

POLS 1101: American Government, Summer 2013

Dr. Christopher N. Lawrence <christopher.lawrenc1@maconstate.edu>

Assistant Professor of Political Science, Middle Georgia State College

Website: <http://www.cnlawrence.com/teaching> Twitter: @LawrenceMGSC

CRN 53592 Section 46 TR 12:30–2:55 p.m. Thomas Hall 132 (WRC1)

CRN 53646 Section 47 TR 5:30–7:55 p.m. Oak Hall 204 (WRC3)

Office Hours: TR 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Academic Services Building 124 (WRC2)
TR 4:30–5:30 p.m. Oak Hall 109 (WRC3)

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.

► **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 (in fact, we’ll start out discussing formal institutions like the Constitution and the three four branches of government for the first half of the term), for now just note that *all* of these pieces matter—not just the formal institutions in Washington!

► **Course Structure:** Please note that this course is designed as a *partially flipped, hybrid* course. The core lectures for each chapter will be delivered online, via Desire2Learn. After reviewing the lecture and reading the chapter, you will complete an online quiz for each chapter *before class*.

During the ensuing class period, we will go over the online quiz and engage in further discussion related to the chapter and lecture. Succeeding in class will require both attention to the online materials and regular attendance and participation in the classroom.

► **MGSC Core Requirements:** This course satisfies the Political Science credit requirement in Area E, as well as the state legislature’s requirement that you complete a course covering the U.S. and Georgia constitutions.

► **Expected Learning Outcomes:** Students will be expected to achieve the following learning outcomes in order to receive a passing grade (D or above) in this course:

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the major institutions (Congress, the presidency, and the judiciary) of the U.S. national government.
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the processes linking citizens and the U.S. national government (elections, parties, and interest groups).
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, including federalism, civil liberties, and civil rights.

These outcomes will be assessed as part of a cumulative final examination for the course.

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

Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright. 2011. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, 4th Brief Edition. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 978-1-60871-274-8.

It should be available, new and used, at the Middle Georgia State College bookstore location in Warner Robins; you may also be able to order it on-line at a discount. You can also obtain the textbook as an e-book online at <http://store.vitalsource.com/show/978-1-60871-945-7>. However, please note that e-book readers and other electronic devices *may not* be used during class.

Additional readings may be assigned at my discretion; I will provide them for you at the library reserve desk, on the course’s Desire2Learn site, or as handouts in class.

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

Term Exams (3)	60%	Participation	5%
Final Exam	20%	Reading/Lecture Quizzes	15%

The overall average posted in Desire2Learn 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 grade at any time in D2L.

The final grade in the course reported to the registrar 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

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

The grade of “FA” will be assigned to students with excessive unexcused absences; see below for details.

► **Grading Philosophy:** Your grades will be earned based 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 may differ based on that reality.

My commitment to you is that I will assign fair and appropriate grades, in a reasonably timely manner,¹ 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.

Historically, the typical student in this course has earned a “C.” Earning a “B” or “A” will require substantially more out-of-class work on your part. A general guideline is that you should devote 2–3 hours of time out of class for every semester hour of class, per week, in *each* course, on average.

► **Exams:** There will be four closed-book, in-class examinations, including the final examination, on the dates that are indicated on the syllabus, covering the assigned materials. The exams will be drawn from the material covered in the most recent section of the course: for example, Exam 2 will mostly cover material studied after Exam 1. Per departmental policy, the final examination is *comprehensive* and will cover *all* of the course materials. Each term exam will count for 20% of your final grade in the course and the final counts as 20%; no examination grades will be dropped under any circumstances. Exams may include multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions.

¹Some assignments, such as the reading quizzes online, are 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.

During exams, 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**.

► **Reading and Lecture Quizzes:** For each module of the course, there will be a reading quiz posted in Desire2Learn. The quiz will be available online at least 48 hours prior to the first class scheduled for that module, marked (Q) on the schedule below. *No quizzes will be accepted after the quiz deadline, which is 15 minutes prior to the start of class.* At the beginning of class, I will review the overall quiz results with the class, so we can see what areas need to be further emphasized when discussing the chapter.

The online quizzes are open-book. You may work with other students in the class on the online quizzes, although it is probably *not* in your best interest to simply copy someone else's answers without understanding *why* they chose those answers.

Additionally, I may give announced or unannounced quizzes or other brief assignments in-class that will count toward this grade. These quizzes will be closed-book, without any opportunity for discussion.

Your lowest two quiz grades will be dropped from your quiz average. Together, the quizzes will count as 15% of your final grade.

► **Participation:** The remaining 5% of your final grade will be based on your level of participation in class. Your class attendance may be a factor in determining this grade.

► **Exam and Quiz Content:** 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 class or in Desire2Learn.

Contacting the Professor: My regularly-scheduled office hours are listed above. 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 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, I will always get back to you within one business day, and frequently sooner.

If you call outside my office hours, please avoid leaving voice mail or messages with college staff, particularly at the Warner Robins campus; 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 to you.

Finally, while you may find me in various guises on various social media sites, I will not “friend” current or past students who are still enrolled as undergraduates; please do not take this personally.

Class Policies: 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 Desire2Learn). Accordingly, disruptive behaviors such as repeated tardiness, side conversations, reading materials unrelated to the course (such as the student newspaper), 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 be counted as an unexcused absence.

► **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, I ask that you mute or switch off

your cell phones and any alarms during class, and refrain 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 those opportunities as they are announced over the term.

► **Notes:** I do not provide lecture notes for students under any circumstances. You will have to rely on the generosity of a classmate or make use of any materials provided on the textbook website or the textbook’s study guide, if applicable. (Students with disabilities who require notes or other learning environment accommodations should consult with me and the MGSC Counseling Center to arrange notetaking assistance.)

► **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 participation in class, I will take daily attendance. In accordance with college policy, students who have *more than two* unexcused absences may be assigned a failing grade (“FA”) at my sole discretion; in particular, any student who has earned a failing grade in the course based on their overall average who also has excessive absences will automatically receive the “FA” grade.

Attendance is one of the factors considered when assigning students’ 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 or two.

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. As each class session is 145 minutes long, a *brief* restroom/personal break will be scheduled during class sessions and announced in-class. If you have a condition that requires more frequent breaks, please let me know so I can accommodate it.

Students who have not attended any classes as of the reporting period (generally, during the second week of classes) may be reported as a “no-show” and may lose financial aid as a result.

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.

Make-up quizzes will not be arranged under any circumstances. There are 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.

► **Late Work:** Online quizzes not attempted prior to the deadline will be scored a zero without further opportunity to take the quiz; if you have partially completed the quiz, you may receive credit for the portion you have completed as of the deadline.

Late extra credit assignments will not be graded, except in the event of a documented illness or other excused, extenuating circumstances that would have made you *incapable* of completing the assignment in time.

► **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:** I take academic misconduct (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams and plagiarism of written work) very seriously. So does Middle Georgia State College.

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-life/docs/Macon_State_College_Student_Handbook.pdf.

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 college-level resolution which may include a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, and/or academic suspension.

I offer some free advice, drawn from past experience as both a student and a professor: do not turn in plagiarized work because you have run out of time and feel as if you need to turn in *something*—taking the late penalty is better than the sanctions for academic misconduct. Similarly, if you forgot to study, it's better to get a low grade on the exam than the zero you'll get if you cheat.

One of the early computer programmers, Admiral Grace Hopper, is reported to have said that “[i]t’s easier to ask forgiveness than it is to get permission.” That advice does not apply in this situation. If you have the slightest doubt in your mind about whether something is academic misconduct, *ask me before handing in the assignment for grading*.

► **Disability Accommodations:** While you are welcome to discuss any special needs with me in private, to be fair to all students, accommodations are only provided when supported by documentation from the MGSC Counseling Center on the Macon campus (478-471-2985; Student Life Building, Room 266; <http://www.mga.edu/counseling>).

► **Tutoring:** Middle Georgia State College provides tutoring services for political science courses, free of charge, on its campuses. In Warner Robins, tutoring services are provided in the Academic Resource Center in Oak Hall 128. Hours when political science tutors are available are posted at the ARC website, <http://www.mga.edu/arc>. Tutoring services are not a substitute for regular class attendance, and all students are welcome.

Withdrawal Deadlines: The last day to drop the course without it appearing on your transcript is Monday, June 3. The withdrawal deadline (last day for a “W”) is Wednesday, June 26; withdrawals after this date, except under extraordinary hardship, will generally be awarded a “WF” grade, which counts the same as an “F” in your GPA.

Course Outline: Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class and will be posted to the course calendar and in Desire2Learn. We will not necessarily read books in the order they appear on the syllabus; 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.

Class Schedule

In the schedule below, *KTR* refers to chapters from the main text, *Keeping the Republic*.

The selected readings from the *Federalist Papers* can be found in Appendices 4 and 5 of *Keeping the Republic*; you do **not** need to purchase a printed copy of the *Federalist Papers* (sometimes titled *The Federalist*).

Date	Topic	Reading(s)
May 28	Introduction to the course	KTR 1
May 30 (Q)	The Founding Era and Constitution	KTR 2; <i>Federalist</i> 10
June 4 (Q)	Federalism; Georgia constitution	KTR 3; <i>Federalist</i> 51
June 6 (Q)	Civil Liberties	KTR 4
June 11	No Class: Dr. Lawrence at Professional Conference	
June 13	Exam 1: Chapters 1–4	
June 18 (Q)	Civil Rights	KTR 5
June 20 (Q)	Congress	KTR 6
June 25 (Q)	The Presidency and the Bureaucracy	KTR 7 and 8
June 27	Exam 2: Chapters 5–8	
July 2 (Q)	The Judiciary	KTR 9
July 4	No Class: Independence Day	
July 9 (Q)	Public Opinion and the Media	KTR 10 and 13
July 11 (Q)	Parties and Interest Groups	KTR 11
July 16	Exam 3: Chapters 9–11 and 13	
July 18 (Q)	Voting and Elections	KTR 12
July 23 (Q)	Public Policy	KTR 14

Final Examination

Section	Date and Time
CRN 53592 (46), TR 12:30 p.m.	Thursday, July 25, 1:00-3:00 p.m.
CRN 53646 (47), TR 5:30 p.m.	Thursday, July 25, 6:00-8:00 p.m.