

**POLS 1101**  
**American Government**  
**Spring 2018**

Instructor: Dr. April A. Johnson  
Class Time: Mon/Wed 2:00pm-3:15pm  
Class Location: Social Sciences Building, Room 2033  
Office Hours: Mon/Wed 1:00pm-2:00pm  
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**Course Description and Objectives**

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 and a vibrant class discussion are essential to the structure of this course.

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&poid=881](http://catalog.kennesaw.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=12&poid=881)

Kennesaw State University is currently engaged in a campus-wide assessment of its general education program. The purpose is to measure student achievement with respect to faculty defined student learning outcomes. This course has been selected to participate in the process. No individually-identifiable student information will be collected as part of the assessment. Data will be reported only in aggregated form. Students should know that the data may be used for scholarly work by members of KSU faculty (but only in anonymous and aggregated form). If you are opposed to having your anonymous data used for scholarly work, you can "opt out" of this specific aspect of the process. For more information on the general education assessment process and for access to an "opt out" form, please click the following link: <https://web.kennesaw.edu/academicaffairs/genedassessment>

**Required Texts**

Geer, John G., Schiller, Wendy J., and Jeffrey A Segal. 2012. *Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Boston, MA: Cengage.  
(ISBN: 9781285417813) \*Note: You only need the textbook, you do not need Aplia access.

## Evaluation of Course Objectives

**Exams:** Exams in this course consist of one non-cumulative midterm exam and one non-cumulative final exam. Exams will be administered in class. Material for the exam questions will come from the textbook, supplemental readings, and in-class lectures/videos.

**Discussion Board Posts:** Each week students will respond to one discussion prompt posted within D2L. The prompts will introduce that week's topic in American politics and encourage students to think about how it relates to themselves and/or to current events more broadly. *Due dates for each response are posted in D2L.* Keep in mind that this is politics- there are no right or wrong answers. Responses are primarily graded according to completion by the deadline, appropriateness, thoughtfulness, and effort.

**Group Exercises:** During select (i.e., random) class periods students will partner with others to consider, debate, and extrapolate upon some of the issues discussed that week. Group exercises may include: summarizing two opposing viewpoints, connecting various topics with a common thread, developing questions for future study, and other similar activities.

**Attendance/Participation/Professionalism:** Students are given one excused absence per semester (not applicable to missed in-class group exercises). In general, however, I expect students to come to each class, to be attentive, and to be engaged in both lectures and discussion. *Please note that showing up late and/or leaving early is disruptive to the classroom flow (meaning- don't do it!).*

Attending class does not equate to participating in it. I want you to be in the classroom both mentally and physically. Participation includes asking questions about the readings (write down questions as you read!), answering questions posed by the instructor and responding to the comments made by your classmates. *Participation also means that you are actively contributing to discussion and creative activities while engaged in group work.* I recognize that some students tend to be less vocal than others. But by virtue of living in the United States, every one of you have some experience with American politics. I encourage you to think critically and to share your insights and inquiries with the class.

In addition to attendance and participation, students will be assessed on the professionalism with which they conduct themselves. Professionalism means that students are focused on course material, accountable for their own learning, and respectful in their communication both inside and outside of the classroom. Incivilities, such as chatting, texting, or excessive classroom disruptions will lower your grade in this course.

### Distribution of Grades

Group Exercises 10%  
Midterm Exam 25%  
Final Exam 25%

Discussion Board Posts 25% (~1.66% each)  
Attendance/Participation/Professionalism 15%

### Grading Scale

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

### **Electronics Policy**

*Above all, please be respectful to both the instructor and your fellow classmates when using electronic devices.* While electronics are not prohibited in the classroom, students generally [do better by taking handwritten notes](#) and [minimizing digital distractions](#). In order to maximize your in-class learning, attentiveness and participation I highly recommend unplugging. If a student's use of electronics is consistently problematic/disruptive I will ask them to leave the classroom.

### **Policy for Missed or Late Work**

Missing or late work/attendance will be accepted only under extenuating circumstances and with proper (medical) documentation. Students will generally not be allowed to make up missing coursework/attendance due to transportation, weather, 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 two weeks of class. The instructor will make every reasonable effort to honor the request and not penalize the student for missing the class. If an examination or project is due during the absence the instructor will give the student an opportunity to complete the assessment at an earlier date.

### **Disability Policy**

Students who require accommodations (e.g., extra time on exams, designated note takers, etc.) to complete and participate in this course are welcome. However, in order for the instructor to recognize these accommodations students must 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. The instructor will not grant accommodations retroactively.* 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 (at least twice 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.

### **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 his or her 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.](#)

**Miscellaneous Policies**

[Academic Honesty/Integrity Statement](#)  
[Confidentiality and Privacy Statement \(FERPA\)](#)  
[Course Accessibility Statement \(ADA statement\)](#)  
[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**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Readings</b>
Mon 1/8	Introduction	---
Wed 1/10	Democratic Ideals	Chapter 1
Mon 1/15	<i>MLK Jr. Holiday</i> <i>No Class</i>	---
Wed 1/17	The Constitution	Chapter 2
Mon 1/22	Understanding Federalism	Chapter 3
Wed 1/24	In Focus: Religious Freedom Laws	*‘Religious Liberty’ Bills Will Again Challenge Lawmakers, Leadership
Mon 1/29	Civil Liberties	Chapter 4
Wed 1/31	In Focus: Government Surveillance and Right to Privacy	*The 10 Biggest Revelations From Edward Snowden's Leaks
Mon 2/5	Civil Rights	Chapter 5
Wed 2/7	In Focus: Ballot Access and Voting Restrictions	*How Recent Changes in Voting Laws Threaten Equal Rights in Georgia- And Beyond
Mon 2/12	Public Opinion and Polling	Chapter 6
Wed 2/14	In Focus: Survey Bias	*Where are the Real Errors in Political Polls? *4 Possible Reasons The Polls Got It So Wrong This Year
Mon 2/19	Mass Media in American Politics	Chapter 7
Wed 2/21	In Focus: Media Influence	*How Sensationalist TV Stories on Terrorism Make Americans More Hawkish

Mon 2/26	<i>Midterm Study Session (Class Optional)</i>	---
Wed 2/28	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	---
Mon 3/5	Organized Interests	Chapter 8
Wed 3/7	In Focus: The Power of Political Action Committees	*GA Lawmakers Return With Pockets Full of PAC Cash
Mon 3/12	The American Party System	Chapter 9
Wed 3/14	In Focus: Challenges to Third Party Development	*Why Are There Only Two Parties in American Politics?
Mon 3/19	Dynamics of Campaigns and Elections	Chapter 10
Wed 3/21	In Focus: Controversy and the Electoral College	*Who Really Elects the President of the United States?
Mon 3/26	Political Engagement	Chapter 11
Wed 3/28	In Focus: Social Media and Participation	*Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted
Mon 4/2	<i>Spring Break No Class</i>	---
Wed 4/4	<i>Spring Break No Class</i>	---
Mon 4/9	Congress	Chapter 12
Wed 4/11	In Focus: Determinants of Congressional Behavior	*Power of the Press: Can the Media Influence Voting Behavior of Legislators?
Mon 4/16	The Presidency	Chapter 13
Wed 4/18	The Bureaucracy	Chapter 14
Mon 4/23	In Focus: Regulation Gone Wild	*E-Cigarettes to Be Regulated as Tobacco Products
Wed 4/25	The Judiciary	Chapter 15
Mon 4/30	In Focus: Judicial Elections	*Outside Spending by Special Interests Floods Judicial Elections at Record Percentage, Report Finds
<b>Final Exam</b> <b>Wednesday, May 2, 2018</b> <b>1:00 PM - 3:00 PM</b>		

\*Posted in D2L

To view academic deadlines visit <http://registrar.kennesaw.edu/>