

POLS 1101-06: Introduction to American Government (CRN 56278)

Middle Georgia State University—Summer 2022

Online

(3 credit hours)

Dr. Annie Watson

annie.watson@mga.edu

Office Hours: Available virtually by request

Catalog Description

This course is a study of the American political system which includes an examination of the U.S. and Georgia Constitutions. This course grants exemption from the U.S. and Georgia Constitutions examinations as required by the Georgia General Assembly.

Course Description and Objectives

This course is a study of the origins, principles, processes, and structures of U.S. government. Over the course of the semester, we will examine the institutional rules and elements of human behavior that shape our government—electoral rules, political parties, interest groups, public opinion, Congress, the presidency, the courts, the constitution, and the bureaucracy. We'll have a particular focus on current events and how they relate to the overarching topics of the class.

By the end of this course, students will be able to...

1. Identify the political institutions established by both the United States and Georgia constitutions, including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, and their roles in governance.
2. Define those civil liberties and civil rights outlined in both the U.S. and Georgia constitutions and their amendments.
3. Describe the ways in which the U.S. and Georgia constitutions may be amended or changed.
4. Describe the processes linking citizens and the U.S. and Georgia governments, including elections, political parties, and interest groups.

Required Readings

This semester, we'll be using an open-access textbook, available in a digital format online:

Krutz, Glen. 2021. *American Government 3e*. Houston, TX: OpenStax.

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-3e>

Please note that every time I reference pages in the textbook, I'll be referring to the page of the PDF, not the page in what would be the printed version. All other required materials will be shared with you on D2L/Brightspace. Please do not distribute these materials to people beyond this class.

Technology Requirements

Because our entire course will take place through D2L/Brightspace, students must have internet access.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

This course consists of **8 modules** (described below) and **2 exams** (a midterm and a final, also described below).

Modules

As you begin to explore the course, remember that each module typically represents 2 full weeks of work in an in-person course. Imagine a Monday/Wednesday class. That's three hours of lecture/class time, with one or two associated hours of homework for each day of class, as well as time spent working on an ongoing term project and/or studying for exams. Now multiply that by two, and you will have the approximate amount of work required for each module. You certainly *can* start a module at 9:00pm the night that it's due. It's unlikely, however, that you will be able to successfully complete it at that point. Be sure to allocate yourself sufficient time to complete all of the module activities!

Within each module there are 3 key parts (2 of which are graded):

1. **Module Introductory Notes, Task List, and Required Content**—Each module begins with a brief set of introductory notes (the “lecture” of the class, so to speak). Included in this file are the required pieces of content for the module (more on this below) and a task list for the module.

The required content is made up of the readings, websites, videos, podcasts, and other sources of material that are meant to illustrate key aspects of the lesson. I am committed to making my classes affordable, so all of these materials are open access. At some points in the module notes, I also provide optional content, in case you find yourself particularly interested in a topic. These resources will be clearly marked as **optional** and will not appear on module content guides or quizzes.

2. **Content Guides (5 points each for 40 points)**—These are essentially worksheets to guide and confirm your engagement with the required content for the course; think of them as the notes you would typically take in class. They should be the first thing you complete and submit for each module.

3. **Quizzes (5 points each for 40 points)**—There will be a quiz for each module of the class. Each quiz will cover the material of the module for which it was assigned; this includes any videos, readings, and other content included in the module. Quizzes will typically be 10 multiple choice questions, graded automatically by Brightspace. Occasionally, I will include open-ended questions (which are not graded automatically); I will, in most cases, have grades for these returned to you before the next module closes. These quizzes will not be timed, and you can use any of the course materials available to you to complete them.

The first quiz checking your comprehension of this syllabus and other introductory materials is due on May 27th by 10:00pm. It is worth an additional 2 points of your grade. This is the assignment that I will be using to judge no-shows for the class, so make sure to complete it! (Note that the presence of the syllabus quiz in the first module means that the module 1 content guide and quiz are worth 4 points each, rather than the usual 5 points.)

Assignments for the modules are due by the time the module closes (typically on **Wednesdays at 10:00pm**).

Exams (10 points each for 20 points)

There are also two exams for the course. The **midterm exam** will cover all of the material up to that point of the class, and the **final exam** will cover all of the material in the class. These exams will have 40 multiple choice questions, which will be graded automatically by Brightspace. They will not be timed, and you can use any of the course materials available to you to complete them.

Grading Scale

Grades are constructed to reflect university standards and are summarized below. Letter grades will be based on how many points you earn according to the following distribution:

A	90-100 points
B	80-89 points
C	70-79 points
D	60-69 points
F	Fewer than 60 points

Preliminary Course Schedule

Modules will (mostly) be due each Wednesday by 10:00pm throughout the summer term. Exceptions to the normal schedule are highlighted in gold in the table below. You may work as far in advance of the due dates as you would like (and I strongly encourage you to start each module well in advance of its deadline). I may make changes to course content to reflect new publications or current events; these changes will be shared with you over email.

Assignments should be completed in the order in which they are listed.

Course Dates	Module	Assignments	Deadline
May 23 – June 1	Module 1: Introduction to the Course and to Studying Politics	Syllabus Quiz	May 27 (by 10:00pm)
		Module 1 Content Guide	June 1 (by 10:00pm)
		Module 1 Quiz	
June 2 – 8	Module 2: Constructing a Government	Module 2 Content Guide	June 8 (by 10:00pm)
		Module 2 Quiz	
June 9 – 15	Module 3: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	Module 3 Content Guide	June 15 (by 10:00pm)
		Module 3 Quiz	
June 16 – 22	Module 4: Congress	Module 4 Content Guide	June 22 (by 10:00pm)
		Module 4 Quiz	
		Midterm Exam	
June 23 – 29	Module 5: The President and the Executive Branch	Module 5 Content Guide	June 29 (by 10:00pm)
		Module 5 Quiz	
June 30 – July 6	Module 6: The Judiciary and Public Opinion	Module 6 Content Guide	July 6 (by 10:00pm)
		Module 6 Quiz	
July 7 – 13	Module 7: Elections and Political Parties	Module 7 Content Guide	July 13 (by 10:00pm)
		Module 7 Quiz	
July 14 – 20	Module 8: The Media and Interest Groups	Module 8 Content Guide	July 20 (by 10:00pm)
		Module 8 Quiz	
July 25	Finishing Up	Final Exam	July 25 (by 10:00pm)

Campus Policies

Covid-19

The University System of Georgia recognizes COVID-19 vaccines offer safe, effective protection and urges all students, faculty, staff and visitors to get vaccinated; however, it is an individual decision to receive the vaccine and will not be required to be a part of our campuses. Everyone is encouraged to wear a mask or face covering while inside campus facilities. Unvaccinated individuals are strongly encouraged to get a vaccine, to continue wearing a face covering, and to continue socially distancing from others when possible. Updated protocols for isolation and quarantine will be in effect this semester in order to mitigate further spread of the coronavirus on our campuses. USG guidance is subject to change based on recommendations from GA DPH. MGA will remain flexible in their planning and be prepared to change course as necessary. MGA will continue to provide updated information at this website: <https://www.mga.edu/coronavirus/>.

Class Behavior Expectations

Middle Georgia State University students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the MGA Student Code of Conduct. The Student Code of Conduct, Responsibilities, Procedures, and Rights are found at https://www.mga.edu/student-affairs/docs/MGA_Student_Handbook.pdf#page=45.

Plagiarism

A plagiarism prevention service is used in evaluation of written work submitted for this course. As directed by the instructor, students are expected to submit or have their assignments submitted through the service in order to meet requirements for this course. The papers will be retained by the service for the sole purpose of checking for plagiarized content in future student submissions.

Accessibility Accommodations

Students seeking ADA accommodations must contact Middle Georgia State University Office of Accessibility Services in Macon at (478) 471-2985 or in Cochran at (478) 934-3023. <https://www.mga.edu/accessibility-services/>.

Withdrawal Policy

Students are encouraged to read the withdrawal policy found at <https://www.mga.edu/registrar/registration/drop-add.php> before dropping/withdrawing from class.

Delayed Opening or Closing of the University

In the event that the university is closed for unforeseen circumstances, we will coordinate making up the material over D2L/email.

Knight's Alert: <https://www.mga.edu/police/alert/index.php>

End of Course Evaluations

Student evaluations of faculty are administered online at the end of each term/session for all courses with five or more students. Students will receive an email containing a link to a survey for each course in which they are enrolled. All responses are anonymous.

Campus Carry Legislation

For students who prefer to bring concealed firearms to class, HB 280 provides you with the *possible* ability to do so. Please refer to the following URL to explore your possible right to bring a gun to the university: <http://www.mga.edu/police/campus-carry.aspx>

University Policy

Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and adhering to all Middle Georgia State University student policies, including those linked on the Syllabus Policy page: <https://www.mga.edu/faculty-affairs/syllabus-policy.php>.

Course Policies

An Inclusive Classroom

Political debates and discussions can become quite heated. This passion is part of what makes the study of politics fun! However, the fun ends where personal attacks and disrespect begin. Creating an inclusive, respectful, and safe classroom environment is integral to the success of this course. To this end, all class members are expected to treat each other at all times with respect, courtesy, tolerance, fairness, and justice.

Communicating with the Instructor

My primary methods of communicating with you will be through campus email and Brightspace. You will be held responsible for regularly checking these accounts. Assignment changes, important dates, and other valuable information may be sent to these accounts over the course of the term. Please check them daily. I do my best to answer e-mails within 24 hours (but rarely answer e-mails at night or on weekends). I am also happy to answer questions over Microsoft Teams by appointment.

Late Work

The late submission of assignments will result in a 10 percent reduction in points per day they are late, unless alternative arrangements are made with me. *If you are worried about meeting deadlines or if something comes up, please come talk to me as soon as possible.* I can't help if I don't know what's going on.

Changes to the Syllabus

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations by the instructor may be necessary. As such, I reiterate the absolute necessity that you (1) come to class and (2) regularly check your e-mail.

Academic Resources

There are many academic resources available to you on campus throughout the semester. These include:

- The **D2L Help Center** provides 24/7 help for those having problems using the system. They can be contacted at 1-855-772-0423 or through a live chat (<https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu/s/>).
- The **Technology Assistant Center (TAC)** provides help with passwords, email, SWORDS, and more general tech support. They can be contacted during business hours at 478-471-2023 (Macon), 478-934-3319 (Cochran), or helpdesk@mga.edu.
- The **Writing Center** is a free service that provides one-on-one consultations to assist students with all types of writing. They are open on the Macon, Cochran, Dublin, and Warner Robins campuses and offer both face-to-face and video-conferencing sessions. Check out their website here to sign up for a consultation: <https://www.mga.edu/student-success-center/writing-centers.php>.
- The **Student Success Center** offers tutoring free of charge on all MGA campuses for currently enrolled students. To view center contact information, subjects tutored, and tutor availability, go to the SSC website at <http://www.mga.edu/student-success-center/>. SSC tutoring sessions may be scheduled online and face-to-face through the "Book an Appointment" link on the Student Success Center website. Other services at the SSC include online academic workshops and a robust website with resources for academic assistance. The centers also have computer workstations, printing, and Internet access.

Hardship Resources

Being a student can be hard. Your lives are changing, and college can be a stressful environment. *There is no shame in struggling with this.* If you are feeling depressed or otherwise concerned about your mental health, please reach out to BeWell@MGA. The 24/7 support line for in-the-moment support and connections to next steps is 833-910-3362. Additional services are available

through the MGA Counseling Center at 478-471-2985 (Macon), 478-934-3080 (Cochran), and counseling@mga.edu. More details can be found on their website: <https://www.mga.edu/counseling-services/index.php>.

Other important numbers/websites:

- **For a life-threatening emergency, always call 911 (or campus police at 478-471-2414).** For non-emergencies, MGA recommends this guide: <https://selfcareguide.readsh101.com/>.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
<https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- **Veterans' Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 (Press 1)
- **Georgia Crisis and Access Line**
1-800-715-4225
- **The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+)**
1-800-4TREVOR
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org>
- **National Sexual Assault Hotline**
1-800-656-HOPE
<https://online.rainn.org>
- **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**
<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov>
- **National Institute of Mental Health**
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>
- **Alcoholics Anonymous**
<https://www.aa.org/>
- **Narcotics Anonymous**
<https://www.na.org/>
- **MGA Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Resources**
<https://policies.mga.edu/policy-manual/section-6-campus-affairs/6-5-nondiscrimination/index.php>

If you are experiencing other kinds of hardship, MGA has some services that may help. These include, but are not limited to, the provision of food and professional clothing, described in greater detail below.

- **The SHARE Pantry** is stocked with staple food items such as canned tuna, peanut butter and spaghetti sauce. Students, faculty and staff who show their MGA Knight ID cards can visit once per month during spring, summer and fall semesters to pick up five items each time. For hours of availability, contact:
 - Sha Parnell: gernisha.parnell@mga.edu (Cochran)
 - Ashleigh Jennings: ashley.jennings@mga.edu (Dublin)
 - Christy Faulk: christy.faulk@mga.edu (Eastman)
 - Devereaux Lindsey: devereaux.lindsey@mga.edu (Macon)
 - Ashley Thompson: ashley.thompson5@mga.edu (Warner Robins)

- **The Professional Closet** offers new and gently used suitable-for-work clothing and accessories, including ties and shoes, for purchase to MGA students, alumni, faculty and staff through Career Services offices on the Macon Campus (Student Life Center, Suite 254) and Cochran Campus (Sanford Hall, Suite 112). The cost of any single item does not exceed \$5, and all proceeds are reinvested into The Professional Closet. The Professional Closet is open during the University's normal business hours, 8:00-5:30 Mon.-Thurs. and 8:00-noon on Fridays.

My office door is also always open to you. Please keep in mind that I am a Title IX mandatory reporter.