

POLS 1101 – Introduction to American Government

Instructor:	Yao Yao	Class Time:	T/TR 8:15-9:35 AM
Email:	Yao.Yao1 @uga.edu	Classroom:	Baldwin 101D
Office Hours:	T/TH 10:00-11:00 AM	Office Location:	Baldwin 303 A

Course Description

This course introduces students to the foundations, institutions, and political dynamics of American government. It explores the constitutional design of the republic, the various ways citizens engage in politics through public opinion, media, political parties, elections, and interest groups, and the functions of key institutions, including Congress, the presidency, the courts, and the bureaucracy.

Course prerequisites – none.

Learning Objectives:

- 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.

University Requirement

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.

Required Materials

Required Texts

We are using two textbooks this semester.

- Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Robert J. Spitzer *We the People (15th essentials edition)* **with access to InQuizitive**
- Engstrom et al. *Georgia's Constitution and Government (9th edition)*

We the People provides a comprehensive introduction to U.S. national politics and government. It is available for purchase through the University Bookstore or from other retailers. Students may also choose a more affordable electronic version that includes access to InQuizitive: <https://digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople15ess>

Georgia's Constitution and Government, published by the University of Georgia Press, is available at no cost through the University Library.

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 Top Hat account during the lecture either through your laptop or your phone. I will provide the join code during our first day of class.

InQuizitive

InQuizitive is an adaptive learning tool that accompanies your textbook. Weekly InQuizitive assignments will be posted on eLC. When accessing InQuizitive for the first time, you will be prompted to enter a registration code, which is included with your textbook purchase.

Because InQuizitive is integrated with the eLC gradebook, you must access it through eLC by clicking on “InQuizitive.”

Email Etiquette

Please note that – due to privacy and confidentiality concern – I can only reply to emails sent from your UGA account. Please give me 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. It is not just a sign of respect but also a reflection of you.

Student Drop-In Hour

You can come to office hours to ask me questions about the course content (especially if you're having trouble). But you can also come to office hours to say hello, ask me about my research, learn what political scientists do, tell me about your interests (academic or otherwise), or talk about U.S. politics.

You don't need an appointment if you come by on Tuesdays/Thursday between 10-11 AM. I'd love to meet you.

Course Evaluation

Midterm I	15%	September 22 nd
Midterm II	15%	October 27 th

Final Exam	20%	December 8 th
Assignments	20%	Weekly
InQuizitive	15%	Weekly
Participation	15%	Daily

Please pay particular attention to the underlined points below, as they are especially important for your final grade.

Midterm (I&II)

We will have two midterm exams. Each exam will be conducted in person and closed book and will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions of varying levels of difficulty. These exams are not cumulative. As outlined in the Course Schedule, the course is organized into three modules. The midterm I will cover material from Module 1, and the midterm II will cover material from Module 2. If you accidentally miss the midterm exam, I will, regrettably, not be able to offer a make-up exam. 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.

Each midterm exam is worth 15% of your final grade in the class.

Final Exam

The final exam will be conducted in person and closed book and is not cumulative. It will consist of two parts: (1) multiple-choice questions covering material from Module 3, and (2) a final in-class essay. Please purchase a Bluebook, an 882 E scantron form and a #2 pencil for the exam at the UGA bookstore. If you accidentally miss the final exam, I will, regrettably, not be able to offer a make-up exam. 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 is worth 20% of your final grade in the class.

Assignments

Many class sessions will include group assignments that apply course concepts to real-world problems. These assignments will be completed during class, and must be submitted to eLC by 11:59 PM on the due dates listed on eLC. Note, I will be firm about the deadline. A submission at 12:01am on the next day will be counted as zero (even if only because your

internet was slow). Please be responsible and plan ahead. Students who miss class will be required to complete these assignments individually.

Because life happens, and you may not always be able to complete these assignments on time, you will have two, 1-day extensions over the course of the semester (even if one minute late, it will count as a 1-day extension). You may distribute them as you see fit. If you want to turn in one of your assignments two days late or two assignments one day late, you may do so. If you do not ever want to turn in the assignment late, that is fine also. However, these are the only extensions that I will be giving over the course of the semester. You do not need to ask permission to use these 1-day extensions. However, please be wise in how you take advantage of this policy. I will be unlikely to grant additional exceptions, accept late assignments, or grant extensions.

Assignments account for 20% of your final grade

InQuizitive

InQuizitive tests your comprehension of the assigned readings. The links to these assignments will be posted to eLC every Monday morning and are due every Friday at 11:59pm. 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 link I post on eLC every Monday). Note, I will be firm about the deadline. A submission at 12:01am on the next day will be counted as zero (even if only because your internet was slow).

Because life happens, and you may not always be able to complete these assignments on time, you will be allowed to miss one week’s submission without consequence (i.e., I will drop the week with the lowest score from your final grade) with no questions asked. You do not need to email me to take advantage of this policy -- it will be taken care of automatically when I calculate final grades at the end of the semester. However, please be wise in how you take advantage of this policy. I will be unlikely to grant additional exceptions, accept late assignments, or grant extensions.

InQuizitive assignment accounts for 15% of your final grade

Participation

Participation is not a “free 15%,” but a reflection of your consistent engagement in the course. Your participation grade will be based on both the quality (e.g., contributing to

discussion, engaging with group work) and consistency of your participation. You can find an overview of how we assess active participation below:

Category	Points
Student attends all or most lectures	+3 pts
Student is actively engaged in class discussions (e.g., asks relevant questions, connects ideas, acknowledges different perspectives)	+3 pts
Student contributes meaningfully to group activities (e.g., collaborates, stays on task, helps advance the group's work)	+3 pts
Student references course readings and/or lecture material	+3 pts
Student builds on or responds to peers' comments	+3 pts

You are expected to attend each class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire session, as class sessions are essential to your success in this course. However, I understand you have a busy life. Each student is allowed **four** unexcused absences without penalty. These absences will not affect your grade, and no explanation is required. You do not need to email me to use them -- it will be taken care of automatically when I calculate final grades at the end of the semester. Note, these absences cannot be used on exam days. Please be wise in how you take advantage of this policy. Each additional unexcused absence beyond the four allowed will result in a 5% deduction from your participation grade.

Participation accounts for 15% of your final grade

Grading

All grades (including final grades) will be assigned following the system depicted below:

A	=	94-100	C+	=	77
A-	=	90	C	=	74
B+	=	87	C-	=	70
B	=	84	D	=	60 – 69
B-	=	80	F	≤	59

Important Class Dates and Deadlines

First Day of Class: Tuesday, August 17

Drop/Add: August 17 – August 21

Midterm Exam I: Tuesday, September 22

Midterm Exam II: Tuesday, October 27

Withdrawal Deadline: Wednesday, November 11

Last Day of Class: Thursday, November 19

Reading Day: Wednesday, December 2

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 8

Class Policies

Absences

Attending class is critical for your success in this class. Participation is a significant portion of your grade and there is a significant amount of course content that we will cover in our class meetings and breakout sessions. Absences will be excused in cases of documented illness (with a doctor's note), official university-related events (with documentation from a university or program official), the death of a loved one, religious holidays, or other circumstances beyond your control. I'm here to talk about situations that may arise. Most lecture slides will be posted on eLC/TopHat for your reference. However, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from your peers for in-class discussions and activities or to visit office hours if needed. Students who miss class will be required to complete the assignments individually.

Students are granted **four** free absences. No explanation is required for use of free absences. Students are also expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the entire session. Tardiness/ early departures will negatively affect your overall course grade. **A 3rd tardy or early departure (and each subsequent instance) will count as an unexcused absence.**

Please **do not** come to class if you are ill. The UGA Health Center (<https://healthcenter.uga.edu/>) is located at 55 Carlton Street (across the street from Ramsey).

Make-up Exams

If you miss an exam without an approved excuse, you will receive a zero, which will make passing the class very difficult. If you arrive late for an exam, you will need to complete it in the time that remains. Make-up exams are available only to students with legitimate, documented excuses (e.g., a doctor's visit, religious observance, or death in the family). All make-up exams are administered by the Department of Political Science and require my permission before they can be scheduled. Whenever possible, make-up exams should be completed within one week of the original exam date to ensure fairness and keep you on track with the course.

Missed / Late Assignments

Missed assignments will receive a grade of zero. Assignments/ InQuizitive submitted after the deadline will not be accepted, except as permitted under the policies below.

Students are granted two 1-day extensions for assignments over the course of the semester. In addition, students may miss one week of InQuizitive activities without penalty. These policies are applied separately. You do not need to ask permission to use an assignment extension or your InQuizitive allowance.

Classroom Decorum

My goal as the instructor is to cultivate an active and respectful learning environment where participants feel that their presence and input are valued. With this mind, I ask that we “treat others how we want to be treated” as we discuss and share our perspectives in class. Also to reduce distractions, I ask that students minimize travel in and out of room during class time. In addition, please use technology responsibly during class. Ensure that your cell phones are on silent before coming to class. Students are expected to refrain from texting and/or surfing the internet on their phones while in class. Students can use laptops to take notes and are expected to remain attentive and active participants in 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.

Class AI Policy

This is an introductory course. The use of artificial intelligence tools at any stage in your coursework is **strictly prohibited**.

I do conduct AI checks of every paper and assignment to determine whether an assignment was created using generative AI. A Turnitin reporting of **at least 40% AI** will require a meeting with the professor and author. If I believe a violation of A Culture of Honesty may have occurred, I have a responsibility to report to the Office of Academic Honesty. If I do, you will be informed of the report, so you can look out for an email from the Office of Academic Honesty who will schedule a facilitated discussion between you and me 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.

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. 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.

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.

Quizzes & Exams for Students Registered with Accessibility and Testing (formerly the Disability Resource Center)

If you are registered with Accessibility and Testing and you need extended exam time, you are required to take the exam at Accessibility and Testing. It is your responsibility to contact Accessibility and Testing at least 48 hours before the exam date. For exams, please schedule a time on the same day of the exam, any time after the starting time of the exam. Make sure you to inform me, so I know your exam is not missing.

For more information, please visit the A&T website (<https://accessibility.uga.edu/>). The A&T Office is located at 825 Lumpkin Street (Clark-Howell Hall) and can be contacted by phone (706.542.8719).

Student Athletes

Representing our university in athletics places some unusual scheduling obligations on you. Please get in touch with me about your schedule so we can make sure you are able to achieve in the classroom as well as on the field or in the arena.

Withdraw Policy

Be advised that the last day to withdraw from a course without automatically failing is November 11. All students who withdraw after this date will receive a “WF”.

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.

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: <https://well-being.uga.edu>

Student Care and Outreach: <https://sco.uga.edu>

University Health Center: <https://healthcenter.uga.edu/>

Counseling and Psychiatric Services:
<https://caps.uga.edu> or CAPS 24/7 crisis
support at 706-542-2273

Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: <https://healthpromotion.uga.edu>

Accessibility & Testing Office: <https://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>

Course Schedule

The course is organized into three modules: Foundations, Politics, and Institutions. Class sessions will combine lectures, discussion, and group activities. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings before class in order to participate actively in discussions and fully engage with the material.

MODULE 1 -- FOUNDATIONS

Week 1: Americans & Political Values

Week 2: The Constitution

Week 3: Federalism

Week 4: Civil Liberties

Week 5: Civil Rights

Sep 22 Midterm Exam I

MODULE 2— POLITICS

Week 7: Public Opinion

Week 8: Media

Week 9: Political Parties & Interest Groups

Week 10: Elections & Voting

Oct 27 Midterm Exam II

MODULE 3— INSTITUTIONS

Week 12: Congress

Week 13: The Executive Branch

Week 14: The Courts

Dec 8 Final Exam

Disclaimer

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