INTA 1200 Syllabus

**American Government, Fall 2017**

**Mon/Wed/Fri 8:00am ­– 8:55am, Clough Undergraduate Commons 152**

**Instructor Information**

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| Instructor | Email | Office Hours & Location |
| Jon Schmid | jschmid7@gatech.edu  | By appointment, Habersham G-15 |
| **Teaching Assistants** | **Email** | **Office Hours & Location** |
| Baxter S. Sapp (A-K)Plamen Mavrov (L-Z) | baxtersapp@gatech.edupmavrov3@gatech.edu | By appointmentBy appointment |

**General Information**

**Description**

This course provides an undergraduate level introduction to American Government. It will explore the fundamental concepts, theories, and issues of American politics and policy. American politics is a setting in which national and sub-national interest groups are pitted against one another in contests over wealth, security, power, and ideas. Particular emphasis will be placed on the American economic system. We will examine both the historical and current issues confronting the United States. You will discover that American politics have always been in a state of contention. However, the degree of domestic political discord varies with respect to time and the level of government under scrutiny. Besides the realization of the leaning objectives listed below, a primary focus of this class will be to facilitate the process by which students assume the position of an “impartial spectator” in evaluating the merits of a given political system or political event. That is, I hope to encourage students to evaluate political ideas in a way that is systematic, rational, and cognizant of his or her prior beliefs. Ultimately, the primary goal of this course is to provide each member of the class with a greater understanding of the structures that determine and the forces that shape the American political system, so that he or she may be more engaged, discerning, and critical participant therein.

## Note: This course can be used to satisfy the Social Science or US Perspectives requirement for undergraduates. It also satisfies the state’s “Legislative” requirement for a course on US & Georgia history/constitution. For more details, please see the “Core Curriculum” section of the Georgia Tech Catalog or meet with your undergraduate advisor.

## Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to identify the major philosophical principals that motivated the establishment of the American system of government.
2. Students will be able to identify some of the major policy problems currently facing the United States and explain how scholars & policymakers think about these problems.
3. Students will be able to analyze, interpret, and explain developments in American politics at a basic level.
4. Students will be able to engage in “perspective taking” (i.e. the identification of the interests and constraints of relevant parties) when analyzing a complex political event. In other words, students will able to deconstruct large political-economic phenomena into their constituent interest groups.
5. Students will be able to take the position of an “impartial spectator” in evaluating the merits of a given political system, event, or idea. Similarly, students will be able to identify when they are failing to be objective and will be familiar with the problems associated with such an approach.
6. Students will be able to describe the basic methodologies used in political science and understand the basic process of truth seeking in the social sciences.
7. Students will be able to identify credible and "fake" sources of news.
8. Students will be prepared to advance to higher-level study of specific economic & political issues.

**Course Requirements & Grading**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Assignment  | Date | Weight  |
| Test #1 | September 15 | 20% |
| Test #2 | October 13 | 20% |
| Test #3 | November 10 | 20% |
| Test #4\*\* | December 11 | 20% |
| Participation  | Semester | 20%  |

**Description of Graded Components**

Your final course grade will comprise of five components: four, non-cumulative, tests, and a semester grade for participation. Each test will be graded out of 100 points and will contribute 20% of your final grade. Tests are not cumulative; each test covers 3 chapters of the course text, roughly 10 lectures, and 3-5 supplemental readings or audio recordings.

Each student’s attendance grade for the semester will be calculated as the mean of his or her attendance grades. Daily attendance grades (on more which below) are scored as 0s or 1s (one cannot partially attend class on a given day). Similarly, the attendance grades that are derived from in-class assignments are graded as 0s or 1s. However, for these in-class assignments, full credit will only be granted to submissions that have, based on the judgment of the grader, sincerely attempted to provide a complete and thoughtful response to the prompt.

## The optimal outcome for me in this course is that each student earn an “A.” Given the wide variability of student interest, capacity, effort, course-load, commitments outside of this class, and even luck, this is unlikely. However, I will never downwardly curve grades to fit a preconception regarding the ideal performance distribution for this class. If a given assessment is characterized by a distribution that seems too low, I will make appropriate upward adjustments to grades.

**\*\*** A written assignment will constitute 20% of your Test #4 grade. The assignment will require you to analyze the manner in which various media outlets cover a particular news item. You will be required to assess the credibility of specific pieces, outlets, and authors. An assignment sheet describing what is expected will be distributed after Test #3.

**Grading Scale**

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A 90-100%

B 80-89%

C 70-79%

D 60-69%

F 0-59%

**Course Materials**

**Course Text**

Keeping the Republic (7th edition) by Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright (Congressional Quarterly Press)

## Additional Materials/Resources

Other assigned material will be made available on T-Square. Some assignments are not readings but computer audio files, which should be treated as seriously as an in-class lecture or assigned reading (i.e. you are responsible for knowing the assigned MP3 material). In all cases, transcripts of the audio files are available on the econtalk.org website.

**Course Expectations & Guidelines**

## Accommodations for Learning Needs:

## If you have learning needs that require some adaptations for you to succeed in this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services on campus (<http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>). I am happy to arrange to accommodate your learning needs based on their recommendations.

## Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/ or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

## Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

## Attendance and Participation

## Attendance is mandatory: Why? Research shows that student attendance correlates strongly with performance. Because one of my objectives is to promote student performance, I have taken the (admittedly paternalistic) decision to require attendance.

Attendance will be measured in two ways: Attendance sheet and class activities.

***Attendance sheet:*** Most often attendance will be measured by means of an attendance sheet. Attendance will be taken ten times over the course of the semester. Be aware that signing the attendance sheet indicates your full attendance that day. Signing the attendance sheet but not attending the full class, or having a friend sign on your behalf, is a form of academic misconduct, constitutes an honor code violation, and can result in a severe grade penalty.

Regardless, students may miss up to two classes after the last registration day (usually Friday of the first week of class) without penalty. Thereafter, each absence will result in a grade deduction of 10% the attendance score. Students are responsible for any material, assignments, or announcements covered in classes missed.

Absences that have a Georgia Tech excuse\* will not count against students.

**In-Class Activities**: During the semester we will have many opportunities to “escape” the typical lecture setting. In particular, debates, group discussion, and short writing assignment will take place roughly weekly. The duration of these activities will vary. In order to receive full attendance credit during these days, students will be required to submit some (typically short) deliverable. Students will be informed of the specific content of this deliverable on the day of the activity. Students that turn in a good faith attempt at completion of the deliverable will receive full credit.

\*Valid Georgia 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. Unfortunately, job interviews, research conferences, and family/friend visits do not count as a valid Tech excuse for missing a quiz or exam in this class. Excuses (together with supporting evidence or documents) should be presented to the TA as soon as possible and NOT LATER than 5pm of the final day of class.

## Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Students who miss a test without a valid Georgia Tech excuse\*, will receive “0” points for that test. Students who miss a test with a valid Georgia 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. Once the valid Georgia Tech excuse is received and validated, the student and the TA should arrange a time and venue for a retest.

## Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

## Student Use of Mobile Devices and Other Tech in the Classroom

Phones should be set to silent during class. Browsing phones during class indicates a lack of respect to the professor and the TAs. It is also likely to reduce student performance.

Please do not record the lectures without my permission. In most cases, I will be happy to allow an individual to take an audio recording of the class, however, I will make this decision on a per student basis.

**Advice on how to succeed in the course**

Success in this course is straightforward. A student’s final grade is determined by two variables: tests and participation. Performing well on the tests requires students to learn the content contained in three sources: the course textbook, the lectures, and the supplemental content that has been posted on T-Square. For each test, this requires students to study three chapters from KTR, roughly ten lectures, and 3-5 supplemental items. Participation is almost entirely a function of effort and diligence.

**Course Schedule\***

\*This schedule is what Thurgood Marshall might have characterized as a “living document.” Although every effort will be made to adhere to this chronology (especially the test dates), it is possible that some shifting may occur. I will notify you of such changes during class and via T-Square.

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| Date | Topic | Due |
| August 21 | Introduction | None |
| August 23 | Politics & The European, American,and African-American Enlightenments | “American Enlightenment Thought” |
| August 25 | Politics | KTR Ch. 1, “Alexander Crummell” |
| August 28 | Citizenship and Pol. Culture | Take Pew Political Typology Quiz (remember score!) |
| August 30 | Citizenship and Pol. Culture & Political Science Methods |  |
| September 1 | Citizenship and Pol. Culture | KTR Ch. 2 |
| September 4 | **Holiday-no class** | **Holiday-no class** |
| September 6 | Founding a Nation | Federalist No. 51 |
| September 9 | Founding a Nation | “Seidman on the Constitution” audio file |
| September 11 | Founding a Nation |  |
| September 13 | Review | KTR Ch. 3 |
| September 15 | **Test 1** |  |
| September 18 | Federalism  |  |
| September 20 | Federalism | “Epstein on the Constitution" audio file |
| September 22 | Federalism | KTR Ch. 4 |
| September 25 | Fundamental American Liberties | US Bill of Rights |
| September 27 | Fundamental American Liberties | Campus Carry (Guidelines & Bill) |
| September 29 | Fundamental American Liberties | KTR Ch. 5 |
| October 2 | Struggle for Equal Rights | Brown v. Board of Education (Warren ruling) |
| October 4 | Struggle for Equal Rights | Literacy test & Letter from Birmingham Jail |
| October 6 | Struggle for Equal Rights | KTR Ch. 6 |
| October 9 | **Holiday-no class** | **Holiday-no class** |
| October 11 | Review |  |
| October 13 | **Test 2** |  |
| October 16 | Congress |  |
| October 18 | Congress | Gerrymandering (two articles) |
| October 20 | Congress | KTR Ch. 7 |
| October 23 | Presidency  | House Divided Speech |
| October 25 | Presidency | “Bruce Bueno de Mesquita on the Spoils of War” audio file |
| October 27 | Presidency | KTR Ch. 8 |
| October 30 | Bureaucracy |  |
| November 1 | Bureaucracy |  |
| November 3 | Bureaucracy | KTR Ch. 9 |
| November 6 | Guest Lecture (local politics) |  |
| November 8 | Review |  |
| November 10 | **Test 3** |  |
| November 13 | Legal System |  |
| November 15 | Legal System | Oliver Wendell Holmes’ dissent in Abrams v. United States |
| November 17 | Legal System | KTR Ch. 10 |
| November 20 | Political Parties | Washington's Farewell Address (1796) |
| November 22 | **Holiday-no class** | **Holiday-no class** |
| November 24 | Political Parties | KTR Ch. 11 |
| November 27 | Interest Groups | “Luigi Zingales” audio file |
| November 29 | Interest Groups |  |
| December 1 | Review | KTR Ch. 12 |
| December 4 | Review |  |
| December 11 | **Test 4** | **\*\*** Media Analysis Assignment |
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**Other Important Dates**

**August 25**: Registration/ Schedule Change Deadline (last day to drop course without receiving a “W”)

**September 29**: Progress reports due

**October 29:** Grade Mode Change Deadline (last day to change from letter grade to pass/fail)

**October 29**: Withdrawal Deadline (last day to withdraw and still receive a “W”)