



## INTA 1200: American Government

Fall 2010

\*\*\*Mon/Wed/Fri 1:05pm – 1:55pm\*\*\*

LOCATION: Boggs B6

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Dr. Mark Zachary Taylor

Assistant Professor, INTA

[mzak@gatech.edu](mailto:mzak@gatech.edu)

(404) 385-0600

Office hours: MWF 2pm-3pm or by appointment

Office: Habersham 318

TA: Megan Clem

[gtg948x@mail.gatech.edu](mailto:gtg948x@mail.gatech.edu)

Course Website: [www.mzak.net/inta1200](http://www.mzak.net/inta1200)

Version 8.8.10

### I. Introduction

This course will serve as an undergraduate level introduction to American government. In it we will explore fundamental concepts, theories, and issues of American politics and policy, with an emphasis on economic aspects. We will do so by examining both the historical and current issues which confront the United States and its place in the world. You will explore how great Western political-economists think about these problems, and examine the events which fostered their ideas. You will discover that American politics have always been in a state of contention. It is a setting in which national and sub-national interest groups are pitted against one another in a contest over wealth, security, power, and ideas. While the course is wide ranging, we will often focus on two major and enduring tensions in US politics in particular. The first is the ongoing debate over the proper role of markets versus government in the US economy and social life. The second is the never ending contest between efficiency, equity, and morality in US policy debates. Underlying each of these are fundamental tensions over power, interest, and the question of “who rules?”. One lesson I hope to communicate in this course is that free and competitive political and economic markets are fundamental to a free and competitive society. However, markets require an agile and efficient government in order to function properly. Therefore we need to develop tools of analysis for understanding why markets succeed or fail, and the tradeoffs between different types of government actions to support markets. All major sides of the various debates over American politics and government will be presented with equal ferocity. The “winner” of these debates, if there is one, is for you to decide. Student performance will be determined by questions & discussion and regular tests about fundamental concepts. Finally, you will find that estimations of whether policy is “good” or “bad” in the United States often depends on who you are as a political-economic actor: your assets, interests, beliefs, and values. Therefore one goal of this class is to force you to think critically about yours.

## II. Approximate Course Calendar\*

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Aug 23: Introduction	Ancient-1492 (Democracy)	<b>Quiz 1 (on class policies)</b>
Aug 31: Economics of Revolution	1789 Debates over the Constitution	<b>Quiz 2</b>
Sep 6: <b>TECH HOLIDAY</b>	1789-1865 Economics of Civil War	Market Failures and Reconstruction
Sep 13: Market Failures & Progressives	1930s: Liberals v. Conservatives	<b>Quiz 3</b>
Sep 20: 1950s-1960s: Race	1950s-1960s II: Race	TBA
Sep 27: Supreme Court I	Supreme Court II	<b>Quiz 4</b>
Oct 4: TBA	Elections I	Elections II
Oct 11: Media I	Media II	<b>Quiz 5</b>
Oct 18: <b>TECH HOLIDAY</b>	The Budget Process	The Policy Process
Oct 25: Politics of Trade I	Politics of Trade II	<b>Quiz 6</b>
Nov 1: Politics of Trade III	Politics of Economic Growth I	Politics of Economic Growth II
Nov 8: Politics of Economic Growth III	Politics of Finance I	<b>Quiz 7</b>
Nov 15: Politics of Finance I	Socialism, Marxism, Capitalism I	Socialism, Marxism, Capitalism II
Nov 21: Market Failures I	Market Failures II	<b>TECH HOLIDAY</b>
Nov 29: TBA	TBA	<b>Quiz 8</b>
Dec 6: TBA	TBA	TBA
Dec 13: NO CLASS	Dec 15: <b>FINAL EXAM</b> (2:50pm)	NO CLASS

\*Lecture topics are subject to change (especially after Oct 18); quiz dates are fixed (unless overridden by special situation).

## III. Required Textbook

I have chosen to require a text that is both high quality *and* widely used so as to maximize the probability that they can found “used” at vastly reduced prices. There is also a high likelihood that each of the texts can later be re-sold at close to its “used” price if you should decide to do so. The required materials to be purchased are:

***Keeping the Republic (3rd Brief Edition) by Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright (Congressional Quarterly Press 2008). Hereafter referred to as “KTR”***

Other assigned readings will be made available on T-Square and the course website. Some assignments are not readings but computer audio files (usually ~20 minutes each) which should be treated as seriously as an in-class lecture or assigned reading (i.e. you are responsible for knowing assigned Mp3 material).

## IV. Assignments

You are not “invited” to do the assigned readings and lectures, you are required to do so as a participant in this class. “KTR” indicates a chapter in the textbook *Keeping the Republic*.

Mon Aug 23: Read *Shaping Telecommunications* excerpts on economics (.pdf available on T-Square)

Wed Aug 25: Medieval IPE (MP3 and .doc available on T-Square)

Fri Aug 27: Early Colonists 1 & 2 (MP3 and .doc available on T-Square)

Mon Aug 30: Mercantilism (MP3 and .doc available on T-Square)

Wed Sep 1: KTR “Politics of the American Founding”

Fri Sep 3: The Presidency 1-5 (MP3 and .doc available on T-Square) & KTR “The Presidency”

Mon Sep 6: The Presidency 1-5 (MP3 and .doc available on T-Square) & KTR “The Presidency”

Wed Sep 8: KTR “Congress”

Fri Sep 10: KTR “Congress”

Mon Sep 13: KTR “Congress”

Wed Sep 15: KTR “Congress”

Fri Sep 17: KTR “Federalism” & KTR “The Struggle for Equal Rights”

Mon Sep 20: KTR “Federalism” & KTR “The Struggle for Equal Rights”

Wed Sep 22: KTR “Federalism” & KTR “The Struggle for Equal Rights”

Fri Sep 24: KTR “Fundamental American Liberties”  
 Mon Sep 27: KTR “The American Legal System and the Courts”  
 Wed Sep 29: KTR “The American Legal System and the Courts”

Fri Oct 1: KTR “Voting, Campaigns, and Elections”  
 Mon Oct 4: KTR “Voting, Campaigns, and Elections”  
 Wed Oct 6: KTR “Voting, Campaigns, and Elections”  
 Fri Oct 8: KTR “The Media”  
 Mon Oct 10: KTR “The Media”  
 Wed Oct 13: KTR “The Media”  
 Fri Oct 15: KTR “Domestic and Foreign Policy”  
 Mon Oct 17: KTR “Domestic and Foreign Policy”  
 Wed Oct 19: KTR “Domestic and Foreign Policy”  
 Fri Oct 21: Rise/Fall of Free Trade (MP3 and .doc available on T-Square)

Readings after Oct 21 subject to change!

Week 10: Basic Gains/Losses from Trade (MP3 and .doc available on T-Square)  
 Week 11: KTR “Parties and Interest Groups”  
 Week 12: KTR “Public Opinion”  
 Week 13: KTR: “The Bureaucracy”  
 Week 14-15: TBA  
 Week 16: KTR “Power and Citizenship in American Politics”

## **V. Course Objectives**

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- A) Identify the major policy problems currently facing the United States and explain how leading scholars & policymakers think about these problems.
- B) Analyze, interpret, and explain developments in American politics.
- C) Understand and identify the effects of both national and global economic developments on xxx.
- D) Deconstruct large political-economic phenomena into their constituent interest groups (both causes & effects).
- E) Understand & identify how your own interests (e.g. your job, financial security) are affected by events in American politics, and what steps you can take to protect or advance your interests.
- F) Advance to higher-level study of specific economic & political issues.

## **VI. Class Conduct**

### **A) Attendance is mandatory.**

Why? Because many students request this rule. Students may miss up to three classes (but not quizzes) without penalty. Thereafter, each absence will result in a grade deduction of 10% of one quiz (e.g. a student with 10 absences will have one full quiz’s worth of points deducted from his/her final grade). Students are responsible for any material, assignments, or announcements covered in classes missed.

### **B) No in-class distractions! Specifically:**

- i. **No electronics: laptops, cellphones, ipads, e-readers, cameras, recording devices.**
- ii. **No food or drink (except water).**

If it runs on electricity and it’s primary job is to deal with information, then turn it off (or put it on vibrate). Why? Electronics, food, and drink interfere with the classroom teaching-learning environment. Students breaking this rule will be asked to leave or drop the class.

**C) Class starts at 1:05, ends promptly at 1:55.**

If you show up late, enter quietly. If you show up so late or leave so early that you miss the sign-up sheet, then you will be counted as absent. Also if you consistently sign the attendance sheet and leave soon thereafter, then eventually you'll be noticed and considered absent nonetheless.

**D) Students are required to check their email and the class website <mzak.net/inta1200> once per day.**

**E) Your grade = 8 quizzes + 1 final,**

- a. All test questions are ranked equally unless otherwise specified. All tests will be based on the required readings, MP3 lectures, and the 1pm -2pm lecture. There will be study guides for the quizzes. Your grade will *not* benefit from "face time" with the professor or TA, or from agreeing with the professor's or TA's political/policy stances or philosophies.
- b. No make-up quizzes.
  - i. Students who miss a quiz without a valid Tech excuse\*, will receive "0" points for that quiz. For example, say there are 1000 points possible in the class. Then a perfect student who misses a 100 point quiz would get a final grade of 900/1000.
  - ii. Students who miss a quiz with a valid Tech excuse\*, will have that quiz eliminated from their grade calculation (both denominator & numerator). For example, say there are 1000 points possible in the class. Then a perfect student who misses (with a valid excuse) a 100 point quiz would get a final grade of 900/900
  - iii. Students who miss a quiz with a valid Tech excuse\* should present the excuse to the TA for verification. Students should bring evidence of excuse validity (i.e. doctor's notes with contact info). Excuses that cannot be verified will be rendered invalid.
- c. We may have extra-credit assignments available *only* for students close to a grade divide. These may take the form of book reviews or essay questions.

[\*Valid Tech excuse = Absences for medical or personal emergencies will be excused upon verification by the TA or professor. Absences for school athletics will be excused only if they are in accordance with the schedules approved and circulated by the Student Academic & Financial Affairs Committee for Travel or the Associate Athletic Director (Academic Services). Absences due to military service will be handled on a case-by-case basis and subject to verification.]

E) If you do miss class for a non-emergency or non-approved event, do *not* apologize or explain why. We completely understand that "life happens" and that you have priorities other than this class. However, unless it's a valid Tech excuse (see above), it will not affect grading policy. That is, if you miss class for some awesome extra-curricular adventure or opportunity, we're not offended...but we cannot grant you a special tutoring session, extension, or make-up either. You will be responsible for any material, assignments, or announcements covered in class that you missed.

F) **Your first stop for all grading, administrative, class policy issues, etc. should always be the TA.** The TA acts as triage, addressing most matters herself and passing on others to the Professor. The TA has no authority to bend any class rule or policy. I reserve the right to overrule the TA on any issue.

G) Websites and online material are generally *not* accepted as legitimate sources for use or citation in your papers and presentations. Exceptions to this policy will be discussed in class.

H) Students will treat each other and the professor with respect. Constructive questioning and criticism are welcome & encouraged. Personal attacks & insults are not. The rule of thumb here is that critical comments and questions should be maturely phrased in a manner that encourages constructive and open debate; they

should not be phrased as insults, threats, or in a manner that shuts down conversation or debate.

- I) Students are expected to read and abide by the Georgia Tech Student Code of Conduct and the Academic Honor Code. All violations will be reported. The complete text of these two Codes may be found at: [www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/integrity/policies/index.html](http://www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/integrity/policies/index.html)

## **VII. Email Policy**

- A) General communications from the professor to the class will be posted on the class website. Students are required to check the class blog daily, and are responsible for all communications on it regarding assignments and grades.
- B) Personal or confidential communications from the professor to you will be sent by email. **You are therefore required to have a functioning email account**, check it daily, to alert the professor if you are not receiving emails on it, and to provide a functioning email address if this one fails to operate properly.
- C) We will check email at irregular intervals between 9am and 6pm every weekday; I reserve the right to check and respond to emails more often than this.
- D) Your emails will be responded to within 72 hours of their receipt, if not faster, conditional on the following:
- Include the course number in the “Subject” line of your emails.
  - Write a meaningful subject line (e.g. “INTA 1200—is immigration a good topic for my extra credit paper?”)
  - If you have a general question, check the syllabus, website, T-Square *before* emailing...the answers might be in there!
  - Be sure to do the readings and listen to the lectures thoroughly *before* emailing questions about the material...the answers might be in there too!

It is the student’s responsibility to adhere to these guidelines. Any e-mail not adhering to these guidelines may be mistaken for spam (or a joke) and discarded.

- E) Unless specifically instructed, assignments are always to be submitted in hard copy form only; electronic submissions serve only as backups & confirmations. (i.e. I don’t have time to download, print, & staple 50 papers).
- F) Absences: Only send email about absences or missed deadlines if they are the result of medical issues or serious personal emergencies (e.g. fires, natural disasters, death in the family). Otherwise, do not send email about absences. Also, do not send email to apologize for missing class or assignment deadlines.

## **VIII. Plagiarism Policy**<sup>1</sup>

The full plagiarism policy, along with citations guidelines, are described on the class website. In brief, plagiarism is defined, for the purposes of this class, as: copying, borrowing, or appropriating another person’s work **and** presenting it as your own in a paper or oral presentation, deliberately or by accident. Acts of plagiarism will be reported in accordance with the Honor Code. In order to avoid being charged with plagiarism, if you use the words, ideas, phrasing, charts, graphs, or data of another person or from published material, then you must either: 1) use quotation marks around the words **and** cite the source, or 2) paraphrase or summarize acceptably using your own words **and** cite the source. The plagiarism policy is not restricted to books, but also applies to video & audio content, websites, blogs, wiki’s, and podcasts. **Plagiarism includes putting your name on a group project to which you have minimally contributed.**

## **IX. Bias**

All major sides of the various debates over American politics and government will be presented with equal ferocity. The “winner” of these debates, if there is one, is for you to decide. I am *not* trying to turn you into Republicans, Democrats, liberals, conservatives, or any kind of “-ist” except for social scientists. The purpose of

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<sup>1</sup> Brennecke, Patricia. 2005. *Academic Integrity at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology: A Handbook for Students* (MIT: Cambridge, MA).

this course is merely to outline the general landscape of American government and politics, and to give you the analytical tools to decide issues for yourself.

Note however that all people have biases, and you should interpret all statements with that in mind. Therefore, although I will try to be as objective as possible, you should know my personal biases:

- 1) I am a non-partisan, moderate, centrist. I support policies and policymakers based on their ability to solve national and international problems. I also judge policymakers on their sound judgment, honesty, and integrity. I do not judge policies or policymakers on their political party, personal lives, physical characteristics, or “conservative” or “liberal” leanings or origins.
- 2) As for policies and ideologies: I tend to prefer free market solutions; I generally support government intervention only in the event of market failure; I tend to prefer economic efficiency over economic equality, unless inequality becomes so great that it threatens domestic security. I support neither “less” nor “more” government, but smarter and more efficient government. I believe that it is each individual’s personal responsibility, not the government’s job, to maintain national morality.
- 3) I tend towards positive rather than normative aspects of politics, and I have a very strong bias towards scientific methods in general (e.g. controlled experiments, natural experiments, statistical analysis, qualitative case studies) and the use of (most types of) empirical evidence to substantiate theoretical claims.
- 4) I see economic prosperity, individual freedom & personal autonomy, and national security as being three mutually supportive phenomena *not* mutually exclusive ones. I also believe them to be the nation’s top priorities. I am a pragmatist in that I generally support policies that have been empirically shown to foster these three goals.
- 5) I tend to support decentralization, competition, and check-and-balances for all large political & economic groups.
- 6) I believe that change, flexibility, and adaptability are usually good things.
- 7) Finally, I strongly believe that fear and laziness, especially in the intellectual realm, are the root causes of all social problems. Therefore my greatest bias is to force you to bravely and industriously apply your minds to the problems of American politics. But know that **you will NOT score any points for adopting my ideological or policy positions!** Scientifically rigorous disagreement is both welcomed and encouraged.

## **X. Grades**

Your grade will be determined by: how well you *communicate* to me that you *understand* the *fundamental* definitions, concepts, and causal relationships of American government and politics *as presented in the lectures and readings*.

It bears repeating that your personal (dis)agreement with the definitions, concepts, & relationships presented in this class will not affect your grade. You do however need to show that you understand these fundamentals as they are currently accepted by the community of top researchers in American politics, government, policy, and economics. You need not agree with them, but you do need to show that you understand them. Your understanding of the course material will be communicated to me via the following (see course website for details):

**100% = Quizzes and final exam. All test questions are weighted equally, unless otherwise specified. All material assigned up until midnight before a quiz is fair game on that quiz. Extra credit assignments are rarely granted. They usually reserved for students sitting on**

**the border between grades, and will be assigned only upon request and on a case-by-case basis.**

For individual assignments (papers, tests, etc), grades in this course are not rigidly related to numerical scores, distribution functions, predetermined percentages, or your knowledge of academic jargon. As can be seen from the following grade descriptions, individual assignment grading in this course is related more directly to a student's demonstrated mastery of the material. This also means that the relative performance of one's peers is less important, though not irrelevant, to one's grade. Finally, in determining an assignment's grade, consideration is given for elegance of presentation, creativity, imagination, and originality *only* where these have been appropriately be called for, and where mastery of the fundamentals has already been demonstrated. A satisfactorily completed individual assignment will receive one of the following grades:

**A:** Exceptionally good performance demonstrating a superior understanding of the subject matter, a foundation of extensive knowledge, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials.

**B:** Good performance demonstrating capacity to use the appropriate concepts, a good understanding of the subject matter, and an ability to handle the problems and materials encountered in the subject.

**C:** Adequate performance demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter, an ability to handle relatively simple problems, and adequate preparation for moving on to more advanced work in the field.

Other grades awarded include:

**D:** Minimally acceptable performance demonstrating at least partial familiarity with the subject matter and some capacity to deal with relatively simple problems, but also demonstrating deficiencies serious enough to make it inadvisable to proceed further in the field without additional work.

**F:** Failed. Has not demonstrated familiarity with the subject matter, nor the capacity to deal with simple problems in a manner recognizable to the consensus of mainstream academic practitioners within the field.

Note that this course's internal grading system includes plus (+) and minus (-) modifiers for use with the letter grades A, B, C, and D. However, they are not officially part of students' grades, they do not appear on Georgia Tech transcripts, and they do not affect internally or externally reported grade-point averages.

### **XI. Grade Change Policy**

Legitimate requests for grade changes are welcome and encouraged. However, you should resist the temptation to file a frivolous request just hoping to "get lucky". Simple computational or clerical errors should be brought to the TA's attention immediately. Otherwise:

A) Requests for grade changes must:

- i) be submitted to the TA in writing, both electronically and in hard-copy, and
- ii) be submitted not sooner than 7 days and not later than 28 days after receiving the graded assignment, and
- iii) be no longer than 600 words, and
- iv) be accompanied by the original completed test/paper (attached to the hard copy)

B) Requests for grade changes should:

- i) identify what was required in the assignment, and
- ii) describe *precisely* how these requirements were fulfilled at a level above the received grade, and
- iii) address any relevant comments written by the professor on the graded assignment (if applicable) and explain why they do not apply.

Approach a grade change request as if arguing a legal case: you should have strong and convincing arguments and evidence to support your request. Be aware that appeals to the practices of other professors generally do not

constitute good argument or evidence. Note also that grade changes requests can result in re-grades both up or down (or left unchanged). That is, if the greater scrutiny demanded by a grade change request reveals your assignment to deserve a lower grade than previously awarded, then the lower grade may be assigned (i.e. be sure that you are not “looking a gift horse in the mouth” *before* you file a grade change request).