

POLS 1101: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Fall 2015

MWF 10:00am-10:50am

Classroom: Langdale Hall 400 CRN: 85200 & 89073

Professor: Kristina La Plant
Email: klaplant1@gsu.edu

Office: Langdale #816
Office Hours: MW 11:15am-
12:15pm; *or by appointment*

I. Course Description and Learning Objectives

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a fundamental and essential understanding of the political system in the United States. Students should approach this class as a tool that can be used to facilitate informed participation in government and society. Specifically, students will learn about the constitutional foundations of American democracy, the structure and organization of government institutions, and the crucial role the public, media, and other groups play in shaping public policy. Successful completion of this course will enable students to:

- (1.1) Analyze political issues from a non-partisan perspective with a systematic understanding of American government.
- (1.2) Accurately assess and evaluate data to make informed opinions and evaluations on social and political issues.
- (1.3) Identify a multitude of outlets that can facilitate political participation.

II. Required Web Text

Evans, Jocelyn Jones and Kristy E.H Michaud. *Central Ideas in American Government*. Soomo Publishing

Access to this webtext can be obtained either by purchasing directly from Soomo publishing (recommended) via D2L Brightspace or by purchasing a passkey at the Georgia State University Bookstore. **DO NOT PURCHASE THE HARDCOPY EDITION OF THIS TEXT!!!** Students must purchase the webtext in order to complete homework assignments. For additional help registering with Soomo see the Webtext and Syllabus folder on the class' D2L Brightspace page.

To get access to the webtext, please follow these three steps:

Step 1: Login to D2L Brightspace

From Brightspace's My Courses list, select POLS 1101- Introduction to American Government.

Step 2: Click Soomo Learning

From the left navigation menu, click the Soomo Learning link. A new browser or tab will open. NOTE: Make sure your browser's pop-up blocker is disabled.

Step 3: Select Payment

You can pay with a credit card, debit card, or use a passkey purchased from the GSU Bookstore.

III. Student Responsibilities

By taking this class you are responsible for a variety of requirements, assignments, and etiquette. The following paragraphs outline your responsibilities as a student in this class.

(3.1) Announcements and Communication

Students are responsible for checking their university email accounts daily. Any announcements or communications related to the class will be made via email. Please send all of your emails to: klaplant1@gsu.edu.

(3.2) Preparation, Participation, and Attendance: 20 %

In order for you to get the most out of this class it is imperative that you complete the readings and assignments prior to coming to class each day. You are also responsible for arriving to class each day, on time, and ready to engage and participate. It is important that you actively listen during class, take notes, and contribute in group activities and discussions. This is a highly interactive class, so you are expected to contribute to the learning environment. For these reasons preparation, attendance, and participation will account for **20 percent of your final grade**.

(3.2.1) Preparation and Participation

The degree to which you are prepared for class will be assessed by the successful completion of "Get the Gist" study questions and other activities in the webtext, *Central Ideas in American Government*. In order to receive full credit for preparation, you are responsible for completing all "Get the Gist" questions in each chapter and any additional weekly assignments. "Get the Gist" questions gauge your reading comprehension at the end of each passage, and consist of several multiple choice study questions. You are **NOT** required to complete the "Investigations" in each chapter however. Chapter "Investigations", such as "INVESTIGATION: The US Constitution" in Chapter 1.9, are single page activities denoted by multiple choice quizzes where your first answer is your final answer. These Chapter "Investigations" can be completed for extra credit.

Overall, your preparation grade will be based on the percent of Get the Gist questions answered correctly and other assigned weekly activities that you complete prior to the beginning of each Friday class period (10am). You will NOT receive preparation credit for work submitted after 10am. Only "Get the Gist" questions which are answered correctly will receive credit. Other activities such as polls, and Your Turn discussions, which are more subjective, will be evaluated on the basis of completion or depth and thoughtfulness. For example, if there are a total of 38 "Get the Gist" questions and 2 assigned polling questions for Chapter 1 the highest possible grade would be 40/40 for that specific week.

(3.2.2) Attendance

Attending class regularly is integral to your ability to succeed in this class. Role will be taken at the start of each class. Students who are not in class when roll is taken will be marked absent. Absences will be excused only for those reasons which the University recognizes; medical excuses must be accompanied by a note from a medical professional. **Students with perfect attendance will receive a two percentage point bonus toward their final grade. Students with one absence will receive one bonus point toward their final grade. Students with two or more absences will receive no extra credit.**

(3.3) Political Socialization Paper

Students are required to write a 2-3 page, double-spaced, 12 pt. font paper on their own political socialization. No sources or citations are required for this assignment. Students will reflect upon how agents of socialization have impacted their interest and/or participation in politics. The Political Socialization Paper is due Friday, October 9th at the beginning of class. The paper will account for 5 percent of your total grade.

IV. Exam Schedule and Grading

In this class you will take three non-cumulative examinations. Each exam will test your comprehension in three major areas of American Government: Foundations, Behavior, and Institutions. Exams will include multiple choice questions and short answer responses. The exam schedule is as follows:

Grade Component	Date	Time	Percentage of Grade
Exam 1	Wednesday, September 23	(normal class time)	25%
Exam 2	Monday, October 26	(normal class time)	25%
Final Exam	Monday, December 14	(8:00-10:30am)	25%
Preparation, Attendance, and Participation			20%
Political Socialization Paper	Friday, October 9		5%

(4.1) Grading Scale

This class will use plus-minus grading. Grades will conform to the following scale:

A+ 98-100, A 93-97, A- 90-92, B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B- 80-82, C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72, D 60-69, F<60

V. Extra Credit

Students may earn up to **three extra credit points** for successfully completing exercises called "Investigations" in the webtext. Most chapters provide at least one Investigation. (NOTE: These

are not the same as the **required** “Get the Gist” questions or other weekly assignments.) Each Investigation includes a list of questions. To get extra credit, you must answer at least 75% of the questions correctly. Remember, once you answer a multiple choice question in an Investigation, **YOU CANNOT CHANGE YOUR ANSWER!!!** So make sure you are confident of your answer before clicking the selection as you cannot go back to change your answers. **For all Investigations completed above the 75% correct threshold, you will receive one percentage point extra credit added to your final grade. The maximum amount of extra credit you can receive for successfully completing Investigations is three percentage points.**

All Investigations from the chapters each exam covers must be completed by 11:59PM on the final class day preceding the exam (see schedule below). In other words, if you successfully complete all 7 Investigations in chapters 1-4 (at least 75% correct) on the final class day (by 11:59pm) preceding the first exam then you will receive 1 bonus point that will be added to your final grade. You can do this a total of three times resulting in a possible three percentage points added to your final grade for the class.

VI. Classroom Policies

(6.1) Makeup Exams

There will be no make-up exams. If you miss an exam you will receive a zero. If you are late to an exam you will only have the time that remains to complete your exam. See section 6.3. “Problems and Emergencies” for the only exception to this rule. In the case of a documented emergency or problem you will be given the chance to makeup your exam which will be much more difficult and analytical than the regular exams distributed in class.

(6.2) Cheating and Academic Misconduct

Violations of the academic dishonesty rules are grounds for receiving an “F” in this course. If you have any questions about what constitutes as cheating, academic misconduct, or plagiarism, examine the university policy and/or ask the professor. Please see the University’s Policy on Academic Dishonesty (Section 409) for details.

(6.3) Problems and Emergencies

If a problem or emergency arises that prevents you from attending class or an exam you should contact Professor La Plant as soon as possible (klaplant1@gsu.edu).

(6.4) Disability Policy

Georgia State University complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who seek academic accommodations must first take appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services located in Suite 230 of the Student Center. Please advise the professor if you have a documented disability that requires accommodation.

(6.5) Policy on Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to, receiving phone calls during class hours, texting, or frequently leaving the classroom during

lecture. **All cell phones and other communication devices must be turned off.** Students who disrupt the learning environment will be asked to leave the classroom without warning.

(6.5.1.) Electronic Devices

Since this class requires a webtext, students will be allowed to bring their laptops to class. However, the only programs that you should have running on your laptop during class are the webtext browser and/or word processor for taking notes. If, throughout the semester, I see anyone abusing this privilege by interacting on Facebook (or any other social media), playing online games, or any other disruptive activity I reserve the right to ban the use of laptop computers for the remainder of the semester.

(6.6) University Policy on Incompletes and Withdrawals

For GSU policy on Incompletes please see <http://www.cas.gsu.edu/incompletes.html>, and for GSU Policy on hardship withdrawals, please see: <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwdos/hardship.html>. The last day to withdraw from courses and receive a “W” on your transcript is Tuesday, October 13. It is your responsibility to manage your classes.

(6.7) Course Evaluations

Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

VII. Course Schedule

Below is an outline of the course schedule and assigned readings for each week. The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

UNIT 1: THE FOUNDING

WEEK 1: Introductions, the Purpose of Government and Constitutional Foundations

WEEK 2: Federalism

Friday, September 4:

Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 2 by 10am.

WEEK 3: Civil Liberties

Friday, September 11:

Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 3 by 10am.

WEEK 4: Civil Rights

Friday, September 18:

Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 4 by 10am.

WEEK 5: Exam Prep and Introduction to Political Socialization

Monday, September 21: Exam I Prep

Investigations from Chapters 1-4 must be completed by 11:59pm to receive extra credit

Wednesday, September 23: **EXAM ONE*****

Friday, September 25: Introduction to Political Socialization

UNIT 2: POLITICAL BEHAVIOR AND PUBLIC OPINION

WEEK 6: Political Socialization, Public Opinion, and the Influence of the Media

Friday, October 2:

Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 5 and the Chapter 6.4 Poll on Media Bias, and the Your Turn Discussion 6.7 on “Government Regulation of the Media” by 10am. You do not need to complete Get the Gist for Chapter 6.

WEEK 7: Voting and Political Participation

Friday, October 9:

*Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 7 by 10am. **PAPER DUE: Political Socialization paper at beginning of class.***

WEEK 8: Elections and Campaigns

Tuesday, October 13: **(LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW)*****

Friday, October 16:

Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 8 by 10am

WEEK 9: Political Parties

Friday, October 23: Exam 2 **Review**

*Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 9 and 9.4 Poll and Your Turn discussion by 10am. (You do not have to answer the “Still Your Turn” discussion) *Investigations from chapters 5-9 must be completed for extra credit by 11:59pm**

UNIT 3: INSTITUTIONS

WEEK 10: Exam II and the Legislative Branch

Monday, October 26: **EXAM TWO*****

Friday, October 30: Congress

Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 10 by 10am

WEEK 11: The Executive Branch

Friday, November 6: *Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 11 by 10am*

WEEK 12: The Bureaucracy

Friday, November 13: Bureaucracy

Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 14 by 10am

WEEK 13: The Judicial Branch

Friday, November 20: Judiciary

Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 12 by 10am

WEEK 14: Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 15: Public Policy and Interest Groups

Friday, December 4: Public Policy and Interest Groups

Answer all Get the Gist questions from Chapter 13 by 10am

WEEK 16: Final Exam Review

Monday, December 7: Final Exam Review/Last Day of Class.

Investigations from Chapters 10-14 must be completed by 11:59pm to receive extra credit

FINAL EXAM:

Monday, December 14 8:00am-10:30am

VIII. Important Dates to Remember

(8.1) Unit I

Monday, September 21: *Investigations from Chapters 1-4 must be completed by 11:59pm to receive extra credit*

Wednesday, September 23: **Exam I**

(8.2) Unit II

Friday, October 9: Political Socialization Paper due

Tuesday, October 13: Last Day to Withdraw from classes

Friday, October 23: *Investigations from Chapters 5-9 must be completed by 11:59pm to receive extra credit*

Monday, October 26: **Exam II**

(8.3) **Unit III**

Monday, December 7: *Investigations from Chapters 10-14 must be completed by 11:59pm to receive extra credit**

Monday, December 14 8:00am-10:30am: **Final Exam**