

Fall 2009

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Office Hours: MW, 3:15-8:15,
by chance or by appointment

POLS 1101: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

This course will introduce the major institutions and actors comprising the government(s) of the United States. The first weeks will examine the foundations of our national government, including a detailed look at the United States Constitution. After this, the course will turn to examinations of the Presidency, Congress, Political Parties and Elections, and the Judiciary. During these discussions, attention will be paid to the interactions between the branches – as well as between the federal government and the states (including a detailed look at the government of Georgia) – and the roles of such other actors in the political process as the bureaucracy, interest groups, and the media will also be observed. Students will demonstrate that they have developed: an understanding of the basic values of American civic culture; an understanding of the constitutional, institutional, political, and legal processes of the United States and the state of Georgia; an understanding of the interrelationship between American Governmental institutions; an understanding of the basic terminology of political science and American politics; and an understanding of how American culture, values, and political institutions compare with those of other types of government.

The class will meet twice a week, Monday and Wednesday, 2:00-3:15 p.m., in TLC 1200. In order to pass the tests and exam, it is imperative that one come to almost every class – and while there, to pay attention and take thorough notes. Most of the material on which the tests will be based will come from the lectures, but it is also important to complete the reading assignments, most of which are from the latest (2009) edition of Karen O'Connor and Larry J. Sabato's *American Government: Roots and Reform* (2009 Alternate Edition). The class will also read two additional, short, books, David Maraniss and Michael Weisskopf's "*Tell Newt to Shut Up! (1996)*," and Richard F. Fenno's *Congress at the Grassroots (2000)*. In addition, as there will be class discussion on various current political events, one should be aware of the most recent political happenings – and to the end, it is suggested that one read the political articles from a national newspaper on a daily basis (possibly the best source for this is the *Washington Post*, which can be found online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics>).

As will be detailed in class, a fifty-question Constitution Quiz, worth 15% of the final grade, will likely be given on September 9 or 14. There will then be two tests during the semester, the first, which is likely to be on September 30 or October 5, will be worth 25% of the final grade, and second, to be held around November 9-11, will be worth 30%. The remaining 30% of the grade will come from the final examination, which will be held on Monday, December 7, at 2:00 p.m. A ten-point scale will be used for all tests. Make-up tests will not be given unless permission to miss a scheduled test has been given by me *in advance*. Evidence of cheating on any test will be grounds for receiving an F for the course, and will also be reported to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, which could lead to suspension or expulsion from the university.

A syllabus is attached.

SYLLABUS

Introduction; The American Political System

Section I: Foundations; The Constitution; Separation of Powers; Federalism

Readings: *American Government*, 30-62
 American Government, 64-93
 Federalist Papers, Nos. 10 & 51, in *American Government*, 598-602

Constitution Quiz (15% of Final Grade)

Section II: Institutions: The Presidency, Congress, and their Interactions

Readings: *American Government*, 272-304
 American Government, 234-271
 “*Tell Newt to Shut Up!*”

First Exam (25% of Final Grade)

Section III: Political Parties and Elections

Readings: *American Government*, 404-442
 American Government, 444-490
 American Government, 492-528
 Congress at the Grassroots

Second Exam (30% of Final Grade)

Section IV: The Judiciary

Readings: *American Government*, 334-374
 American Government, 152-190
 American Government, 192-232

Final Exam (30% of Final Grade)