

American Government  
in the Comparative Perspective

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This course is designed to give students an introduction to American political institutions, actors, and processes but with an added comparative perspective. The student will not only be expected to understand these topics but also be able to critically evaluate them.

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 Georgia History/Constitution. For more details, please see the "Core Curriculum" section of the Georgia Tech Catalog or meet with your undergraduate advisor.

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#### COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the background and historical context that shapes the American political system.
- Gain a broad understanding of the institutions, actors, participants, and processes of politics and government in America.
- Understand how government, politics, and policy impact your daily life.
- Understand the basic structure and operations of GA state government
- Understand how the American governmental system is similar to and different from other structures around the world.

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#### COURSE MATERIALS

There is no required textbook for this course. However, there are mandatory readings that are posted to Canvas or will be handed out in class. All readings are subject to change, but students will be notified in advance. Unless otherwise noted, all readings, audio files, or videos are mandatory.

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#### TEACHING STYLE

My style is somewhat loose as you will quickly see. This will not be a typical lecture class, as I will try to make it both informative yet somewhat enjoyable. Thus, what you will find is a mix of lecture with the

addition of various “human interest pieces” and hopefully some humor. What does make this class different than my typical American Government class is that we are fully remote, and it has been designated as an asynchronous course. So, if you have heard or read reviews of past classes and expect what you have heard about, then I am afraid you may be disappointed. Still, I will do my best and hopefully have a solution listed below that will help those who prefer more of a “live” class environment.

In my lectures I will attempt to take all bias out. In other words, I will analyze but not give you my opinion nor feelings. Think of me as a sports broadcaster. I just call the game as I see it and don’t cheer for either team. I just love the game, which in our case is politics. I want you to know that I encourage an open exchange of ideas and debate. I am not looking for you to simply agree with everything I am saying. I can assure you I take nothing personally, so feel free to question things, probe for more information, etc., but I ask you to be respectful and courteous to everyone if you post comments, questions, or concerns to the group as a whole. Of course, I do have my own opinions. When appropriate, I will share them if asked but will always first present things through the analytical lens.

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## CLASS FORMAT AND ASSIGNMENTS

Lectures- First and foremost, I want everyone to know my preference would have been for us to be in a traditional classroom setting but that was impossible and unsafe. Thus, the university chose to make this a remote, asynchronous class. For some of you this is a dream and I get that. You don’t want to take this class, someone is making you take this class, etc. I have heard it all before and it does not offend me. Normally you are my favorite students to have in class because often you soon realize what we are discussing is both interesting and fun. And also, this class typically serves as a nice break from organic chemistry, quantum physics or whatever else you are doing in your other classes. Still, for others this remote environment is the worst-case scenario. No live interaction, just watching another boring video, and the feeling that you just are checking a box. So, I want to try and address both types of students in this class.

For the recording of lectures, I plan on using Bluejeans and providing recording times to the students. So, if you would like to be in the “live studio audience” you can be. With that said, there are some drawbacks to using this software. The most significant is that it limits how many students can be in the live student audience to 150. If I see we are getting close to that number on a consistent basis then I will likely switch to Webex so that more students can attend. But for now, if you would like to be in the “live studio audience” I would recommend logging in a bit early to make sure you get a spot. For the rest, you will be able to watch the lectures at your convenience after they post. There will be no attendance kept or extra participation credit given to those who can attend. I am doing this because some of you will want to ask questions live, engage in the material in real time, want to discuss what is going on in politics more generally, or just simply like to have greater structure. But again, live attendance will be totally optional. Lectures will be posted three times a week as if we were on a regular class type schedule and I plan to record as many of them as possible with the live option available to students. Each lecture will represent the amount of material I would typically cover in a 50-minute residential class. And again, any attendance to the live recording is optional. The times of those recordings will be announced after a survey of the class has been conducted in order to select an appropriate time. Finally, I do want to note that lecture slides will not be posted outside of the lectures themselves. In other words, you will need to watch the lectures and take notes.

Exams- There will be three exams that will cover material up until that point. None of them are cumulative. They will be multiple choice and true/false type questions.

Readings and assignments- This class does not use a textbook, thus you will *must* watch the lectures to be prepared for exams. There are, however, readings that need to be done. Those will be posted on Canvas as pdf files. There will also be short reading assignments or quizzes attached to many of those in which you will have time windows to complete them within.

Discussion- From time-to-time there will be discussion questions posted you are expected to reply to them. However, not every student will need to reply to every question. Instead the class will be broken up with blocks of students being required to answer. However, the first day there will be one set of questions everyone will need to respond to.

Office hours and interaction with me- I will have some virtual office hours each week in which I will be available. Once again this is likely to be done through Bluejeans so I can set up set meeting times. These will be available to everyone during these windows. However, I will also be available for private virtual meetings as well. Times of which will be coordinated through email. In addition, I realize many of you may be in time zones where neither of those might work. I promise you there will be a way to work it out, even if it means me staying up late or getting up early. At the very least you could send me an email with questions and we can start there. I truly want to be as available to you as possible so don't hesitate to reach out.

Communication- All communication should occur through email inside of Canvas. If you do email me through my Georgia Tech email address, please make sure you clearly identify what class you are in and what you are emailing about.

Fall 2020 specific- The Fall semester could become a bit crazy due to Covid. I will be following the University protocols for Covid-19

**Instructor Illness or Exposure to Covid-19** During the fall 2020 semester, I may be required to quarantine due to exposure or isolate due to a Covid-19 diagnosis. Some disruption to classes or services is inevitable, but Georgia Tech is making every effort to ensure continuity of operations. As is the case in any semester, I may cancel a class if I have an illness or emergency situation. If an I need to cancel a class, I will notify students as early as possible.

If I need to cancel a class repeatedly due to Covid-19 symptoms, a backup will be supplied in the form of a temporary substitute instructor or asynchronous work. No course will be canceled after the first class has occurred.

**Student Illness or Exposure to Covid-19** During the semester, you may be required to quarantine or self-isolate to avoid the risk of infection to others. Quarantine is the separation of those who have been exposed to someone with Covid-19 but who are not ill; isolation is the separation of those who have tested positive for Covid-19 or been diagnosed with Covid-19 by symptoms.

If you have not tested positive but are ill or have been exposed to someone who is ill, please follow the [Covid-19 Exposure Decision Tree](#) for reporting your illness.

During the quarantine or isolation period you may feel completely well, ill but able to work as usual, or too ill to work until you recover.

*In Remote courses-* Unless you are too ill to work, you should be able to complete your remote work while in quarantine or isolation.

If you are ill and unable to do course work this will be treated similarly to any student illness. The Dean of Students will have been contacted when you report your positive test or are told that it is necessary to quarantine and will notify me that you may be unable to attend class events or finish your work as the result of a health issue. I will not be told the reason. I will be lenient and understanding when setting work deadlines or expecting students to finish work, and so you should be able to catch up with any work that you miss while in quarantine or isolation. I will may make available any video recordings of classes that have been used while you are absent, and I may prepare some complementary asynchronous assignments that compensate for your inability to participate in discussion sessions.

**CARE Center, Counseling Center, Stamps Health Services, and the Student Center-**

These uncertain times can be difficult, and many students may need help in dealing with stress and mental health. The **CARE Center** and the **Counseling Center**, and **Stamps Health Services** will offer both in-person and virtual appointments. Face-to-face appointments will require wearing a face covering and social distancing, with exceptions for medical examinations. Student Center services and operations are available on the **Student Center** website. For more information on these and other student services, contact the Vice President and Dean of Students or the **Division of Student Life**.

**Accommodations for Students at Higher Risk for Severe Illness with Covid-19-**

Students may request an accommodation through the Office of Disability Services (ODS) due to 1) presence of a condition as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or 2) identification as an individual of higher risk for Covid-19, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Registering with ODS is a 3-step process that includes completing an application, uploading documentation related to the accommodation request, and scheduling an appointment for an “intake meeting” (either in person or via phone or video conference) with a disability coordinator.

If you have been approved by ODS for an accommodation, I will work closely with you to understand your needs and make a good faith effort to investigate whether or not requested accommodations are possible for this course. If the accommodation request results in a fundamental alteration of the stated learning outcome of this course, ODS, academic advisors, and the school offering the course will work with you to find a suitable alternative that as far as possible preserves your progress toward graduation.

**Course Homeworks/Assignments/Papers-** All course assignments will be submitted electronically via Canvas.

*Final remarks-* With everything being recorded and likely students participating in those recordings, it is absolutely imperative that class materials are not disseminated in any way. Lectures should only be viewed by individuals currently registered to this class and all students taking this class are bound by the honor code to not distribute materials in any way.

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UNIVERSITY and COURSE POLICIES

*Statement of Inclusion:* The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts supports the Georgia Institute of Technology’s commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand

the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in the broader society.

Request for Modification - If you are a learner that requires some adaptations for you to succeed in this course or are a student with disabilities that requires accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability at (404) 894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu> as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your needs and obtain the appropriate accommodations letter. Any student requiring instructional modifications due to a documented disability should make an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible so that the appropriate accommodations can be made. I am happy to do whatever I can to ensure that you succeed.

Academic Integrity - By attending Georgia Tech you have all committed to upholding the ideals of honor and integrity as well as refusing to betray this trust that has been bestowed upon you as a member of our academic community (<http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>). Any student who is suspected of violations of this honor code including but not limited to cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be automatically reported to the Office of Student Integrity. This office will investigate the incident as well as recommend the penalties for the violations.

Attendance- Because this is a remote, asynchronous class, attendance for the live recordings when offered is not required. However, there will be assignments and an announcement regularly with very clear due dates and time windows. You will be expected to finish and submit those assignments within those time windows. In addition, the expectation is that all lectures will be viewed within 24-36 hours of the first being posted.

\*Excused Absence policy – This course will follow the University’s policy for excused absences. Absences for medical or personal emergencies will be excused upon verification by the Office of Student Life. You can find an outline of the policy here <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/student-absence-regulations/> This would apply to illness as well as personal emergencies. Please review this page if you are not familiar with it. In addition, all institute approved absences will honored, which would include university sanctioned function, athletics, etc. when accompanied by the appropriate documentation. Absences resulting from oversleeping, alarms not going off, computer crashes, drink or food specials, lost wallets, lost purses, or dogs eating papers, books, flash drives, etc. will not be considered approved absences.

Classroom Policies - Professional and courteous behavior will be required of all students at all times. That means whether engaged in the recording of lectures or the posting of discussion responses. Any behavior that is detrimental to the creation of a positive, inclusive environment will not be tolerated. It is fine to have opinions, thoughts, and arguments, however, please remember that just because we have free speech does not mean we are free from the consequences of that speech.

Correspondence - All course-related concerns/email should first be addressed to your TA. Monday through Friday, your email will be returned within 48 hours. If you have not received a reply within that time frame, please email me directly. The one exception is for missed assignments or exams. Please email me those issues directly.

*All policies are subject to review by the professor and are subject to change with written notice to the students ahead of time.*

## COURSE STRUCTURE

Exams (E1-25%, E2-25%, E3-30%) - The exams will test your knowledge of the material covered in lecture, the text, as well as any supplemental readings. The test itself will be made up of term identification, multiple choice, short answer and True/False. As we get closer to the first exam I will give greater details on format and best practices, however, each exam covers only a designated section of the course. ***Thus, neither the second nor third exam is cumulative.*** Based on the course survey I have chosen not to do any proctoring service, as not all student indicated the basic requirements to do so. But I remind you are bound the Student Honor Code and any violations will be met with severe consequences.

Written Assignments/quizzes (15% total) - Short out-of-class writing assignments or quizzes. They will be submitted through Canvas and Turnitin software is active. I will be dropping your lowest score.

Discussion responses (5%) – Small discussion posts that will occur throughout the semester. These are really more to show engagement with the material than

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## GRADING PROCEDURES

A = 100-90; B = 89-80; C = 79-70; D = 69-60; F = 59 and below. Mid-term grades or progress reports will be listed as S = Satisfactory, meaning 70 and above, or U = Unsatisfactory, indicating a grade below 70. ***If you are taking the class Pass/Fail, then the same mid-term grade standard will also be applied for a final grade of “S” = Satisfactory as well.***

***In addition, Canvas will be used only for posting grades and NOT GRADE CALCULATION. Thus, students should not use any calculation made by the system as being representative of their actual grade in the class.***

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## WEEKLY READINGS AND SCHEDULE

This is meant as a guide and students will be notified of any changes. I have attempted to provide a full schedule to provide those who wanted more structure based on their survey results just that. However, it is likely that this schedule will change, be imperfect, and/or be thrown off by the course of events either in our online environment or the ‘real world’. However, **the exam dates will never change, and you will be given a window of time to access those exams and they will be timed.**

August 17– Syllabus Day and some general remarks

August 19 - Political Science and the Study of Politics

August 21 - American Politics and American Political Culture

August 24 - American Politics and American Political Culture

Readings:

1) Elazar, “The Three Political Cultures”

August 26 – The Myths of American Politics and AOC

August 28 - Constitution

Readings:

- 1) Federalist #15
- 2) Federalist #51

August 31– Constitution

Readings:

- 1)Kammen, “The Nature of American Constitutionalism”

September 2 – Federalism

September 4 – Federalism

***September 7- No Class Labor Day***

September 9 – Catch up day or Congress

Readings:

- 1) Edmund Burke, “Speech to the Electors of Bristol”
- 2) David R. Mayhew excerpt from *Congress: The Electoral Connection*

September 11 – Congress I

September 14 – Congress II

September 16 - Congress III

Readings:

- 1) Citizens Against Government Waste

September 18- **EXAM 1**

September 21 - President I

September 23- President II

Readings:

- 1) Richard Neustadt “The Power to Persuade,” from *Presidential Power*

September 25- President III

September 28 - Bureaucracy I

September 30 - Bureaucracy II

October 2 - Judiciary

Readings:

- 1) Federalist #78

October 5- Judiciary II

October 7 - Judiciary III

Readings:

- 1) David O'Brien "The Court in American Life"

October 9 – Elections and Voting

October 12 - Elections and Voting

October 14- Elections and Voting

October 16 – Catch up class or Topic **TBD**

October 19 - Public Opinion I

Readings:

- 1) George Gallup, "Polling the Public"
- 2) "Four Pollsters"

October 21 – **EXAM 2**

October 23 - Public Opinion

October 26- Interest Groups I

Readings:

- 1) Federalist #10
- 2) Mancur Olson, "The Logic of Collective Action"

October 28 - Interest Groups II

October 30 - Political Parties I

Readings:

- 1) Fiorina, "Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics"

November 2 – Political Parties II

Readings:

- 1) Fiorina, "What Culture Wars?"
- 2) Wilson, "How Divided are We?"

November 4 – Civil Liberties I

Reading:

- 1) Rauch, "In Defense of Prejudice"

November 6 - Civil Liberties II

November 9 - Civil Liberties III

November 11- Civil Rights I

November 13 - Civil Rights II

Readings:

- 1) Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"



November 16 – Public Policy Foreign and Domestic policy  
Reading:  
**TBD**

November 18 - Public Policy Foreign and Domestic policy

November 20 – Georgia Government

November 23 – Thoughts, Review and Commentary

***Thanksgiving Recess November 25-27***

***Final Exam- Thursday, December 3***

**Additional Important Dates to keep in mind**

**August 21-** *Last day to register, make schedule changes, and/or drop without a "W" grade for Spring Semester 2019*

**September 28-** *Midterm progress reports posted*

**October 24-** *Deadline to change grade mode from Letter/Grade to Pass/Fail (and vice versa) and last day to withdraw from individual courses with "W" grades*