



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA)

POLS 1101:
Introduction to American Government
Fall 2026

Instructor: Professor Alexa Bankert

Contact: alexa.bankert@uga.edu

Meeting Times: Main Lecture on Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:35-12:30 PM with
Breakout Sessions on Friday

Meeting Place: Instructional Plaza N106 (on T & TR)

Office Hour: Tuesdays, 2 PM – 3 PM in Baldwin Hall, Office 360 F

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

Course Description and Student Learning Outcomes

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.

In practical terms, this means you will:

1. 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.
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.

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.

Meeting Times & Locations

Every week, we'll meet for a 55-minute lecture on both **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:35 AM to 12:30 PM in Instructional Plaza N106**. In addition, you'll have a small-group **breakout session with your Teaching Assistant on Fridays**. The place and time of the breakout session varies based on the section you are enrolled in (see Athena).

Section	Time	Location	TA	Email
10918	8:40–9:35 AM	Journalism 509	Morgan LeBlanc	Morgan.LeBlanc1@uga.edu
10919	8:40–9:35 AM	Baldwin 102	Brandon Decker	Brandon.Decker@uga.edu
10920	8:40–9:35 AM	Psychology 111	Jannek Kiermayer	Jannek.Kiermayer@uga.edu
10922	8:40–9:35 AM	Journalism 502	Jett Zenthoefer	jettcz@uga.edu
10923	9:55–10:50 AM	Baldwin 202	Morgan LeBlanc	Morgan.LeBlanc1@uga.edu
10924	9:55–10:50 AM	Baldwin 102	Brandon Decker	Brandon.Decker@uga.edu
10925	9:55–10:50 AM	LeConte 323	Jannek Kiermayer	Jannek.Kiermayer@uga.edu
10926	12:00–12:55 PM	Journalism 502	Sarah Kingsley	Sarah.Kingsley@uga.edu
10927	12:00–12:55 PM	Baldwin 264	Maya Rush	Maya.Rush@uga.edu
10928	1:15–2:10 PM	Military Bld. 4	Maya Rush	Maya.Rush@uga.edu
10937	1:15–2:10 PM	Journalism 508	Sarah Kingsley	Sarah.Kingsley@uga.edu

Attendance Policy in the Lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays

Attendance is not formally required, but because TopHat participation contributes to your grade, missing lectures may lower your participation score. Please consult the participation grading scheme below for more details on how we calculate your overall participation grade. There are more reasons why regular attendance in the lecture is a good idea: Questions on quizzes and exams will be based on the lecture material (which goes beyond the textbook). I also share important deadlines and class updates at the beginning of each class.

Attendance Policy in the Breakout Section on Fridays

Attendance in the breakout section on Fridays is required. Spotty attendance will negatively impact your participation grade. If you cannot make it to class, please send your TA an email (before class begins) with the reason for your absence as well as required documentation for an excused absence. Excused absences are given when your TA receives one of the following: an official UGA excuse, religious holidays, a medical note, or a student-athlete responsibility. Please note that vacations and (regular) Greek life events are not considered excused absences. Having said that, I understand you have a busy life! That is

why we allow for 2 unexcused penalty-free absences from your breakout section throughout the semester. We do not need to know the reason for these absences. Any unexcused absences after the 2 freebies will result in a 5 percentage-point deduction from your earned final participation grade for each absence. Please consult the participation grading scheme below for more details on how we calculate your overall participation grade.

Required Text

We the People (15th Essentials Edition) – by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Robert J. Spitzer **with access to InQuizitive**

Please note that you can also buy the textbook in an electronic format with InQuizitive access at a more affordable rate here:

<https://digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople15ess>

Required Technology & Communication

There are three main technologies we use in this class: eLC, TopHat, and InQuizitive.

eLC

Our course is mainly administered through eLC. You will find all our course materials on this website, so please check it on a regular basis.

My primary means of communication with the class will be through announcements posted in eLC. Make sure you receive eLC updates for our class automatically via email (eLC > Click on your profile > Notifications > Instant Notifications).

TopHat

If you do not have a TopHat account yet, please go to

<https://support.tophat.com/article/Student-University-of-Georgia-Quick-Start-Guide-New>

for instructions on how to get started. You will need access to your TopHat account during the lecture either through your laptop or your phone. Our class is called “POLS1101 Main Lecture Fall 2026 Prof. Bankert”. The join code is 033955. 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.

InQuizitive & eBook

InQuizitive is an adaptive learning tool that accompanies your ebook. We will post the weekly InQuizitive assignment and the eBook chapter to eLC. The first time you access InQuizitive or the eBook, you will need to purchase access. InQuizitive and the eBook are linked to our gradebook in eLC, so please access them only through eLC.

Feeling Lost? Here is How To Reach Us!

This class has multiple sections. Every section is assigned to a specific teaching assistant (short: TA). Please identify your section and your TA by checking Athena. This is an important step since your TA is responsible for guiding the breakout session on Fridays as well as grading your participation in your breakout section, quizzes, and exams. **Thus, if you have any questions about your grades, weekly assignments, or eLC, please contact your TA. If you have any questions about the lectures or administrative concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at alexa.bankert@uga.edu.**

Email Etiquette

Please note that – due to privacy and confidentiality concerns – we can only reply to emails sent from your UGA account. Please give us at least 24 hours to reply to your email. Just as a heads-up: You cannot reply to an email I send out via eLC (ending in @uga.view.usg.edu). If you do, the email will bounce back, and I will not receive it. Finally, please be professional and polite when you email me or your TA. It is not just a sign of respect but also a reflection of you.

Student Drop-In Hour

If you have difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments, please come talk to me or your teaching assistant. Don't be afraid to come by our office hours! We are not scary. However, please note that these office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture or asking *extremely* detailed questions about the quizzes or the exam (My epitaph will read: "Will this be on the exam?")

If my office hour (Tuesdays, 2 PM – 3 PM) does not work for your schedule, please email me directly to make an appointment. I am available for in-person and Zoom meetings.

How We Evaluate Your Work: Quizzes, Exams, and Other Assignments

Midterm: The midterm will consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. These questions will cover material from the first half of the semester. *The midterm exam takes place in our lecture hall and is scheduled for Thursday, October 15.* **Please purchase an 882-E scantron form and a #2 pencil for the exam at the UGA bookstore.** Please do not request to take the exam early due to travel plans. I will not be able to offer an earlier exam date, so please schedule your travel plans accordingly.

Final Exam: The final exam is **not** cumulative and will consist of two parts: A section with multiple-choice questions that cover the second half of the semester's material as well as a final in-class essay. *The final exam takes place in our lecture hall and is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 8, 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM.* If you accidentally miss the final exam, I will, regrettably, not be able to offer a make-up exam. **Please purchase a Bluebook, an 882-**

E scantron form and a #2 pencil for the exam at the UGA bookstore. Please do not request to take the exam early due to travel plans. I will not be able to offer an earlier exam date, so please schedule your travel plans accordingly.

InQuizitive & eBook: “InQuizitive” tests your comprehension of the assigned eBook readings. Your eBook grade is based on completion of the questions embedded in each assigned chapter. The links to these assignments will be posted to eLC every Monday morning and are due every Friday at 11:59 PM. If you complete the assignments through an external website, your score will not show up in the eLC gradebook. So please access “InQuizitive” only through eLC. (Note that bookmarking the InQuizitive website does not work either. You need to use the links I post on eLC every Monday). Please note that InQuizitive and the eBook chapter cannot be submitted late for credit unless you arranged an extension with your TA in advance.

Quizzes: Over the course of the semester, there will be 4 short quizzes (3-5 short-answer questions) based on prior lectures and assigned readings. These quizzes will take place in your breakout session. As of now, they are planned for **September 11, October 2, November 6, and November 20**. Attending the lectures is crucial for achieving a good quiz grade. We will drop your worst quiz grade at the end of the semester (that includes 0s from missing a quiz). Please note that if you miss a quiz while taking one of your freebies, you won’t be eligible for a makeup quiz.

Quizzes & Exams for Students Registered with Accessibility and Testing

If you are registered with Accessibility and Testing (formerly the Disability Resource Center) and you need extended exam and quiz time, please schedule an appointment with Accessibility and Testing at least 3 days before the quiz/exam date, so you can take the quiz/exam in their facilities. Right after you have taken the quiz/exam, please drop it off in my mailbox in Baldwin Hall (front office on the ground floor). Please note that the front office closes at 5 PM. Please also email your TA, so they are aware of your absence and know to retrieve your quiz/exam for my mailbox. Since quizzes take place during the breakout session, we ask you to schedule your quizzes at the Accessibility and Testing Center before or after your breakout session (but on the same day), so you can still attend your breakout session. For exams, please schedule a time on the same day of the exam, at or any time after the starting time of the exam.

Quizzes & Exams for Student-Athletes

If you are a student-athlete and you need an extension on quizzes or exams due to your training and competition schedule, please make sure to email your TA at least 24 hours before the exam/quiz date. You are responsible for scheduling a makeup date that works for your schedule and your TA’s schedule within one week of the original exam/quiz date.

Excused Absences from Quizzes & Exams

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. Please note that if you miss a quiz while taking one of your freebies, you won't be eligible for a makeup quiz.

Participation: Your participation grade will be based on two components:

1) Your **TopHat participation** during the lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays as well as during the breakout session on Fridays. We calculate this component by combining your TopHat scores from both the lecture and the breakout session. You can track both scores over the course of the semester on the TopHat site. The combined score makes up 40% of your overall participation grade. We understand that there might be an occasional technical difficulty when dealing with TopHat, so we allow for up to 20 missed questions over the course of the semester without any negative impact on your grade. Please do not think of these as “free” questions that can be saved up for days you choose to miss lecture.

2) **Active participation** in your breakout session, including participation in discussions and group activities, which makes up the remaining 60% of your overall participation score. Even perfect attendance without active participation does not guarantee a good participation score. You can find an overview of how we assess active participation below:

Category	Points
Student attends all or most breakout sessions	+ 3 pts.
Student is engaged in most sessions (e.g., asking relevant questions, connecting ideas, drawing connections, acknowledging different perspectives, etc.)	+ 3 pts.
Student references readings and/or the lecture	+ 2 pts.
Student builds on or responds to peer comments	+ 2 pts.

Online Research Survey: You are required to participate in an online research survey. The study will take approximately 20-25 minutes and will provide you with an understanding of political science research. The survey consists of multiple questions about your political opinions. All answers remain completely **anonymous** (we confirm your completion through a separate external link that is not connected to your survey responses). The link to the online survey will be distributed via email by the end of October.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 25%

Quizzes: 15%

InQuizitive: 15%

eBook: 5%

Participation (TopHat & Breakout Session): 15%

Participation in Online Research Study: 5%

Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades

100-94 A	79-77 C+
93-90 A-	76-74 C
89-87 B+	73-70 C-
86-84 B	69-60 D
83-80 B-	59-0 F

****Please note that there is no standard rounding policy. Rounding decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis and are largely determined by your TA.****

When To Expect Grades

You can expect grades for your quizzes and exams within one week of submission. To improve your InQuizitive score, you can re-do the assignment until its weekly deadline on Friday 11:59 PM. We will provide a mid-semester update on your participation. If you do not receive your grades within these time frames, please contact your TA.

Grade Appeals

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 two weeks of receiving your grade. Keep in mind that I will re-grade your entire quiz or exam. Therefore, there is no guarantee that your grade will improve. Your grade can go up, stay the same, or even go down if my assessment differs from your TA's.

Incompletes

A final grade of "Incomplete" will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student's responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (starting Tuesday, August 18)

Topic: Introduction to the Class

Readings: Read the syllabus *carefully*. You can find it on eLC under "Course Documents".

Week 2 (starting Tuesday, August 25)

Topic: The Citizen & The Government

Readings: Chapter 1 in "We The People" & Constitution of the United States of America

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 1 on InQuizitive

Week 3 (starting Tuesday, September 1)

*****Online lectures plus breakout session due to conference travel*****

Topic: The Founding and the Constitution

Readings: Chapter 2 in “We The People” & Declaration of Independence & Georgia Constitution

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 2 on InQuizitive

Week 4 (starting Tuesday, September 8)

*****First Quiz on Friday, September 11*****

Topic: Federalism

Readings: Chapter 3 in “We The People” & The Federalist Papers

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 3 on InQuizitive

Week 5 (starting Tuesday, September 15)

Topic: Civil Liberties

Readings: Chapter 4 in “We The People” & U.S. Bill of Rights & Georgia Bill of Rights

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 4 on InQuizitive

Week 6 (starting Tuesday, September 22)

Topic: Civil Rights

Readings: Chapter 5 in “We The People” & Emancipation Proclamation & Letter from Birmingham Jail & Gettysburg Address

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 5 on InQuizitive

Week 7 (starting Tuesday, September 29)

*****Second Quiz on Friday, October 2*****

Topic: Public Opinion

Readings: Chapter 6 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 6 on InQuizitive

Week 8 (starting Tuesday, October 6)

Topic: The Media

Readings: Chapter 7 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 7 on InQuizitive

Week 9 (starting Tuesday, October 13)

*****Midterm Exam on Thursday, October 15*****

Topic: Political Parties and Interest Groups (only one lecture on Tuesday)

Readings: Chapter 8 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 8 on InQuizitive

Week 10 (starting Tuesday, October 20)

Topic: Participation, Campaigns, and Elections

Readings: Chapter 9 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 9 on InQuizitive

Week 11 (starting Tuesday, October 27)

*****Fall Break on Friday, October 30*****

Topic: Congress

Readings: Chapter 10 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 10 on InQuizitive

Week 12 (starting Tuesday, November 3)

*****Third Quiz on Friday, November 6*****

Topic: The Presidency

Readings: Chapter 11 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 11 on InQuizitive

Week 13 (starting Tuesday, November 10)

Topic: The Bureaucracy (it is not going to be as boring as it sounds)

Readings: Chapter 12 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 12 on InQuizitive

Week 14 (starting Tuesday, November 17)

*****Fourth Quiz on Friday, November 20*****

Topic: The Federal Courts

Readings: Chapter 13 in “We The People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 13 on InQuizitive

Week 15 (starting December 1)

*****Tuesday, December 1 follows a Friday schedule (see UGA calendar), so you will have a final exam prep session during your breakout session*****

Other Important Course Policies**Syllabus Policy**

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary. I will give you fair notice (at least a week) if something, such as a reading assignment, is to change.

Use of Generative AI Technology for Coursework

The use of Generative AI (GAI) tools is not generally permitted in this course but will be

permitted for select assignments. Specific assignments will include details about whether use of GAI tools is allowable or not, and why. If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with me before using it. We do conduct AI checks of every paper and assignment to determine whether an assignment was created using generative AI. Whenever an assignment explicitly allows for the use of GAI, please keep the following in mind: You may not represent output generated by a GAI tool as your own work. Any such use of GAI output must be appropriately cited or disclosed, including quotation marks and in-line citations for direct quotes. Including anything you did not write in your assignment without proper citation will be treated as an academic misconduct case. Suspected unauthorized assistance, plagiarism, or other violations of UGA's "A Culture of Honesty," will be reported to the Office of Academic Honesty. For full details on how to properly cite AI-generated work, please see the APA Style article: How to Cite ChatGPT. Finally, GAI is highly vulnerable to inaccuracy and bias. You should assume GAI output is wrong unless you either know the answer or can verify it with another source. It is your responsibility to assess the validity and applicability of any GAI output used.

Prohibition on Recording Classes

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Accessibility and Testing, 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), please 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.

Accessibility and Testing

If you anticipate needing accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with Accessibility and Testing. Additional information can be found here: <https://accessibility.uga.edu/>

Withdrawal Policy

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal-passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses during the drop/add period do not qualify as withdrawals. Please review the policy here: <https://reg.uga.edu/general-information/policies/withdrawals/>

Culture of Honesty Policy

You are required to commit 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 policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at <https://honesty.uga.edu/> If we believe a violation of A Culture of Honesty may have occurred, we have a responsibility to report to the Office of Academic Honesty. If we do, you will be informed of our report, so you can look out for an email from the Office of Academic Honesty who will schedule a facilitated discussion between you and your TA to review your case. The goal will be an agreement reached about what occurred, and if it involved dishonesty, an appropriate sanction. To protect your rights, we cannot discuss your case outside of that facilitated meeting.

Preferred Name

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

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.