Materials

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 will 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 may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

For more information on securing an accommodation to record lectures, see: <https://accessibility.uga.edu/faculty-guidelines-for-record-lecture/>.

Student Success Resources

The Office for Student Success and Achievement (OSSA) empowers students to achieve success throughout their academic journey. Through free peer tutoring, academic coaching, UNIV student success courses, Bulldog Basics, and first-generation student support, we promote well-being, student learning, and community building. To connect with OSSA, email ossa@uga.edu, call (706) 542-0163, or visit Milledge Hall (near Reed Hall and Sanford Stadium).

Schedule and Weekly Learning Goals

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. The schedule is tentative and subject to change, though I commit to giving you plenty of advance notice if anything changes. The learning goals expressed in the syllabus above should be viewed as the key concepts you should grasp after each week.

"Read" indicates the required reading per topic. "Listen" indicates the lectures (uploaded to ELC) to be watched/listened to per topic. Information from both the readings and lectures will be tested on the multiple choice exams.

KJKVJ = The Logic of American Politics by Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser, Vavreck, Johnson

Module 1: Foundations of American Government (open July 6th and due July 14th)

(Lecture 1) Introduction to American Politics and Revolution

- Read: KJKVJ Chapter 1
- Listen: The Logic of American Politics, Revolution pt. 1

(Lecture 2) Constitution

- Read: KJKVJ Chapter 2, Declaration of Independence (ELC), Articles of Confederation (ELC), U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights (ELC)
- Listen: Revolution pt. 2, Constitutional Convention, The US Constitution

(Lecture 3) Federalism

- Read: KJKVJ Chapter 3, Gettysburg Address (ELC), Emancipation Proclamation (ELC)
- Listen: Eras of Federalism, Federalism Today

(Lecture 4) Civil Rights and Liberties

- Read: KJKVJ Chapters 4 and 5, Letter from Birmingham Jail (ELC)
- Listen: Introduction to Rights and Liberties, Civil Rights, Civil Liberties

Due on July 14th by 11:59 pm: Syllabus Quiz, Module 1 Multiple Choice Exam, Position Paper #1, SAGE Vantage Work (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Module 2: Institutions of American Government (open July 14th and due July 22nd)

(Lecture 5) Congress

- Read: KJKVJ Chapter 6
- Listen: Introduction and Basics of Congress, Legislative Process

(Lecture 6) Presidency

- Read: KJKVJ Chapter 7
- Listen: Introduction to the Presidency, The Presidency Today

(Lecture 7) Federal Judiciary

- Read: KJKVJ Chapter 9
- Listen: The Federal Courts, Judicial Decision-Making

(Lecture 8) Bureaucracy

- Read: KJKVJ Chapter 8
- Listen: Bureaucracy

(Lecture 9) Georgia Politics

- Read: Engstrom et al (selected readings), Georgia Constitution (ELC)
- Listen: Georgia Politics

Due on July 22nd by 11:59 pm: Module 2 Multiple Choice Exam, Position Paper #2, SAGE Vantage Work (Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9)

Module 3: Behavior in American Government (open July 22nd and due July 30th)

(Lecture 10) Public Opinion and Media

- Read: KJKVJ Chapters 10 & 14
- Listen: Public Opinion, Mass Media

(Lecture 11) Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

- Read: KJKVJ Chapter 11
- Listen: Expansion of Suffrage, Voting and Elections, Campaign Finance

(Lecture 12) Political Parties

- Read: KJKVJ Chapter 12
- Listen: Eras of Political Parties, Political Parties Today

(Lecture 13) Interest Groups

- Read: KJKVJ Chapter 13
- Listen: Interest Groups

Due on July 30th by 11:59 pm: Module 3 Multiple Choice Exam, Position Paper #3, SAGE Vantage Work (Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13, 14)

Withdrawal deadline is July 23rd.

Final essay exam is on July 31st (opens at 8 am and due at 11:59 pm on ELC.

Assignment	Due Date
Module 1	July 14th
Module 2	July 22nd
Module 3	July 30th
Final Essay Exam	July 31st