

## POLS 1101: American Government, Fall 2025

Section 15, CRN 83419: TR 9:30 a.m.–10:45 a.m., SOAL 202

Section 20, CRN 83229: TR 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m., SOAL 202

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Walk-In Hours (Macon, SOAL 115): Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 12:20–2:00 p.m.; Thursdays, 12:20–5:00 p.m.

Or, schedule appointments on Calendly: <https://calendly.com/dr-lawrence-mga/meeting>.

**Course Overview:** Welcome to the class! This course is a survey of the fundamental features of the American political system in the contemporary era. While some historical background and philosophical underpinnings will be presented along the way, this class focuses on the key aspects of our current political order. In addition to talking about the government in Washington, the course will also delve into how individuals and groups affect—and are affected by—decisions made by politicians at the federal and state levels.

**This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Citizenship area.**

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I prepare for my responsibilities as an engaged citizen?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history of the United States, the history of Georgia, and the provisions and principles of the United States Constitution and the Constitution of Georgia.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Critical Thinking is developed throughout the course through assignments on subjects such as the Constitution, federalism, civil liberties, civil rights, Congress, the Presidency, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and public opinion.
- Intercultural Competence is developed through course content on civil liberties, civil rights, the judiciary, domestic and foreign policy, public opinion, political participation and voting behavior, political parties, and interest groups.
- Persuasion is developed through course content on public opinion, political behavior, political parties, and interest groups, as well as accounts of the Civil Rights Movement and deliberation at the Constitutional Convention and within Congress.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** At the conclusion 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.

Achievement of these outcomes will be assessed as part of a comprehensive final examination for the course.

**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.

**Overall Model of the Course:** One way to understand the American government is to think of it much like a factory: it takes raw materials and turns them into finished goods. If we follow the analogy, the “raw materials” are what the public wants and demands from the political system; the “finished goods” are the laws and other policy outputs of government, like schools and roads and wars. Accordingly we can diagram the American political system (and, for

that matter, the political system of Georgia) as follows:

The public → Linkage institutions → Formal political institutions → Policy outputs

While we won't necessarily follow this model from left to right in our discussions, for now just note that *all* of these pieces matter—not just the formal institutions in Washington!

**Intellectual Property Notice:** Course content provided either in-class or online that is the original, creative work of the professor is copyrighted by the professor and licensed only for your own, personal use, unless otherwise specified. Violations of this class policy will be considered to be student misconduct.

**Required Materials:** There is one book required for this course:

Krutz, Glen et al. 2025. *American Government*, 4th ed. Houston: OpenStax College. ISBN 979-8-385190-66-9.

It should be available, new and used, at the Middle Georgia State University bookstore in Macon; you may also be able to rent or purchase it on-line at a discount. Free online and PDF copies of the book are available at <https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-4e>. (You may also use the 3rd edition.)

Additional readings may be assigned at my discretion; I will provide them for you at the library reserve desk, on the course's Brightspace site, or as handouts in class.

**Technology Requirements:** You are required to have access to Brightspace for the duration of the course. You will also need access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone that can read Portable Document Format (Adobe PDF) files and supports HTML5 technologies for browsing the Internet.

**Grades:** Your final grade in this course will be based on the following elements, weighted as follows:

Assignment category	Weight
Term exams (3)	60%
Final exam	20%
Quizzes	10%
Participation	10%

The overall average posted in Brightspace throughout the semester will also be weighted as above. *Your grade is not simply based on “adding up points” as it may be in some of your other courses.* You can review your current grades and average at any time in Brightspace.

The final grade in the course reported to the registrar for your permanent transcript will be converted based on this scale:

Final Weighted Average	Grade	Grade Points	Catalog Description
90.0 or above	A	4.0	Excellent work
80.0–89.9	B	3.0	Good work
70.0–79.9	C	2.0	Satisfactory work
60.0–69.9	D	1.0	Passing work
59.9 or below	F	0.0	Failing work

A final numeric grade will only be reported for students in dual enrollment programs. At the college level, only the final letter grade in the course is part of your permanent record.

Although a “D” is the minimum passing grade in undergraduate courses, any grades below a “C” may jeopardize your continued eligibility for federal and state financial aid and may not be accepted for transfer to other colleges or universities. Please refer to the “Satisfactory Academic Progress” policy on the Financial Aid website for details.

► **Midterm Grades:** Per university policy, a midterm grade will be posted to SWORDS for all students in this course one week before the withdrawal deadline. The midterm grade is strictly advisory and will not be part of your permanent

student record. Students whose course average at the midterm point is passing may be assigned the midterm grade of “Satisfactory” rather than a specific letter grade; students who are failing the course will be assigned either an “F” or “Unsatisfactory” grade.

You should be aware that midterm grades do not guarantee a particular final grade in the course, as future assignments will also affect the final course grade you earn.

► **Grading Philosophy:** Your grades will be earned based on my judgment of your performance in meeting the learning objectives of the course, and not on the basis of good intentions, whether or not you agree with my political or ideological views (you probably don’t), or how much effort you put in to the course. To judge your performance comprehensively, my grading may include both objective and subjective assessments; sometimes there is a clear “right” answer, sometimes there is no one “right” answer, and sometimes there are a number of potential responses that vary in completeness and correctness, and so my approach to grading differs based on that reality.

My commitment to you is that I will assign fair and appropriate grades, in a reasonably timely manner,<sup>1</sup> according to this philosophy, based on the work that is presented for grading. If at any time you believe I have not met that standard, see the section on “Grade Appeals” below.

► **Term Exams:** There are four exams in this course, each of which will account for 20% of your final course grade. The first three exams will cover portions of the course (chapters 1–5, 6–10, and 11–13 & 15, respectively), while the final exam will be cumulative including material from chapters 1–13 and 15–17. (You will not be examined on material from chapter 14.)

During the exams, you may not make use of any notes, no discussion among students is permitted of any kind, and all electronic devices (cell phones, calculators, pagers, computers, etc.) must be **switched off and stored away**.

Questions on examinations and quizzes may be drawn from the textbook, materials presented in lecture, and/or additional materials provided by the instructor as announced in Brightspace. They may include multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. No exam grades will be dropped under any circumstances.

► **Quizzes:** Occasional quizzes will be administered in class without prior notice, based on the assigned readings and other materials for a given chapter.

► **Participation:** This portion of your grade will be determined based on a holistic evaluation of your class participation; as discussed below, your participation grade is not simply based on class attendance, although it would be difficult to earn a perfect participation grade without regular class attendance.

**Contacting the Professor:** My regularly-scheduled office hours are listed at the beginning of the syllabus. During those times, I generally do not schedule appointments; rather, meetings are “first come, first serve.” When I am not busy with a student in-person, I will also be available “virtually” at these times by phone or web chat. If you wish to make a confirmed appointment to see me *outside* my scheduled hours, please do so at least two business days in advance.

If you do contact me outside my office hours, please bear in mind that my other work and personal obligations may be on a different schedule than what is convenient for you; for example, I may be in class, in the midst of research, or at a meeting. Except under extraordinary circumstances, if your email includes a question or otherwise requires a response, when school is in session I will always get back to you within one business day, and frequently sooner; messages that merely inform me of a class absence may not be acknowledged.

If you call my office outside my office hours, please avoid leaving voice mail or messages with university staff; it is an incredibly unproductive and inefficient means of communication. You will usually receive a much quicker response by email.

**When contacting me outside of class, please be sure to specify both the course and section you are in, as it will allow me to respond more quickly and accurately to you.**

**Student Privacy Rights:** To ensure compliance with federal and state laws that protect the privacy of your educational records, all discussion regarding grades or other confidential information must be conducted in person, via Brightspace, or via your official *mga.edu* email address; I will not discuss confidential information over the phone, on

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<sup>1</sup> Some assignments may be automatically graded, so you can expect fairly quick feedback on those. You should expect the grading of written work to generally take between 5 and 10 business days.

social media, or via any non-school email address. If you have not yet activated your official university email address, please see <https://www.mga.edu/technology/services/email.php>.

As a matter of general policy I do not discuss students' class performance, attendance, or other issues with their parents or guardians. Even if a FERPA waiver is on file with the university, such a waiver does not oblige me to discuss students' class performance with parents or guardians. This policy includes students who are minors and/or dual-enrolled students.

**Class Policies:** The primary expectations of all Middle Georgia State University students are integrity and civility. Each student should approach his/her academic endeavors, relationships and personal responsibilities with a strong commitment to personal integrity and interpersonal civility.

I believe that for our class to be successful, we must establish a supportive and respectful environment in the classroom and related settings (such as the class website on Brightspace). Accordingly, disruptive behaviors such as repeated tardiness, side conversations, reading materials unrelated to the course, or use of communication technologies (e.g., web browsing/IMing/texting during class) will adversely affect your grade; repeated or egregious disruptive behavior may result in you being asked to leave class for the day, which will reduce your participation grade by one letter grade.

► **Electronic devices:** In the past I have found that while a few students are able to use laptops and tablets effectively as note-taking aids in the classroom, the vast majority find it difficult to avoid distractions from email, Facebook, and other sources online. Ordinarily this wouldn't cause much of a problem, but in the classroom setting this creates what social scientists refer to as "negative externalities"; specifically, when you're watching that funny YouTube video of the monkey washing a cat, everyone around you is also going to see it and be distracted too. Accordingly, you should mute or switch off your cell phones and any alarms during class, and refrain completely from using laptops, tablets, e-readers, "smart" or "dumb" phones, and other portable electronic devices during class.

There may be times in class when I *specifically* ask you to use your cell phone or a laptop or tablet (for example, to participate in a web-based activity); on these occasions, of course, it would be OK to do so.

► **Extra credit:** To be fair to all students, I do not offer individualized extra-credit opportunities. If you believe you might benefit from extra credit, I strongly advise you take advantage of any opportunities offered to the whole class as they are announced over the term.

► **Notes:** I do not provide lecture notes for students under any circumstances. If you miss class, you will have to rely on the generosity of a classmate or make use of any materials provided on the textbook website or its study guide, if applicable. (Students with disabilities who require notes or other learning environment accommodations should consult with me and the MGA Disability Services Office to arrange notetaking assistance.)

You may make audio recordings of in-class lectures; recordings are for your own, personal use, and may not be shared with students who are not enrolled in this course.

► **Revisions to the syllabus:** While I will make every effort to follow the syllabus as-written, if unforeseen circumstances arise during the semester I reserve the right to amend any policy in this syllabus.

► **Attendance and absence policy:** To encourage regular attendance and participation in class, I will take daily attendance. Your attendance an important factor considered when evaluating your participation grades; however, perfect attendance does not guarantee a perfect participation grade, and it is possible, but perhaps unlikely, that you could receive a perfect participation grade if you have missed a class meeting. Unlike in some of your other courses, "attendance" *per se* is not directly computed in your grade.

However, repeatedly arriving late, leaving early, or unexplained/frequent trips outside of the room during class time for non-medical reasons will adversely affect your participation grade. In addition, students who miss more than three class meetings (including examinations) will automatically receive an "F" in the course, except in the case of a documented illness or emergency.

► **Make-ups:** Make-up examinations must be scheduled in advance in the case of an unavoidable planned or reasonably-foreseeable absence; otherwise, make-ups will be given only in the case of an illness or other emergency that is properly documented, after the fact. To be fair to all students, make-up exams must be completed within two weeks of the originally scheduled exam date; also, make-up exams may be administered in a different format than the original

exam offered to the rest of the class, at my sole discretion.

Make-up quizzes will not be arranged under any circumstances. There are also no make-ups for missed classes; however, students with an excused absence will receive credit for attending any classes missed with a valid excuse (such as student illness or participation in class-related or sponsored activities), and any missed in-class quiz will be dropped from the grade.

To be fair to all students in the class, students are responsible for *all assignments*, regardless of their date of initial enrollment in the course.

► **Grade Appeals:** Like everyone else, I am fallible and sometimes make mistakes. If I simply misrecorded a grade (for example, if I enter “70” in the gradebook when you earned an “80”) or made an arithmetic error, please bring me the returned assignment, and I will immediately correct the error.

If you believe you received an *unjust* grade, I am happy to discuss the grading of the assignment with you, in-person during regular office hours or at a scheduled appointment; please bring the graded assignment with you so we can have a productive conversation. If you remain unsatisfied with my explanation of the grade, to give us both ample time to consider the dispute, you will need to type a brief (one-page) explanation of your position and turn it in, along with the original graded assignment, *at least one week after* the assignment was originally returned to you. I will then consider your appeal and make a determination. Appeals must be submitted in hard copy format; no appeals submitted via email will be considered. Please refer to the Student Handbook and Catalog for policies regarding appeals of *final letter grades*.

► **Academic Misconduct:** You are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the Student Code of Conduct; this is included in the current edition of the Student Handbook, which is available online at [http://www.mga.edu/student-affairs/docs/MGA\\_Student\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.mga.edu/student-affairs/docs/MGA_Student_Handbook.pdf).

I take academic misconduct (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams and plagiarism of written work) very seriously. So does Middle Georgia State University. In this course the *minimum* penalty for academic misconduct is a grade of zero (0) on the assignment in question, with no opportunity to repeat the assignment, along with referral to the testing center to complete an examination on plagiarism, cheating, and the Student Code of Conduct. Second or subsequent violations, or egregious misconduct (for example, an organized effort to cheat involving multiple students, or academic misconduct that causes harm to other students), will automatically be referred to the Office of Student Affairs for a university-level resolution which may include a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, and/or academic suspension.

► **Generative Artificial Intelligence:** While you are welcome to make use of generative artificial intelligence software (including, but not limited to, “large language models” like ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, etc.) to assist in written work in this course, you are strongly encouraged to ensure that content produced by this software is grammatically, factually, and logically correct. In particular, you should take care that factual assertions made in text are supported by *real* evidence; current LLMs are known to frequently “hallucinate” or fabricate supporting evidence such as citations to nonexistent sources, or interpret website content that is fictional or fantasy in nature as factual content. In many cases it will be easier to write your own responses rather than verifying the accuracy and correctness of LLM output and ensuring it does not fail to quote or cite necessary supporting evidence.

**University Policies:** Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and adhering to all Middle Georgia State University student policies, including those linked on the Syllabus Policy pages at <https://www.mga.edu/faculty-affairs/syllabus-policy.php> and <https://www.mga.edu/center-excellence-teaching-learning/syllabi-policies.php>. Any policy listed therein is incorporated in this syllabus by reference, even if not explicitly called out below. Note that some listed policies may not apply fully or at all to online courses like this one.

► **Student Code of Conduct:** MGA students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the MGA Student Code of Conduct: <https://www.mga.edu/student-handbook/>

► **Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment Policy:** MGA is committed to ensuring a safe learning environment that supports the dignity of all members of the University community. We encourage students to read more about this institutional policy: <https://policies.mga.edu/policy-manual/section-6-campus-affairs/6-5-nondiscrimination/>

► **Attendance Policy:** MGA students should attend all class sessions, be they face-to-face or online. Class attendance

and participation is an individual student responsibility. Learn more about attendance expectations by asking each of your instructors and through this web resource: <https://mga.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2024-2025/undergraduate-catalog/academic-policy-and-information/course-policies/attendance-policy/>

► **Withdrawing from a Course:** Before withdrawing from or dropping a course, students should check the last date for withdrawing before considering their options and the consequences of their choices: <https://mga.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2024-2025/undergraduate-catalog/academic-policy-and-information/withdrawal/>

► **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity/Honesty:** MGA uses a plagiarism prevention service to evaluate written work that students submit for this course. The papers will be retained by the service for the sole purpose of checking for plagiarized content in future student submissions. MGA's Code of Conduct prohibits the use of any unauthorized assistance in completing any work for any course. The Code of Conduct is available at this webpage: <https://www.mga.edu/student-conduct/>

► **Academic Mindset:** The purpose of a university education is not just to teach you knowledge and skills but also to expand the ways you use your mind and handle challenges. A positive academic mindset provides an effective framework that will guide you through this course and also throughout your life as you adapt to a changing world. In this spirit, MGA seeks to encourage students to strengthen their positive academic mindset. This course promotes a positive academic mindset by highlighting the following:

- Knowing that you can strengthen your abilities through effort and a positive attitude;
- Believing in your own ability to learn and continue to improve;
- Recognizing that the work in this course has value and purpose for you;
- Fostering your willingness to embrace new experiences and challenges;
- Acknowledging that your effort and attitude affect your performance.

► **Mental and Emotional Health Support:** Counseling Services is proud to be a part of BeWell@MGA, which provides students 24/7 access to counselors and mental health resources to help cope with minor issues to major concerns. More information is available on this webpage: <https://www.mga.edu/student-affairs/bewell/>

► **Accessibility Services:** Students with a documented disability must work with MGA's Accessibility Services to arrange essential services relating to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards.

If a student is considering requesting accommodations, they should first contact Accessibility Services to discuss the process: <https://www.mga.edu/accessibility-services/>

If a student needs course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or chronic illness, the student should notify their instructor in writing and provide a copy of a current Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Accessibility Services. Faculty cannot offer accommodations to any student without timely receipt of the official SAR document.

► **Student Success Centers (SSC):** Tutoring is available free of charge on all MGA campuses for currently enrolled students. SSC tutoring sessions may be scheduled online and face-to-face through the "Book an Appointment" link on the SSC website. Other services at the SSC include online academic workshops and a robust website with resources for academic assistance. The SSC locations also have computer workstations, printing, and Internet access. To view contact information, subjects tutored, and tutor availability, go to the SSC website at <http://www.mga.edu/ssc>.

► **Writing Center:** The MGA Writing Center is a free service that provides one-on-one consultations to assist students with all types of writing. Either in-person or via Teams, our consultants provide feedback and use different strategies to help students improve their writing. Writing Center locations are open on the Macon and Cochran campuses.

► **Mathematics Academic Resource Center (MARC):** The MARC offers free tutoring for most math courses. Tutoring can be in person or online, by appointment or walk-in. We are equipped with computers, textbooks, whiteboards, calculators, and study notes to provide students with a space to study. For hours, locations, and booking a session, please visit <https://www.mga.edu/MARC>.

► **Center for Career and Leadership Development:** Students have free access to career and professional development services through the CCLD. Virtual and in-person appointments can be scheduled in Macon, Cochran, or Eastman at

mga.joinhandshake.com. College-to-career resources include career exploration/assessments, job/internship/graduate school search assistance, career fairs, resume/interview prep, and professional/leadership development. Contact them at [careerservices@mga.edu](mailto:careerservices@mga.edu) or visit <https://www.mga.edu/center-career-leadership-development/>.

- **Course Experience Feedback Survey:** Student perception surveys of a class and its instructor 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 Emergencies:** In the event of a closure or delayed opening of the university due to inclement weather or other emergency, you should monitor the Knight Alert system for updates; sign up for these alerts at <https://www.mga.edu/police/alert/>. You should expect communication via email and/or Brightspace regarding any assignments to be completed or revisions to the schedule while we are unable to meet.

In the event of an emergency situation on campus, call 9-1-1 and/or campus police at (478) 471-2414.

- **HB 280 (Campus Carry Legislation):** In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 16-11-127.1, Middle Georgia State University recognizes that a lawful weapons carrier may carry concealed handguns on Middle Georgia State campuses, excluding restricted campus facilities. More information is available at this webpage: <https://policies.mga.edu/policy-manual/section-6-campus-affairs/6-10-weapons-on-campus/>

- **Withdrawal Deadlines:** The last day to drop the course without it appearing on your transcript is Tuesday, August 19th. Students may withdraw from the course and earn a grade of “W” through Wednesday, October 29th. After this point, students who withdraw will normally receive a grade of “WF,” which is calculated in the GPA as an “F.”

The MGA Withdrawal Form is available online or from the Office of the Registrar. Students are encouraged to read the withdrawal policy found at <https://www.mga.edu/registrar/regISTRATION/drop-add.php> before dropping/withdrawing from class. I encourage you to plan ahead and not try to drop or withdraw from class on the day of the deadline.

**Course Outline:** Any changes to this schedule will be posted to the course calendar and in Brightspace. We will not necessarily read chapters in the order they appear in the textbook; please be sure you read the correct chapters *in advance* of the designated class dates. While I may periodically remind students of upcoming scheduled events, it is ultimately **your responsibility** to be familiar with this schedule and any changes to it.

In the schedule below, AG refers to chapters from the main text, *American Government*. The selected readings from the *Federalist Papers* can be found in the appendices of *American Government*.

Date(s)	Topic	Reading(s) due
August 14, 19	Introduction to the Course	AG 1
August 21, 23	The Founding and the Constitution	AG 2; <i>Federalist</i> 10
August 28; September 2	Federalism	AG 3; <i>Federalist</i> 51
September 4, 9	Civil Liberties	AG 4
September 11, 16	Civil Rights	AG 5
September 18	<b>Exam 1</b>	
September 23, 25 (part)	Public Opinion	AG 6
September 25 (part), 30	The Media	AG 8
October 2, 7	Voting and Elections	AG 7
October 9, 14	Political Parties	AG 9
October 16, 21	Interest Groups	AG 10
October 23	<b>Exam 2</b>	
October 28, 30	Congress	AG 11
November 4, 6	The Presidency	AG 12
November 11, 13 (part)	The Courts	AG 13
November 13 (part), 18	The Bureaucracy	AG 15
November 20	<b>Exam 3</b>	
November 24–28	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	
December 2	Public Policy	AG 16–17

The final exam for this course is scheduled as follows:

- Section 15, CRN 83419 (TR 9:30 a.m.): Tuesday, December 9, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., SOAL 202.
- Section 20, CRN 83229 (TR 11:00 a.m.): Thursday, December 4, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., SOAL 202.