

American Government

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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, BIAS, COURSE RULES AND GUIDELINES

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. So you can expect that after a short amount of time there will be a nice back and forth between myself and the class.

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 merely politics. In addition, 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. I just may have to cut our discussions short because of time constraints. 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.

Even though we will keep it loose in here, there still are some rules and guidelines for this class.

- 1) There are a total of three exams in the course. There are no make-up exams unless there is an institutional approved absence (see below). Conflicts with scheduling must be discussed with me ahead of time (not TA).
- 2) Reading pages and assignments are due the day they appear on the syllabus.
- 3) Cell phones are to be placed on vibrate or turned off and must remain out of sight (this means not on your desk, in your lap, etc.). If you are expecting an emergency call, please let me know before class. In addition, there is no texting during class. Violations of the cell phone policy will impact your participation grade, and thus your course grade directly.
- 4) No laptops, tablets, iPads, or other technologies used for taking notes will be permitted in class unless the student has an accommodations letter from the university, they are identified as a note-taker by the university or myself, or I have allowed them in class for that day for everyone. Thus, all notes should be taken by hand through traditional/nontechnical means.
- 5) No recording devices (audio or video) are permitted in class unless the student has an accommodations letter from the university. This is definitely for your protection more than mine.

\*policies updated 8/19/2019

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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 and Participation - First and foremost, you cannot participate if you are not in class. Thus, attendance is mandatory and if you miss a class you are responsible for getting the material from another student. Please before you leave class on the first day find a “note taking buddy” so that if either of you miss you are covered. Lecture slides will not be available online, nor made available by me or the TA in person unless there was an excused absence. However, before each exam the lecture slides will be posted for a very limited time just in case you missed anything. But it should be noted that the slides are primarily outlines and only represent a portion of the material. Thus, there is value to being in class. Participation will be measured in two ways, with an attendance sheet and various in-class activities.

\*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 be 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 behavior will be required of all students at all times. The following behavior is not appropriate: use of cell phones, texting, extraneous conversations, and disrespect toward other students or professor. ***Students engaging in these behaviors may be asked to leave class.*** In addition, no audio or video recording is allowed in class unless approved by the professor in accordance with an accommodation letter.

Correspondence - All course-related concerns/email will be addressed first 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.

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

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## COURSE STRUCTURE

Exams (E1-25%, E2-30%, 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.**

Written Assignments (10% total) - Short out-of-class writing assignments on readings and discussion questions. They will be submitted through Canvas and Turnitin software is active. Generally there are between 5-7 written assignments a semester but this number can vary. I will be dropping your lowest homework score.

Participation (5%) - In class participation measurements. You can have two missed classes before it will impact your grade and generally there are 7-10 in class participation measurements in a semester.

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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 students should not use the calculation made by the system as being representative of their actual grade in the class. I will begin posting your weighted average after the second exam.***

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## WEEKLY READINGS AND SCHEDULE

This is meant as a guide and students will be notified of any changes. Students should note that for each exam, they are accountable for all of the readings and lectures up until that point and if there are schedule changes those will not impact exam dates. Finally, additional readings may be added.

August 19– Syllabus Day

August 21 - Political Science and the Study of Politics

August 23 - American Politics and American Political Culture

August 26 - American Politics and American Political Culture

August 28 – The Myths of American Politics and AOC

August 30 - Constitution

Readings:

Federalist #15 and #51

***September 2- No Class Labor Day***

September 4 – Constitution/Federalism

September 6 – Federalism II

September 9 – Federalism

September 11 – Catch up day or Congress

Readings:

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

September 13 - Congress I

September 16 – Congress II

September 18 - Congress III

Readings:

Citizens Against Government Waste

September 20- President I

September 23 - **EXAM I**

September 25- President II

Readings:

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

September 27- President III

September 30 - Bureaucracy I

October 2 - Bureaucracy II

October 4 - Judiciary

Readings:

Federalist #78

October 7 - Judiciary II

October 9 – Judiciary III

Readings:

David O’Brien “The Court in American Life”

October 11 - Elections and Voting

***October 14- No class FALL break***

October 16 - Elections and Voting

October 18 - Elections and Voting

October 21 - Elections and Voting

October 23 - Public Opinion I

October 25 - Public Opinion II

Readings:

George Gallup, "Polling the Public", "Four Pollsters"

October 28- Interest Groups I

Readings:

Federalist #10; Mancur Olson, "The Logic of Collective Action"

October 30 - **EXAM 2**

November 1 - Interest Groups II

November 4 – Political Parties I

November 6 – Political Parties II

November 8 - Catch up class or start Civil Liberties

November 11 - Civil Liberties

November 13- Civil Liberties II

November 15 - Civil Liberties III

November 18 - Civil Rights I

November 20 - Civil Rights II

Readings:

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

November 22 – US Domestic Policy

November 25 – US Foreign Policy

***Thanksgiving Recess November 27-29***

December 2 - Georgia Government

**Final Exam Monday, December 9 2:40-5:30**

**Additional Important Dates to keep in mind**

**August 23-** Last day to register, make schedule changes, and/or drop without a "W" grade for Spring Semester 2019

**September 30-** Midterm progress reports posted

**October 26-** 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