

POLS 1101: American Government
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:35 a.m. – 12:55 p.m., Spring 2026
Baldwin Hall, Room 301

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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.

Learning Outcomes

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

Assigned Textbook

Krutz, Glen, and Sylvie Waskiewicz. *American Government*. Third edition. OpenStax, 2021.

This textbook is a free open-source resource provided by Rice University's OpenStax initiative. It is available online and in PDF form:

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-3e/?Book%20details>. There is also an audiobook version: <https://openaudio.us/american-government-3e/>.

Other assigned readings will be provided to students online on eLC.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Participation: Participation in class is worth 10% of your final grade. While I strongly prefer your participation to come in the form of questions and discussion during class, I am willing to accept detailed notes and analysis in a dedicated bluebook as a substitute. To count as full participation, your bluebook notes should contain lecture notes, questions about the material, thoughts and comments on your classmates' discussion, and other detailed analysis that demonstrates your full attention is being paid to the class. Please note that bluebook notes are an in-class assignment; no credit will be given for notes taken outside of class.

Attendance: As a student, it is your responsibility to regularly attend and participate in class; as such, I will not require excuses for absences. However, you must notify me in advance of an absence on the due date of a major assignment in order for me to consider giving you an extension. Assignments submitted late without prior approval will be subject to a 10% deduction per day late.

Reading Review Questions: You will complete 16 multiple choice homework assignments worth a total of 15% of your final grade. The end of every chapter in our textbook provides a series of multiple choice questions for review. For every chapter in the textbook, you will answer these questions via an eLC quiz. You may repeat the quiz as many times as you would like until you get a grade with which you are satisfied. Assignments submitted late without prior approval will be subject to a 10% deduction per day late.

Reading Responses: You will turn in 16 reading responses worth a total of 15% of your final grade. The end of every chapter in our textbook provides a series of critical thinking questions for review. For every chapter in the textbook, choose one of those questions and submit a half-page response via eLC. Responses should combine information in the textbook and lectures with your own thoughts, experiences, or observations. Assignments submitted late without prior approval will be subject to a 10% deduction per day late.

Quizzes: You will take four vocabulary quizzes, each of which count for 5% of your final grade. Vocabulary terms and definitions will be taken from the textbook. Each quiz will come at the end of a textbook unit.

Final Exam: You will take one multiple choice exam, which counts for 20% of your final grade. If you do not attend the final exam, I cannot offer you a makeup exam unless you have made prior arrangements with me.

Research Paper: You will write one research paper, which counts for 20% of your final grade. Your paper should compare and contrast the U.S. federal government with Georgia's state government, evaluating their constitutional foundations, historical developments, and modern capacity for policymaking. Your paper should be a minimum of five pages with full bibliographic citations using the citation manual with which you

are most comfortable. Assignments submitted late without prior approval will be subject to a 10% deduction per day late.

UGA Student Honor Code

Academic integrity is a core value of institutions of higher learning. All students, upon enrolling at UGA, must pledge: "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. To clarify the application of the policy in this course: tests and written assignments should be your own work while studying and class preparation can (and should) be done with others. The use of artificial intelligence or word mixing software like Grammarly to write your papers is considered plagiarism in this course.

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 & 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 and Testing: 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>.

Topical Outline

- Week 1: The U.S. Constitution
- Week 2: Federalism
 - Quiz 1
- Week 3: Civil Liberties
- Week 4: Civil Rights

- Week 5: Public Opinion
- Week 6: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
 - Quiz 2
- Week 7: The News Media
- Week 8: Political Parties
- Week 9: Interest Groups
 - Quiz 3
- Week 10: Congress
- Week 11: The Presidency
- Week 12: The Courts
- Week 13: State and Local Government
 - Quiz 4
- Week 14: The Bureaucracy
- Week 15: Domestic Policy
- Week 16: Foreign Policy
 - Final Exam
 - Research Paper Due

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