

American Government, POLS 1101-01, Fall 2009

MWF 9:00 – 9:50, 107 Pafford

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Office (136 Pafford Bldg) Hours: MW 3:15- 5:00 pm or by appointment

Course Objectives:

This course is an introduction to American government and politics. It discusses how the American political system works, focusing not only upon the institutional and legal frameworks set out in the U.S. and state Constitutions but also upon the historical, philosophical, psychological, and sociological aspects of the American policy-making process. The goal is to develop an ability to interpret American government and politics systematically and critically and to motivate you toward greater participation in the politics of the United States at all levels.

Course Tools and Outcomes:

This course employs diverse tools to achieve the course objectives and the undergraduate education goals effectively. It does not rely only on the instructor's lecture but more on your active participation and preparation. Although lecture is a major portion of each class, you discuss the issues, define the problems, identify the existing solutions, and debate alternative (potential) policies. The most important requirement in this course is ACTIVE PARTICIPATION, which requires two elements: preparation and enthusiasm. You are required to preview each chapter before class and to be ready to discuss relevant topics. Throughout the semester, you will write essays, make a political speech, engage in group debates, and actively participate in the class discussions and campus-wise or community activities.

You are expected to demonstrate the following outcomes at the end of the semester:

- An understanding of the basic values of American civic culture.
- An understanding of the constitutional, institutional, political, and legal processes of the U.S. and Georgia.
- An understanding of the interrelationship between American Governmental institutions.
- An understanding of the basic terminology of political science & U.S. politics.
- An understanding of how American culture, values, and political institutions compare with those of other types of government.

Required Texts:

- **Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, and Margaret Weir (2009) *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics. Georgia Edition. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.***
- Students are also required to monitor the daily news, like New York Times, Washington Post, AJC, CNN, etc.. Students are also recommended to log on relevant websites that provide rich information for the political and governmental issues.

Course Requirements:

1. Exams (85%)

There will be **five examinations** offered in this class (including the final examination). Each exam tests how much students understand the issues and important terminologies & theories. Exams will include materials from the lectures, text, news reports, and class discussions. No make-up exam is available (Also see the attendance requirement).

2. Essay (15%)

a. Topic: *A Critical View on the President Obama's Leadership & Policy*

You should carefully observe and evaluate the President's effort and leadership to deal with various contemporary issues, particularly the economic crisis. Choose one specific issue and evaluate the following major questions: What kinds of new policy have he (and his administration) adopted? How does the President lead his administration and the American public? How does he cooperate with the Congress? What conflicts are debated in the Congress between Democrats and Republicans? How do interest groups affect the policy decision? Do the public opinions support the new policy or President?

b. Major contents that you should include in the paper:

- (1) New policy adopted by the Obama Administration
- (2) President Obama's leadership
- (3) Congressional response, debates, and reactions
- (4) Interest groups
- (5) Public opinions

c. Writing criteria and format

You may support or criticize the policies, leadership, and perspectives to make your argument more persuasive, clear, and logical. The essay must be typed and checked for spelling and grammar. Appropriate citation and reference are required. Here are some format guidelines.

- (1) Cover title page: Title, your name, this cover page is not counted toward the total page number.
- (2) Margin should be 1 inch top, bottom, left, and right.
- (3) Use Times New Roman 12 font
- (4) Start your essay from the top line of the first page: Do not write your name, course name, and the instructor name again on the top margin of the first page.
- (5) Do not make any irregular space between paragraphs.
- (6) Provide accurate citations in necessary places [Do not make a direct quotation of more than two sentences]
- (7) Page number should be placed in the bottom center of each page.
- (8) References should be the last page.
- (9) **Length (body of writing, not including the reference page): 4 ~ 6 pages [Minimum requirement is 4 full pages], double-spaced**

d. Due date: Nov 9 in class

A note on plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of materials by other authors and content providers without the appropriate attribution. This is a serious violation of the University Honor Code. You must use the appropriate citations and reference if you use the work of others to inform your paper (see the Student Handbook for more details).

3. Attendance (“Extra Credit”)

Class participation is required for every student. Each absence will deduct the total grade point by two percent. Any student missing more than three meetings without the instructor’s prior permission will be dropped from the course for excessive absence. No make-up exam is normally allowed. Any expected or unexpected absence should be approved by the instructor with a written evidence (e.g., doctor’s note, departmental letter, etc.). In this class, attendance is defined “presence in the classroom from the beginning of class until the end of class.” Late coming or early leaving without prior permission will be considered absence.

Final Grade:

Final grade is made by summing up all the requirements above.

Requirements	Percentage
Exam 1 (Mid-term)	15
Exam 2 (Mid-term)	15
Exam 3 (Mid-term)	15
Exam 4 (Mid-term)	20
Exam (Final)	20
Essay	15
Total	100
Attendance	Extra Credit (Perfect Attendance) or Deduction (Absences)
Final Letter Grade	A:≥90%, 80% ≤B≤ 89%, 70% ≤C≤ 79%, 60% ≤D≤ 69%, F≤ 59%

Other expectations....

Throughout the course, students will be in accordance with the University Student Honor Code (see the Student Handbook for detail information).

- ✓ **Cell phones should be turned off while in class.**
- ✓ **Any cheating and disruptive behavior is not allowed.**
- ✓ **No sleeping and chatting**
- ✓ **The official communication method will be through campus email (MyUWG).**
- ✓ **Strongly recommended to read P.M. Forni’s *Twenty-Five Rules of Considerate Conduct* [The book title is “Choosing Civility”]**

CLASS SCHEDULE (Fall 2009)

Section	Dates	Lecture Topics	Readings		
Foundations	August	8/14	Introducing the course (Syllabus) Introduction to American Government		
		17, 19,21	Forms of government, democracy, fundamental values, & political ideologies	Chapter 1	
		24,26,28	The U.S. Constitution	Chapter 2	
		31	1st Exam		
	September	9/2,4,9	Federalism	Chapter 3	
		11	The Georgia Constitution http://sos.georgia.gov/elections/constitution_2007.pdf	Appendix	
		14, 16	State and Local Government		
		18	2nd Exam		
		21, 23, 25	Civil Liberties	Chapter 4	
		28, 30, 10/2	Civil Rights	Chapter 5	
	Government	October	5	3rd Exam	
			7,9,12	The Congress	Chapter 12
			14,19	The Presidency	Chapter 13
21,23			The Bureaucracy	Chapter 14	
26, 28, 30			The Court	Chapter 15	
Politics and Political Behaviors	November	11/2	4th Exam		
		4,6	Public Opinion	Chapter 6	
		9,11	Media (Paper Due in Class, Nov 9)	Chapter 7	
		13	Political Participation and Voting	Chapter 8	
		16,18,20	Political Parties	Chapter 9	
		23,30	Campaigns and Elections	Chapter 10	
	December	12/2,4	Interest Groups	Chapter 11	
		7	Final Exam (8am – 10 am, Monday)		