

American Government

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This course is designed to give the student an introduction to American political institutions, actors, policies and processes but also with a comparative perspective. In addition, we will briefly cover the basic structure and operation of Georgia government as well. 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 government structures in other countries.
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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.

If you would like me to suggest a textbook to you I would be more than happy to. In addition, I will be happy to provide a list of additional readings or suggested readings upon request.

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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. However, I 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 the 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.
- 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 are permitted in class unless the student has an accommodations letter from the university or I have allowed them in class for that day.
- 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.

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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 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, 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 (E1-30%, 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.***

Homework Assignments/participation (10% total) - Short out-of-class writing assignments on readings and discussion questions (7%) and in class participation measurements (3%)\*\*

\*\*I will be dropping your lowest homework score and you can have two missed classes before it will impact your grade. Generally there are between 5-7 homework assignments and 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.

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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.

January 7 – Syllabus Day

January 9 - Political Science and the Study of Politics

January 11 - American Politics and American Political Culture

January 14 - American Politics and American Political Culture

January 16 – The Myths of American Politics and AOC

January 18 - Constitution

Readings:

Federalist #15 and #51

***January 21- No Class Martin Luther King, Jr. Day***

January 23 – Constitution/Federalism

January 25 – Federalism II

January 28 – Federalism

January 30 – Catch up day or Congress

Readings:

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

February 1 - Congress I

February 4 – Congress II

February 6 - Congress III

Readings:

Citizens Against Government Waste “2007 Pig Book Summary”

February 8- President I

**February 11 - EXAM I**

February 13- President II

Readings:

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

February 15- President III

February 18 - Bureaucracy I

February 20 - Bureaucracy II

February 22 - Judiciary

Readings:

Federalist #78

February 25 - Judiciary II

February 27 – Judiciary III

Readings:

David O'Brien "The Court in American Life"

March 1 - Elections and Voting

March 4 - Elections and Voting II

March 6 - Elections and Voting III

March 8 - Elections and Voting

March 11 - Public Opinion I

**March 13 - EXAM 2**

March 15- Public Opinion II

Readings:

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

**Spring Break March 18-22**

March 25 - Interest Groups I

Readings:

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

March 27 - Interest Groups II

March 29 – Political Parties I

April 1 – Political Parties II

April 3 - Catch up class or start Civil Liberties

April 5 - Civil Liberties

April 8- Civil Liberties II

April 10 - Civil Liberties III

April 12 - Civil Rights I

April 15 - Civil Rights II

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

April 17 – US Domestic Policy

April 19 – US Foreign Policy

April 22 - Georgia Government

**Final Exam Friday, April 26 from 11:20-2:10**

**Additional Important Dates to keep in mind**

**January 11-** *Last day to register, make schedule changes, and/or drop without a "W" grade for Spring Semester 2019*

**February 18-** *Midterm progress reports posted*

**March 13-** *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*