

**POLS 1101**  
**American Government**  
**Spring 2023**

Instructor: Dr. April A. Johnson  
Office: Social Sciences room 5056  
Class Time/Location: 100% Asynchronous online (<https://d2l.kennesaw.edu>)  
E-Mail (preferred): [ajohn551@kennesaw.edu](mailto:ajohn551@kennesaw.edu)  
Phone: 470-578-4973  
Office hours: By appointment

## **Course Description**

This course examines the structure of the American political system, the democratic theories upon which it was founded, and its development over time. Throughout the semester we will address a number of topics, including the specific functions of each branch of government, steps of the policymaking processes, the evolution and protection of civil rights, and the critical role of political parties and mass media in shaping our political attitudes and choices. A significant portion of the class will be devoted to exploring current political situations and/or controversies. Therefore, students are encouraged to stay up to date with contemporary political events. At the end of the semester students should understand how and why today's U.S. government functions as it does and what impact this system has on its citizens. The overall goal of this course is to sharpen students' ability to critically evaluate and actively participate in day to day political life. Analytical thinking, conveyed through discussion posts and written assignments, are essential to the structure of this course. *There are no prerequisites for this course.*

## **Course Objectives**

1. Summarize the historical circumstances that influenced early American thought.
2. Explain the U.S. government's separation of powers and identify specific checks and balances between branches.
3. Distinguish civil liberties from civil rights and trace their evolution throughout history.
4. Report various forms of political participation and consider how you might get involved in politics.
5. Evaluate the American party system and the electoral process in the United States.
6. Describe the U.S. mass media system and its relationship to public opinion.
7. Demonstrate the interconnected nature of interest groups, bureaucratic agencies, and Congress.
8. Define federalism and identify current examples that illustrate this concept.
9. Criticize contemporary political events, situations, and debates.
10. Identify how public policies at the state and local level affect your everyday life.
11. Express your own thoughts about political issues and evaluate counter opinions.
12. Report, evaluate, and discuss a variety of attitudes and viewpoints.

POLS 1101 satisfies one of Kennesaw State University's general education program requirements. It addresses the US Perspectives learning outcome. The learning outcome states: Students identify the historical, political, social, or institutional developments of the United States. For more information about KSU's General Education program requirements and associated learning outcomes, please visit [http://catalog.kennesaw.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=12&pooid=881](http://catalog.kennesaw.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=12&pooid=881)

## Required Texts

- 1) Geer, John G., Schiller, Wendy J., Richard Herrera, and Jeffrey A Segal. 2016. *Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Boston, MA: Cengage. (ISBN: 9781285858548) \*Note: You only need the textbook; you do not need Mindtap access.
- 2) There are also many supplemental required readings posted in D2L. See the course schedule for more details.

## Evaluation of Course Objectives

**In-Focus Activities:** Students will complete six (6) in-focus activities throughout the semester. In-focus activities highlight one or more aspects the recent readings and place them in the context of current political events. These activities may include writing a short (3-5 page) reflection paper, creating a media diary, providing a research report on a local bill, forecasting an Electoral College map for 2024, and so on. Instructions for each activity will open approximately two weeks before the deadline and will be submitted in dropboxes under the Assignments tab. Because these activities take the place of traditional exams, *significant* amounts of time and effort will be required in order to complete each (i.e., do not wait until the last minute to do it). See the Grading Criteria and Rubrics document under the Start Here tab in D2L. Instructions for each activity may be accessed in D2L by clicking on the Content tab, the Start Here tab, then selecting the In-Focus Activity Instructions subtab.

**Reaction Posts:** One of the key objectives of this class is to make students critical consumers of information. Critical consumption means you are able to reflect on what has been presented to you and provide a thoughtful critique. During each week students will provide their written reactions to the required readings and/or their application to current events. For the most part, there are no right or wrong answers here. Reaction posts are primarily graded on how deeply the student contemplates the issues, how thoroughly they address the prompt(s), and completion by the deadline. *Responses should be anywhere from two to five paragraphs in length*. See the Grading Criteria and Rubrics document under the Start Here tab in D2L. Each discussion board opens approximately one week before its deadline. Discussion boards may be accessed in D2L by clicking on the Content tab, then selecting the appropriate Week/Module. You may also find the discussion boards by clicking on the Discussions tab. To post, click on the discussion board link, then click on Start a New Thread.

**Participation:** Participation in this course requires each student to make one comment on another students' reaction post within ten (10) separate discussion boards. Comments may include: shedding additional light on a topic, asking the student to clarify their position(s)/argument(s), providing a counterargument, citing supporting/opposing evidence, tying the post to a topic previously mentioned, and so on. See the Grading Criteria and Rubrics document under the Start Here tab in D2L. Note that the instructor will monitor the professionalism with which students conduct themselves. Please be respectful of your fellow classmates when posting and commenting. Disagreement or criticism of another's point of view should be expressed in a civil and educated manner. Note that *posts and replies must be completed by the deadline* (i.e., once a board has closed you will not be able to post or reply). To comment on another's discussion post, click on the title of that student's post, then click on Reply to Thread.

## Distribution of Grades

In-Focus Activities 50% (6 total activities worth ~8.33% each)

Reaction Posts 35% (15 total posts worth ~2.33% each)

Participation 15% (10 total comments worth 1.5% each)

## Grading Scale

A	90-100	C	70-79	F	59 or below
B	80-89	D	60-69		

## Policy for Missed or Late Work

Missing/late work will be accepted only under extenuating circumstances and with proper (medical) documentation. Students will generally not be allowed to make up missing coursework due to transportation, weather, travel, family and/or personal issues, though certain exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis.

## Religious Holidays

Students who wish to observe religious holidays must notify the instructor of the date(s) they will be absent within the first week of class. The instructor will make every reasonable effort to honor the request and not penalize the student for missing class and/or assignments. If an examination or assignment is due during the absence the instructor will give the student an opportunity to complete the assessment at an earlier date.

## Accessibility and Disability Policy

KSU provides program accessibility and reasonable accommodations for persons defined as disabled under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students who require specific accommodations (e.g., extra time on exams, designated note takers, visual aids, etc.) to successfully complete this course are welcome! However, in order for the instructor to recognize these accommodations it is the responsibility of the student to officially document their disabilities with the office of Student Disability Services. *Note: Students seeking accommodations should do so within the first week of the semester, as testing and documentation often takes time.* Please visit the Student Disability Services website at [sss.kennesaw.edu/sds](http://sss.kennesaw.edu/sds).

## Electronic Communication

Communication for this course will be sent to your official university email address. It is your responsibility to read the email in your official university email account and to do so in a timely manner. ***Because this is a 100% online course it is recommended that students log into the course in D2L and check their KSU email at least three times per week.*** If you choose to forward your official university email to another off-campus account, faculty are *not responsible* for any undeliverable messages to your alternative personal accounts.

## **Netiquette in an Online Course**

When taking online or hybrid courses at KSU, students will often be in a position where they will need to electronically correspond with their classmates and their instructor. Professionalism in formatting, content, and tone of this correspondence is expected at all times. Please refer to KSU's official netiquette guidelines: <https://www.softchalkcloud.com/lesson/serve/mYw6vgsBfza4X8/html>

## **The Duo Authentication System**

Duo is a two-factor authentication solution supporting the security of personal and university data for campus community members. Two-factor authentication is a method of confirming your identity using two separate elements: 1) Something you know (your NetID password), and 2) something you have (your registered mobile device or landline phone). Duo provides an extra layer of security for your NetID, designed so that no one but you can access your account, even if your password becomes compromised. You will be prompted to authenticate through Duo each time you log-in to Duo compatible services. The service provides multiple options for taking advantage of this additional authentication method, including push notifications through a smartphone app, short codes delivered through the app, or phone calls. For more information visit: <https://uits.kennesaw.edu/duo/index.php>.

## **Contacting the Instructor**

If a student has questions about the material, technical issues in accessing course elements on D2L, or needs to contact the instructor for any other reason, please email me at [ajohn551@kennesaw.edu](mailto:ajohn551@kennesaw.edu). All emails will get a response within three days (72 hours). If for any reason the instructor will be unavailable on certain days the class will be notified in advance.

## **Grading Response Times**

Discussion board posts and replies will be graded within one week (7 days) of each assignment's submission deadline. In-focus activities will be graded within two weeks (14 days) of each assignment's submission deadline.

## **Writing Assistance**

The KSU Writing Center helps students in all disciplines improve their written work. Experienced, friendly writing assistants work with you on topic development, revision, research, documentation, grammar, and more. Appointments with the Writing Center are even available remotely (i.e., online). For more information or to make an appointment, visit [www.kennesaw.edu/writingcenter](http://www.kennesaw.edu/writingcenter), or stop by Room 242 in the English Building.

## **Minimum Technical Skills Needed**

You will need a high speed internet connection and knowledge of how to use Desire2Learn (D2L). Developing an understanding of the discussion board functions, the assignment functions (in order to turn in papers), and the content tabs (to access instructions, required readings, etc.) will be vital. It is recommended that you access D2L from a desktop computer, not a cell phone, iPad, etc. In order to listen

to videos and/or lectures you will need speakers/headphones and a compatible browser. You will also need access to Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and the ability to open PDF files. Note that all computers on KSU's main campus satisfy these requirements.

## Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic honesty and adherence to KSU's Student Codes of Conduct is expected at all times. Any student found to have engaged in academic misconduct such as plagiarism, collusion, or submitting non-original work is subject to disciplinary sanctions from the Department of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity. ***If I suspect that a student has committed plagiarism, even if it is their first time, the student will receive a zero on the assignment and an incident report will be filed with the Department of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.*** For more information about plagiarism and prevention go to [www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org). To view the Kennesaw State University Student Codes of Conduct visit <https://web.kennesaw.edu/scai/content/ksu-student-code-conduct>.

## Special Statements on COVID-19

### *Course Delivery*

KSU may shift the method of course delivery at any time during the semester in compliance with University System of Georgia health and safety guidelines. In this case, alternate teaching modalities that may be adopted include hyflex, hybrid, synchronous online, or asynchronous online instruction.

### *COVID-19 Illness*

If you are feeling ill, please stay home and contact your health professional. In addition, please email your instructor to say you are missing class due to illness. Signs of COVID-19 illness include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Cough
- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- Runny nose or new sinus congestion
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Sore Throat
- New loss of taste and/or smell

COVID-19 vaccines are a critical tool in "Protecting the Nest." If you have not already, you are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated immediately to advance the health and safety of our campus community. As an enrolled KSU student, you are eligible to receive the vaccine on campus. Please call (470) 578-6644 to schedule your vaccination appointment or you may walk into one of our student health clinics. For more information regarding COVID-19 (including testing, vaccines, extended illness procedures and accommodations), see KSU's official [Covid-19 website](#).

### *Face Coverings*

Based on guidance from the University System of Georgia (USG), all vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals are encouraged to wear a face covering while inside campus facilities. Unvaccinated individuals are also strongly encouraged to continue to socially distance while inside campus facilities, when possible.

## Technical Support

Students are encouraged to seek out resources available to them at Kennesaw State if they are experiencing any technical difficulties that the instructor is not able to solve. You can find this support at the following places:

- Student Technology Services
  - <https://uits.kennesaw.edu/>
  - Email: [studenthelpdesk@kennesaw.edu](mailto:studenthelpdesk@kennesaw.edu)
- Desire2Learn (D2L) Support
  - Training schedule, booklets, and videos available at <https://uits.kennesaw.edu/support/d2ltraining.php>
- Respondus Lockdown browser
  - [https://chss.kennesaw.edu/ode/tutorials/Syllabus\\_LockDownBrowser.pdf](https://chss.kennesaw.edu/ode/tutorials/Syllabus_LockDownBrowser.pdf)

## Academic Support Links

KSU offers many academic support resources including Academic Tutoring, Student Success Services, ESL Support, Writing Center, Math Lab, and Supplemental Instruction. Please look at the following link for more information on any of these resources: <https://www.kennesaw.edu/currentstudents.php>.

## Student Support Services

KSU has many student support services geared particularly toward online students that can be found at: <https://ols.kennesaw.edu/>

KSU Financial Aid Office: The Office of Student Financial Aid provides assistance for students to help them meet the costs of obtaining a Kennesaw State University education. <https://financialaid.kennesaw.edu/index.php>

KSU Office of the Registrar: The Office of the Registrar supports academic life at Kennesaw State University, from class registration to graduation and beyond. Explore this site to learn more about our core mission and find resources for students, faculty, staff, and alumni. <https://registrar.kennesaw.edu/index.php>

KSU Bursar's office: The Bursar's Office provides the following services for KSU students:

- Acceptance of student fee payments
- Disbursements of Financial Aid balance of awards
- Administration of private scholarship funds and funds on deposit accounts
- Administration of Corporate and Third-Party Contracts
- Collection of Perkins Loans/KSU Emergency Loan

<https://fiscalservices.kennesaw.edu/bursar/index.php>

## Privacy Policies/Accessibility Statements of External Course Tools:

<https://privacy.microsoft.com/en-us/privacystatement>

[https://www.youtube.com/static?&template=privacy\\_guidelines](https://www.youtube.com/static?&template=privacy_guidelines)

<https://www.adobe.com/privacy/policy.html>

[https://guides.turnitin.com/Privacy\\_and\\_Security](https://guides.turnitin.com/Privacy_and_Security)  
<https://www.adobe.com/accessibility.html>  
<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility>  
<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/189278?hl=en>  
[http://turnitin.com/en\\_us/about-us/accessibility](http://turnitin.com/en_us/about-us/accessibility)

## **Miscellaneous University Policies**

[Academic Honesty/Integrity Statement](#)  
[Confidentiality and Privacy Statement \(FERPA\)](#)  
[Campus Carry Information](#)

[Ethics Statement](#)  
[Sexual Harassment Statement](#)  
[University – Student Rights Statement](#)

## **Enrollment Status Statement**

Students are solely responsible for managing their enrollment status in a course; nonattendance does not constitute a withdrawal.

## **Disclaimer**

The instructor reserves the right to amend or correct this course syllabus as necessary.

## **Course Schedule**

\*All supplemental readings are posted in D2L

To view academic deadlines, including add/drop dates, please visit <http://registrar.kennesaw.edu/>

### **Module 1: January 9- January 15**

Topic(s): Constitutional Foundations

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 2

\*Explainer: What is the 2nd Amendment and how does it impact US gun control?

\*4 Ways the Federal Government Can Improve College Campus Safety in States With Lax Gun Laws

Assignments due: Reaction Post 1 due 1/15 by 11:59pm

### **Module 2: January 16- January 22**

\*Note: *Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Monday January 16*

Topic(s): Understanding Federalism

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 3

\*Marijuana Legality by State

\*Federal law still treats marijuana as an illegal drug, creating headaches for states

Assignments due: In-Focus Activity 1 and Reaction Post 2 due 1/22 by 11:59pm

### **Module 3: January 23- January 29**

Topic(s): Unalienable Rights

Privacy in the Digital Age

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 4

\*Who Has Access to Your Smartphone Data?

\*The police want your phone data. Here's what they can get — and what they can't.

Assignments due: Reaction Post 3 due 1/29 by 11:59pm

### **Module 4: January 30- February 5**

Topic(s): Discrimination and Equal Protections Under the Law

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 5

\*Video: Debate continues over transgender athletes

\*School sports bills draw backlash from Georgia transgender advocates

Assignments due: Reaction Post 4 due 2/5 by 11:59pm

### **Module 5: February 6- February 12**

Topic(s): Public Opinion in the Democratic Context

Who is the American Electorate?

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 6

\*2020 Census: Georgia's minority populations have surged

\*5 takeaways from the release of 2020 census data

Assignments due: In-Focus Activity 2 and Reaction Post 5 due 2/12 by 11:59pm

### **Module 6: February 13- February 19**

Topic(s): Mass Media in American Politics

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 7

\*Watch the video: Yellow Journalism and Fake News

Assignments due: Reaction Post 6 due 2/19 by 11:59pm

### **Module 7: February 20- February 26**

Topic(s): Misinformation and Fake News

Partisan Media and Echo Chambers

Readings: \*A cognitive scientist explains why humans are so susceptible to fake news and misinformation

\*U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided (Click Next at bottom to view all 8 pages)

\*The Causes and Effects of "Filter Bubbles" and how to Break Free (also watch 9 minute video)

Assignments due: In-Focus Activity 3 and Reaction Post 7 due 2/26 by 11:59pm



## **Module 8: February 27- March 5**

Topic(s): The American (Two) Party System

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 9

\*View History of Political Parties graphic

\*Video: The Problems with First Past the Post Voting Explained

\*The two-party system is here to stay

Assignments due: Reaction Post 8 due 3/5 by 11:59pm

## **Module 9: March 6- March 12**

Topic(s): Spring Break

Readings: None

Assignments due: None

## **Module 10: March 13- March 19**

Topic(s): Special Interests and Outside Influences

Criminal Justice Reform

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 8

\*Criminal Justice Facts

\*Study Shows Private Prison Companies Use Influence to Increase Incarceration

Assignments due: Reaction Post 9 due 3/19 by 11:59pm

## **Module 11: March 20- March 26**

Topic(s): Political Engagement

The Psychology of Voting

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 11

\*The Association Between Personality Traits and Voting Intentions in the 2016 Presidential Election

\*The hidden psychology of voting

Assignments due: In-Focus Activity 4 and Reaction Post 10 due 3/26 by 11:59pm

## **Module 12: March 27- April 2**

Topic(s): Dynamics of Campaigns and Elections

#StopTheSteal

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 10

\*How Widespread Is Voter Fraud in the US?

\*View #StopTheSteal timeline

\*Georgia Governor Signs Election Overhaul, Including Changes To Absentee Voting

Assignments due: Reaction Post 11 due 4/2 by 11:59pm

### **Module 13: April 3- April 9**

Topic(s): The Executive

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 13

\*Additional readings TBA

Assignments due: Reaction Post 12 due 4/9 by 11:59pm

### **Module 14: April 10- April 16**

Topic(s): Breaking Down Congressional Structure and Functions

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 12

\*Additional readings TBA

Assignments due: In-Focus Activity 5 and Reaction Post 13 due 4/16 by 11:59pm

### **Module 15: April 17- April 23**

Topic(s): The Supreme Court

Affirmative Action in Higher Education

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 15

\*The Supreme Court Cases That Could End Affirmative Action

\*How the Supreme Court has ruled in the past about affirmative action

Assignments due: Reaction Post 14 due 4/23 by 11:59pm

### **Module 16: April 24- April 30**

Topic(s): Bureaucratic Purpose and History

Opioids and the FDA

Readings: *Gateways to Democracy* Chapter 14

\*Video: What does FDA regulate?

\*Drug overdose deaths in 2020 hit highest number ever recorded, CDC data shows

\*How FDA Failures Contributed to the Opioid Crisis

Assignments due: In-Focus Activity 6 and Reaction Post 15 due 4/30 by 11:59pm