

POLS 1101E – AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Asynchronous and Online
Three Credits
Summer 2026, Session II

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

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Email is the best way to contact me. You must include "POLS 1101" in the subject line or you will not get a response. Please allow 24 hours for a response.

UNIVERSITY COURSE DESCRIPTION

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. Includes a closer look at the State of Georgia, its constitution, and political system.

ADDITIONAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

The American governments at the state and federal started as great experiments; they were tests of whether or not Enlightenment theories and philosophies about government structure could lead to long-term, well-functioning democratic republics that spanned thousands of miles and millions of people. Those experiments continue today – while the broad designs remain mostly intact, politics and time have shifted and changed constitutions and expectations to meet societal needs throughout American history. Today, the federal government and its state counterparts shape many parts of our lives, from the economy to the school system to the way we interact with people. Understanding how the government works and how citizens interact with it is thus crucial for successfully navigating society and life.

In this class, we will discuss the American government in both historical and political terms. We will talk about both state and federal constitutions' evolutions from theoretical documents to works in progress to guiding principles; the formation of political institutions and their role in government today; and the forces that shape people's perceptions of American politics, from parties to interest groups to the media. By the end of this class, you should understand why the American government is designed the way it is, how it works, and how people contribute to its outcomes.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will:

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 U.S. political system, including the state of Georgia, and examine primary sources over time, including the Declaration of Independence, Federalist Papers, the U.S. 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.

A NOTE ABOUT THIS COURSE

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.

COURSE MATERIALS

You do not need to purchase a book for this course. There are required readings in Modules 1 and 3, and they are linked below (and will also be linked on eLC):

- The Constitution and Bill of Rights, <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/>
- The Declaration of Independence, <https://tinyurl.com/sn2tp5aj>
- Articles of Confederation, <https://tinyurl.com/4uajncfy>
- Federalist 10, <https://tinyurl.com/9uu2h5m9>
- Federalist 51, <https://tinyurl.com/ez7mzw6a>
- Emancipation Proclamation, <https://tinyurl.com/4n7awnz9>
- Gettysburg Address, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.24404500/?st=text>
- Letter from Birmingham Jail, <https://tinyurl.com/2w73wpm3>
- Georgia Constitution, <https://tinyurl.com/24vedfjw>

If you would like to have a book for the class, you can purchase the following book:

- Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, Lynn Vavreck, and Timothy R. Johnson. 2025. *The Logic of American Politics*. 12th Edition. Thousand Oaks, California: CQ Press.
 - eBook: 9781071929568

Please note that either digital or physical copy is fine. I followed the 11th edition when creating the class, and I STRONGLY encourage you to buy a cheaper recent edition (such as the 11th), or to rent the book.

Any other course material will be placed on eLC.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ONLINE COURSE

Online lectures will be provided via YouTube links on eLC. Lecture slides, links to readings not in the textbook, exams, and assignment instructions are also located on the eLC site for this course. Please ensure you have access to eLC at the beginning of the semester. You can look for help with eLC [here](#), or reach out to eLC for help [here](#).

To participate in learning activities and complete assignments, you will need:

- Access to a working computer that has a current operating system with updates installed, plus speakers or headphones to hear lecture presentations (closed captioning provided)
- Reliable internet access and a UGA email account
- A current internet browser that is compatible with eLC
- Microsoft Word as your word processing program
- Reliable data storage for your work, such as a USB drive or Office365 OneDrive cloud storage

Lectures and course materials (which are inclusive of my presentations, tests, exams, outlines, and lecture notes) are my production. You are encouraged to take notes and utilize course materials for your own educational purpose. However, you are not to reproduce or distribute this content without my expressed written permission.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS

Your grade will be determined using the following weights:

| Area | Weight |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Course Pre- and Post-Tests | 10% |
| Multiple Choice Exams | 40% |
| Written Response Exams | 40% |
| Reflection | 10% |
| Total | 100% |

COURSE PRE- AND POST-TESTS (10%):

At the beginning of the semester, you will be asked to complete a multiple-choice test that will ask you about your knowledge of the American government and your comfort levels with different topics and types of coursework. You will take the same test again at the end of the semester. These tests will establish your baseline knowledge of the course material and show how much you learned/retained by the end of the semester.

These tests will be graded for completion and effort only (i.e., you get full credit as long as you complete it and it looks like you thought about the answers). You will learn the right answers to many of the questions by the end of the course.

The Course Pre-Test will be available on eLC starting at 9 AM on Monday, July 6th and must be completed by 9 PM on Tuesday, July 14th.

The Course Post-Test will be available on eLC starting at 9 AM on Tuesday, July 23rd and must be completed by 9 PM on Thursday, July 30th.

You must complete BOTH the pre- and post-tests to get credit.

MULTIPLE CHOICE EXAMS (40%):

Over the course of the class, you will be taking three online multiple choice exams in eLC. Each multiple choice exam will have 20 questions, all some combination of multiple choice and true/false questions. These multiple choice exams will not be cumulative. The first multiple choice exam will cover the material from Module 1, the second will cover the material from Module 2, and the third will cover the material from Module 3.

Multiple choice exams will open at 9 AM on the first day of the module and must be completed by 9 PM on the last day of the module. This means you can take the multiple choice exam anywhere within that period. Module dates are as follows:

- Module 1: 7/6 to 7/14
- Module 2: 7/15 to 7/22
- Module 3: 7/23 to 7/30

You will have 1 hour to complete each multiple choice exam. Once you start the multiple choice exam, you have to finish it (i.e., you cannot start, walk away for two hours, and then come back to finish it), so please make sure you give yourself one uninterrupted hour to take it. All multiple choice exams will be open book and open note. I do expect that you will do them on your own, without the assistance of others. Additionally, you will be tested on the material covered in lectures and in the readings, not in what you (or generative AI) finds on the internet.

WRITTEN RESPONSE EXAMS (40%):

You will be taking three online written response exams in eLC. Each written response exam will have two questions and you will be expected to provide short (8-10 sentence) answers to each of the questions. The core of each of the questions asked in each written response exam will focus on the material covered in each module (e.g., the questions in Module 1 will focus on topics covered in Module 1), but some concepts transcend their module (e.g., political parties get discussed in Modules 2 and 3), so you might have to address older concepts in your answers.

Written response exams will open at 9 AM on the first day of the module and must be completed by 9 PM on the last day of the module. This means you can take the written response exam anywhere within that period. Module dates are as follows:

- Module 1: 7/6 to 7/14
- Module 2: 7/15 to 7/22
- Module 3: 7/23 to 7/30

You will have 1 hour to complete each written response exam. Once you start the written response exam, you have to finish it (i.e., you cannot start, walk away for two hours, and then come back to finish it), so please make sure you give yourself one uninterrupted hour to take it. All written response exams will be open book and open note. I do expect that you will do them on your own, without the assistance of others. Additionally, you will be tested on the material covered in lectures and in the readings, not in what you (or generative AI) finds on the internet.

REFLECTION (10%):

At the end of the course, I want you to reflect on a major concept by answering the following prompt in an essay:

Compare the U.S. Constitution and the Georgia Constitution. What principles do they share (e.g., separation of powers, protection of liberties)? What is one key difference between the two documents that reflects Georgia's unique political culture or history?

In one double-spaced page, I want you to answer this question using evidence from the course. Show me that you can pull together the big concepts and make an evidence-based argument (and that you learned something in the class too!).

You will submit this reflection to a dropbox on eLC. It should be completed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, double spaced, with one-inch margins, and it must be submitted as a PDF.

Your reflection is due at 9 PM on Thursday, July 30th.

I will provide more details about this, including the grading rubric, in a separate document posted on eLC.

GRADING SCALE

I will use the following scale to assign course grades:

| Percentage | Grade |
|-------------|-------|
| 93-100% | A |
| 90-92% | A- |
| 87-89% | B+ |
| 83-86% | B |
| 80-82% | B- |
| 77-79% | C+ |
| 73-76% | C |
| 70-72% | C- |
| 67-69% | D+ |
| 63-66% | D |
| 60-62% | D- |
| 59 or less% | F |

Percentages greater than or equal to 0.5 will be rounded up to the next highest whole percentage (Example: 86.5% will round up to an 87%).

GRADE APPEALS

If you receive a grade and see that it contains an arithmetic error (i.e., I mis-calculated your grade), please inform me of the problem. If you have a question or concern about your performance on any course work, please email me. All concerns must be stated in writing (paper or email), beginning with a statement that concisely explains why you believe your grade should be altered.

All concerns, arithmetic or otherwise, must be raised within 72 hours of that assignment/quiz's release to students. It is your responsibility to pay attention to grade releases; the 72-hour clock starts when I release the grade in the eLC gradebook. If you do not raise your question within this 72-hour period, you forfeit your ability to appeal your grade.

LATE POLICY

Absolutely no late work will be accepted. In extenuating circumstances (death in the family, hospitalization, military service, religious holiday, etc.), students may receive a short extension. If you miss an assignment for one of these reasons, you must contact me in writing as soon as is possible and provide documentation of your absence to make alternative arrangements. All claims must, when possible, be made prior to the exam that you will miss. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in a grade of "0" being awarded for that assignment. I reserve the right to give an alternative assignment if this situation arises.

STATEMENTS ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

"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 procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at honesty.uga.edu.

According to UGA, "academic dishonesty" means cheating, attempting to cheat, or assisting someone else in cheating, even if unintentional. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – using another's work as your own without correct citations
2. Unauthorized assistance – giving or receiving help for assignments without prior approval from your instructor
3. Lying/tampering – giving false information related to academic work or in connection with a facilitated discussion, continued discussion, meeting with multiple violations review board, or appeal
4. Theft – stealing any information related to academic work

Absolutely no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Anyone found guilty of cheating, plagiarism, or any other violation of academic integrity will receive an automatic grade of 0.0 for the assignment. Additionally, all other penalties within the University will be pursued to the fullest extent.

For more information about academic dishonesty and UGA's policy regarding them, see UGA's [Academic Honesty Policy](#). It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with these policies.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

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 Wordtuner, as well as GAI tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Writesonic, Rytr, and Rtutor. If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with me before using it.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES

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 accessibility.uga.edu.

UGA 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 and Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care and 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
- Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: accessibility.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting <https://well-being.uga.edu>.

A NOTE REGARDING COURSE DESIGN

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

All changes will be noted on eLC and sent to students via email in advance of class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

MODULE 1: FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Due 9 PM on Tuesday, July 14th

Lecture 1 – Introduction to the Course

- Read:
 - The Constitution and Bill of Rights, <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/>
 - The Declaration of Independence, <https://tinyurl.com/sn2tp5aj>
 - Articles of Confederation, <https://tinyurl.com/4uajncfy>
 - *Federalist 51*, <https://tinyurl.com/ez7mzw6a>
- Lecture:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_707janq7
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_7edu5czk

Lecture 2 - The Constitution

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 2
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_3cekpx7f
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_wwp28o0f
 - Part 3: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_4v43tq41

Lecture 3 – Federalism

- Read:
 - *Federalist 10*, <https://tinyurl.com/9uu2h5m9>
- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 3
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_24jomiyM
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_fffve61i

Lecture 4 - Civil Rights

- Read:
 - Emancipation Proclamation, <https://tinyurl.com/4n7awnz9>
 - Gettysburg Address, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.24404500/?st=text>
 - Letter from Birmingham Jail, <https://tinyurl.com/3vm5792k>
- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 4
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_04odwgvs
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_tc86d5ti
 - Part 3: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_ezu3qqgk

Lecture 5 - Civil Liberties

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 5
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_4iv5u9cv
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_83gzmrjq
 - Part 3: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_8f2ziugm

MODULE 2: AMERICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS **Due 9 PM on Wednesday, July 22nd**

Lecture 6 – Congress

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 6
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_5t2o4cxh
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_wx794jym
 - Part 3: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_tfmfm39t

Lecture 7 – Presidency

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 7
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_yefvbg6h
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_u0nvlwqm
 - Part 3: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_8pj65598

Lecture 8 – Bureaucracy

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 8
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_3lzz08j4
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_k764fodd

Lecture 9 – Judiciary

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 9
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_jtzfdt0q
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_95328yd6
 - Part 3: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_ut1gpww7

MODULE 3: AMERICAN POLITICAL BEHAVIOR
Due 9 PM on Thursday, July 30th

Lecture 10 – Public Opinion

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 10
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_4qmy9b2d
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_z46polab

Lecture 11 – Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 11
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_rguztfmf
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_3bla99ml
 - Part 3: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_teihwjlm

Lecture 12 – Political Parties

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 12
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_117j5h5u
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_f2k94or5
 - Part 3: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_3yex33w3

Lecture 13 – Interest Groups

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 13
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_96zbq72l

Lecture 14 – Media

- Optional Read:
 - *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 14
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_r6lwqceg
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_3bf6w8nq
 - Part 3: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_ocgsm43g

Lecture 15 – Georgia Politics

- Read:
 - Georgia Constitution, <https://tinyurl.com/24vedfjw>
- Lectures:
 - Part 1: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_lgq2vnrx
 - Part 2: https://kaltura.uga.edu/media/t/1_23muq2fh