

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government

Dr. Karson P. Ray

University of Georgia

E-mail: karson.ray@uga.edu

Office Hours: Mondays, 12 pm or by appointment **Class Hours:** M/W, 9:55 – 11:15 am

Office: Baldwin Hall 305A

Classroom: Sanford Hall 112

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 9781071969953 (e-book with Vantage access). Can be purchased through UGA Bookstore, Amazon or CQ Press. Online textbook use is recommended. **Access to SAGE Vantage platform is required to complete coursework. If you purchase the physical textbook, please ensure that you also have access to the SAGE Vantage platform.**
- 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 and Student Learning Outcomes

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, class discussion, presentations, and/or homework.

Successful students will:

1. Apply theoretical framework, such as federalism, separation of powers, and pluralism to analyze the organization and functioning of American government, its political institutions, and processes.
2. Familiarize yourself with the constitutional and philosophical foundations of the U.S. political system, including the Declaration of Independence, Federalist Papers, the U.S. and Georgia Constitution, among others.
3. Critically assess the effects of media and public opinion, using analytical tools to interpret data such as public opinion surveys, election results, and demographic trends.
4. Learn to articulate competing positions on political topics in written and verbal format.
5. Demonstrate the ability to engage in respectful discussion and civil debate on American politics.

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 class. What I do expect is for you to come to class with questions, and to leave with a more complete knowledge of the different aspects of American government.

Grades

- **Quizzes** will be administered six times during the semester; these quizzes will take place in class and are closed-book, closed-note. These quizzes will be comprised of multiple choice and fill in the blank/short answer. These quizzes will not be cumulative. You will have 30 minutes in class to take each quiz. Quizzes will count for 50% of your final grade; six quizzes will be administered, and only the five highest quiz grades will count (10% each). The dates of each quiz are listed in the schedule, but are subject to change dependent upon our pace throughout the semester. **Makeup quizzes are only permitted in extraordinary circumstances. The use of an unexcused absence on a quiz day will result in a zero on that quiz.** Review the "Policies on Incomplete Grades, Late Assignments, and Makeup Assessments" for guidelines regarding makeup assessments.

- **Position Papers** will be due four times throughout the semester, meaning that each short paper is worth 5% of your final grade (20% 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. The most important aspect 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.
- The **Choose Your Own Adventure Activity** allows you the opportunity to choose the way in which you engage with American government. There will be many options from which to choose and you will need to complete enough assignments to fulfill the 10-point (equates to the 10% of your total grade) requirement. Some options will be worth 10 points and some will be worth 5 points. For example: you may complete one 10-point assignment, or two 5 point assignments to fulfill the activity requirements. The nature of the activities and correlating rubrics will be available on ELC and throughout classroom discussions. You may even have the opportunity to complete these assignments in class, if you so choose. These assignments will be due on May 1st, though they can be completed at any point throughout the semester.
- **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 is due each Monday of the semester beginning in Week 2; these specific due dates will be on ELC.**
- **Attendance** will be taken every day throughout the semester. Some days, attendance will be taken by brief in-class assignments. Attendance will count for 10% of your grade. Please review the "Full Attendance Policy" below to review what counts as a "no questions asked" unexcused absence and what constitutes an excused absence. You will be allotted **three** "no questions asked" absences to use at any point during the semester. Beyond these three excuses, points will be taken off your overall attendance grade for additional unexcused absences. **The use of unexcused absences on quiz days will result in a zero on that quiz.**

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:

- 50% of your grade will be determined by quizzes. 6 quizzes will be administered; the 5 highest quiz grades will count for 10% each.
- 20% of your grade will be the Position Papers (5% each, 4 short papers total).
- 10% of your grade will be your "Choose Your Own Adventure" Activity (or activities).
- 10% of your grade will be your SAGE Vantage work.
- 10% of your grade will be determined by attendance.

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

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. Please only email me using your UGA email address, and do not email me through ELC (I will likely not see it).

During Class

I understand that using laptops to record notes is important, so computers will be allowed in my classroom, as long as the use of these devices does not disturb the learning capability of other students. If laptops are discovered to be used for any other purpose than academics, pertaining to this course, then the privilege of electronic devices will be taken away. I aim to respectfully allow each student the same learning capability, which could be hindered by the use of electronic devices. **Phones will not be allowed during class time, except in case of emergency.** Use of cell phones during class is grounds for removal from class for that day and attendance grade penalties. Eating and drinking are permitted, so long as we can respect our classroom and allow for regular class to be conducted.

Full Attendance Policy

Attendance will be taken every day of in-person class, and this will account for 10% of your grade. **Attendance requires active listening and/or participation. Wearing headphones, scrolling on phones, or doing anything on your laptop other than taking notes/using the textbook will result in your attendance point for the day being taken away.**

"No Questions Asked" Absences: You will be allotted **three** unexcused absences, no questions asked, with no attendance grade penalty. These "no questions asked" absences include absences for feeling unwell but not sick enough to go to the doctor, missing class for pre-scheduled doctor's appointments, classes missed because of work/volunteering/interviews/activities/graduate school visits, leaving campus early for break or vacation, missing class because you could not find parking or your ride was late or your roommate took your shower slot (though I sympathize), as well as the days where you simply do not want to go to class. **You do not need to email me when you use one of these absences. Absolutely do not email me asking to be "excused" for any of these reasons.** Life happens, and this is why you have these absences. It is your responsibility to use these absences in an appropriate matter.

Excused Absences: For additional absences beyond the "no questions asked" absences, you will need to provide documentation for any days of class missed in order for it to count as an "excused absence." Excused absences are considered only in extreme circumstances, including (1) performance of military duty; (2) legal obligations to appear or participant in a judicial or administrative proceeding, including jury duty; (3) any medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth; (4) a disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and as documented by the student with the Accessibility and Testing Office, which prevents the student from attending class; (5) observance of a religious practice, holiday, or holy day; (6) participation in an authorized University activity; (7) illness or injury that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class; (8) death or severe illness of an immediate/dependent family member; (9) university closure for weather-related or other emergencies. In the event you miss class for one of these reasons, you must contact me in writing as soon as possible and provide documentation of your absence, at which time I will excuse you from participation for that day.

Policies on Incomplete Grades, Late Assignments, and Makeup Assessments

I will accept incomplete or late assignments and will administer makeup assessments when a documented excuse is provided; review the full attendance policy above to understand what counts as a legitimate excuse (same circumstances as excused absences). Makeup exams or assessments require documentation, and notice as soon as possible. Extensions on assignments will only be given in extreme circumstances, and with at least 24 hours notice; extension requests sent with less than 24 hours before the due date will not be granted without documentation. Under no circumstances will makeup assessments be given without documentation. 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 an excuse will be given a "0" and late work 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 Extra Credit and Grades

Extra credit may be offered to the class as a whole during the semester. Extra credit will not, under any circumstance, be offered on an individual basis. Emails asking for individual extra credit at the end of the semester will not be answered.

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.

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 in-class assessments will result in an automatic report to UGA's Office of Academic Honesty and severe grade penalties. Should you need to have access to your phone for emergency purposes during an examination, you must speak with me before the assessment takes place.

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.

Updates on quiz content will be posted via ELC. Checking ELC regularly will be vital to your success in this course. Corresponding SAGE Vantage work is due weekly (on Mondays) for every assigned chapter of reading for that week, except on exam weeks. SAGE Vantage work can be completed at any point in the semester, but the due dates are each Monday of our course schedule.

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

(Week 1) 1/12 and 1/14: Introduction to American Politics

- POLS 1101 Syllabus
- KJKVJ Chapter 1

(Week 2) 1/21: Revolution and Constitution

- Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday is on January 19th – No Class
- KJKVJ Chapter 2
- Declaration of Independence (ELC)
- Articles of Confederation (ELC)
- U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights (ELC)
- Syllabus quiz due on ELC on 1/21 at 11:59 pm.

(Week 3) 1/26 and 1/28: Federalism and Quiz 1

- KJKVJ Chapter 3
- Gettysburg Address (ELC)
- Emancipation Proclamation (ELC)
- Quiz 1 in class on 1/28.

(Week 4) 2/2 and 2/4: Civil Rights

- KJKVJ Chapters 4
- Letter from Birmingham Jail (ELC)
- DUE on ELC: Position Paper #1 on 2/6 at 11:59 pm.

(Week 5) 2/9 and 2/11: Civil Liberties and Quiz 2

- KJKVJ Chapter 5
- Quiz 2 in class on 2/11.

(Week 6) 2/16 and 2/18: Congress

- KJKVJ Chapter 6

(Week 7) 2/23 and 2/25: Presidency and Quiz 3

- KJKVJ Chapter 7
- Quiz 3 in class on 2/25.

(Week 8) 3/2 and 3/4: Federal Judiciary

- KJKVJ Chapter 9
- DUE on ELC: Position Paper #2 on 3/6 at 11:59 pm.

(Week 9) 3/9 and 3/11: SPRING BREAK

(Week 10) 3/16 and 3/18: Georgia Politics and Quiz 4

- Engstrom et al (selected readings)
- Georgia Constitution (ELC)
- Quiz 4 in class on 3/18.

(Week 11) 3/23 and 3/25: Bureaucracy and Public Opinion

- KJKVJ Chapter 8
- KJKVJ Chapters 10

(Week 12) 3/30 and 4/1: Media

- KJKVJ Chapter 14
- DUE on ELC: Position Paper #3 on 4/3 at 11:59 pm.

(Week 13) 4/6 and 4/8: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections and Quiz 5

- KJKVJ Chapter 11
- Quiz 5 in class on 4/8.

(Week 14) 4/13 and 4/15: Political Parties

- KJKVJ Chapters 12

(Week 15) 4/20 and 4/22: Interest Groups and Quiz 6

- KJKVJ Chapter 13
- Quiz 6 in class on 4/22.

(Week 16) 4/27: Last Week of Class–Course Reflection and Wrap-Up

- Suggested: KJKVJ Chapter 15
- DUE on ELC: Position Paper #4 on 4/27 at 11:59 pm.

Withdrawal deadline is April 9th.

M/W class schedule in effect on April 27th.

Reading Day is April 28th.

Final exam period is April 29th – May 5th.

Assignment	Due Date
Quiz 1	January 28
Position Paper #1	February 6
Quiz 2	February 11
Quiz 3	February 25
Position Paper #2	March 6
Quiz 4	March 18
Position Paper #3	April 3
Quiz 5	April 8
Quiz 6	April 22
Position Paper #4	April 27
Adventure Activities	May 1