

THIS SYLLABUS IS REQUIRED READING. ALL MATERIALS POSTED OR LINKED ON THE COURSE WEBSITE ARE REQUIRED READING UNLESS THE INSTRUCTOR EXPRESSLY STATES OTHERWISE. "REQUIRED READING" MEANS THAT THE STUDENT 1) IS PRESUMED TO HAVE READ AND TO BE FAMILIAR WITH THE MATERIAL AND 2) IN THE CASE OF ADMINISTRATIVE MATERIAL, THAT THE STUDENT MUST COMPLY WITH THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS SET FORTH THEREIN. BY REMAINING ENROLLED IN THIS COURSE, THE STUDENT CONSENTS TO THESE TERMS AND CONDITIONS AS WELL AS ALL APPLICABLE UNIVERSITY AND USG RULES, REGULATIONS, AND POLICIES.

Basic Course Information

SYLLABUS FOR

POLITICAL SCIENCE 1101-19 CRN 20278
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

THOMAS 100, WARNER ROBINS, TUESDAY AND THURSDAY 12:30 PM-1:45 PM
SPRING 2019

THREE CREDIT HOURS

www.buckmelton.com

(All students must check both this website and their official MGSU email accounts every day for announcements. On class days, check *before* class. All students will be presumed to have done so. All students are responsible for any information communicated to them through both of these avenues.)

Instructor Information

Dr. Buckner F. Melton, Jr.

Email: buckner.melton@mga.edu (emails will be answered as promptly as circumstances permit. Please do yourself a favor and identify your campus, course number, and section number whenever you email me. Failure to do so, or misidentification of any of these, may result in a delayed reply.)

Phone: (478) 471-5749 (email is strongly preferred to phone)

Office Hours and Locations: TBA and by appointment

Detailed Course Information

Required texts/materials:

- 1101 Course Outline, available at www.buckmelton.com
- Internet-based materials as noted herein

Supplemental materials:

- Timothy O. Lenz and Mirya Holman, *American Government* (ebook, available on my website above)
- I can provide to any student on request a list of additional supplemental textbooks or other relevant reading.

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.

Official Course Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1.) Students will demonstrate knowledge of the major political 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 civil liberties, civil rights and federalism.

The instrument used to measure this outcome will be the final examination.

Prerequisites/standards: This course has no official prerequisite courses. This is, however, a college-level course that awards college credit under the auspices of the University System of Georgia. To earn this credit, students in this course must perform passing college-level work as determined by the instructor applying professional standards of evaluation. All students in this course are presumed to be both 1) *capable of and* 2) *willing to perform* passing college-level work in the English language. One or both of these presumptions shall be rebutted by a student's poor performance in the course. Barring formal withdrawal by the official deadline or some other reason acceptable to the administration, any student whose performance in this course does not constitute passing college-level work will receive an F in the course. *This F will become a permanent part of the student's college transcript.*

Technology Requirements: Regular and reliable Internet access to the course web page and its contents is required.

Schedule, Requirements, Grading Policy

Tentative Course Schedule: This is located on the course web page and is hereby incorporated into this syllabus by reference. Please make sure that the schedule you consult is the one for your specific section. Please note that the schedule is tentative and may be revised (orally or in writing) as circumstances warrant.

Course Requirements: Students will be evaluated by examinations and quizzes, as described below.

Examinations: The course will include a mid-term and a comprehensive final, the latter covering all material in the course. Each exam will consist of two sections, each section consisting of one of three types of question (so that each exam will consist of two of the three possible question types).

The first type of question is multiple choice.

The second type of question is essay; an essay section will contain two or more broad essay questions, of which the student chooses only one to answer.

The third type of question will contain between five and ten names, terms, or phrases; the student will be asked to select several of these, to identify them, and to describe their importance.

I follow a blind grading policy on all examinations. To take each exam, each student must identify himself on the exam with the last four digits of his student ID number. **FAILURE TO DO SO PROPERLY MAY RESULT IN A ZERO ON THE EXAM.** Other numbers, such as driver's license number or social security number, are unacceptable.

Quizzes: Beginning the second week of class, and for most of the course at my discretion, I will give a quiz at the beginning of the first class of the week. Each quiz will cover only the information that we have covered in class the previous week, together with the accompanying outline material whether or not I have specifically mentioned that material in class. These quizzes are designed to encourage you to study the course material regularly instead of waiting until just before the exam, and to give you feedback on how well you are absorbing the material. There will be no opportunities to take make-ups on quizzes or to time-shift quizzes (taking them at times other than scheduled). If you miss a quiz, for whatever reason, you earn a zero on that quiz. At the end of the semester I will drop each student's lowest quiz grade. (The value of any single quiz is low enough that if you miss or fail a couple of quizzes, it should not have a major impact on your final course grade, but if you get into the habit of missing or failing them, your grade will suffer.) I may discontinue quizzes at my discretion.

These quizzes are designed to be easy to pass—in fact, they are designed to be easy to make a 100 on—for the student who has studied adequately. (Note: “studying adequately” does not mean waiting until fifteen minutes before the quiz to look over your notes.) *If you are regularly failing quizzes, it means that you lack a basic understanding of the material covered in class, on the course outline, in any assigned web page links, or other expressly assigned materials for the previous week.* To fix this problem, you either need to increase your weekly study time, or improve your study skills, or both. *Individually, the quizzes are worth very little, but cumulatively, they can have a major impact on your grade. This means that a bad grade in this course can “sneak up” on you if you don’t take these quizzes seriously.*

As part of your overall quiz grade, each student is required to create a nation state on the website **www.nationstates.net** and to join the region of Nostromo by the last class day of the second week of class, and then address issues confronting the nation state every day until the last day of class. Students who 1) create a nation state, 2) join Nostromo by the last class day of the second week of class, 3) provide me with the name of the nation state by the last class day of the second week of class, and 4) address issues presented to his/her nation state on a daily basis until the end of the semester will receive the equivalent of three quiz 100s. Students who fail to meet one or more of these requirements will receive the equivalent of three quiz zeros.

Class performance/participation points: This course is interactive and not merely a lecture course. I will thus sometimes ask questions for discussion by the class, and often I will call upon individual students to answer hypothetical questions, offer conjecture, draw conclusions based on information I supply, or otherwise contribute to the discussion. Adequate responses are expected and required. (By “adequate” I mean responses that show you’ve been following the day’s material and make some effort at a reasonable answer.) A student who responds in a superior fashion may be *rewarded* with one or more points on an upcoming examination or on the final course grade. (By “superior” I mean a response that draws excellent connections among facts and ideas, shows evidence of excellent reasoning skills, or otherwise comprises a particularly valuable contribution to the discussion or material.) A student who responds in an inadequate fashion may be *penalized* one or more points on an upcoming examination or on the final course grade. (By “inadequate” I mean either a lack of response or a response that shows the student to be clearly uninterested in or unaware of the material being covered at that time). Further, a student who refuses to identify himself or herself by name when requested to do so will automatically be penalized one or more points.

Please note that quantity doesn’t make up for quality in terms of class participation. A student who frequently volunteers (i.e., without my solicitation) inadequate, or merely adequate, input in an attempt to gain points will not thereby gain any, and may in fact lose points if the constant interjections become disruptive. (I will give you notice if your interjections appear to me to be disruptive.) On the other hand, *genuine questions or requests for clarification, along with the volunteering of informed or insightful comments, are always welcome, will never result in a penalty, and may receive one or more points.*

Missing/making up quizzes and examinations:

Missing a quiz: You may not make up a missed quiz or time-shift quizzes (i.e., take them at times other than scheduled for your section), regardless of reason. If you miss a quiz, for whatever reason, you earn a zero on that quiz. Missing one or two quizzes—especially since the lowest quiz grade will be dropped—will have a negligible effect on a student’s final course grade, but if you get into the habit of missing them, your grade will suffer, so you need to address whatever issue is causing you to miss them.

Exam policy: Examinations are mandatory, and the opportunities to time-shift an exam or to make up a missed exam are severely limited. *All make-up examinations will be considerably more difficult than the regularly scheduled examinations.* This is designed 1) to deter students from choosing the option of taking exams at a later time except when circumstances force them to, and 2) to reflect the additional study time that students have available when taking the exam at a later time than the rest of the class. (Among other differences, make-up examinations, unlike regular examinations, do not offer a student a choice of essay or short answer questions but instead require the student to answer questions of the instructor’s choice.)

Missing/making up the midterm: A student who misses the mid-term will take a make-up mid-term at the time scheduled for the final examination, i.e., s/he will take both the makeup and final exams together; when time doesn’t permit this, the student will take the makeup at the university-scheduled time for the final exam or, failing this, at my discretion.

Missing the final exam: Final examinations for *all* students in the section as a group will be given *either* at the at the university-scheduled time for the final exam for the time and date this section meets, *or* on the last day of class (not both), at the instructor’s discretion. (In other words, I have a choice as to when to schedule the final, but students don’t have a choice.) I’ll announce the date at least two weeks beforehand.

Unlike midterm examinations, final examinations may not be made up or time-shifted. If you miss the final exam, you miss the final exam and you will receive a zero on it. Finals take place at the end of the semester when my grading schedules and commitments are tight and I face deadlines from the registrar for submitting my course grades. I cannot arrange to schedule special makeup finals for individual students. If you can provide me with *written official documentation of an emergency or some official compulsory reason for absence, I will exempt you from the final exam if I receive that documentation before the deadline I face for submitting course grades to the registrar.* If you are exempted, the quizzes will count 20% of your grade and the midterm will count 80% of your grade. Examples of emergencies of official compulsory reasons that will permit an exemption, if documents, include but aren’t limited to 1) military deployment, exercise, or transfer orders, 2) subpoenas or summons for court appearances, 4) official written requests from MGSU officials for accommodations in light of academic, athletic, or disability requirements, 5) official documentation of a death, grave illness, or other major medical emergency in the *immediate* family (e.g., funeral notice, death certificate, emergency room or urgent care admission form showing *major* medical issue, and the like, or 6) official documentation of an act of God (e.g., police report of traffic accident or major breakdown on the way to take the exam). Again: whatever the reason, it is not enough to tell me that an emergency or the like has occurred; *you must provide me with official written documentation before my grades are due.* This documentation is subject to my verification. Absent this documentation, you get a zero on the final.

Examples of reasons that *won’t* suffice to permit a rescheduled or makeup final, regardless of documentation, include but aren’t limited to 1) oversleeping on the day the final exam is scheduled, 2) forgetting when the final exam is scheduled, 3) routine doctor or dental visits, 4) having non-refundable (or any) plane tickets for a date prior to the scheduled final exam, 5) being scheduled to work during the final exam, 6) having child care issues during the scheduled final exam, 7) attending a student protest or political rally when the final exam is scheduled, 8) being out of town, visiting home, or visiting parents during the scheduled final exam, and 9) incarceration of the student. The fact that this policy may cause you

inconvenience is no excuse. Scheduling makeup exams causes *me* considerable inconvenience at a very busy point in the semester and, more importantly, is potentially unfair to your fellow students, who may have inconvenienced themselves to make it when you didn't. As noted elsewhere in this syllabus, you are free to attend or not to attend on days when there are no exams, but on the two days when we have an exam, you must be here. You are strongly advised to arrive on time for an exam, but at any rate, you must arrive before the first student taking the exam leaves the room. If you arrive after that point you have officially missed the exam and may not take it on that occasion.

Grading system:		Assignment:	
A (Excellent work)	90 - 100	Mid-term exam	40%
B (Good work)	80 - 89	Final exam	40%
C (Satisfactory work)	70-79	Quizzes (cumulative)	20%
D (Passing work)	60-69		
F (Failing work)	0-59		

How can you tell the difference between an A and a B, or a C and a D? Some instructors have a hard time admitting that there's a lot of subjectivity going on in the assignment of grades on essay exams and other similar assignments. But because history involves interpretation rather than factual recall alone, its quality can't truly be measured using mathematics alone. Despite this inherent fuzziness, there are some general guidelines worth noting:

An A paper answers all parts of the assignment, and goes beyond that by demonstrating how those parts are related. It is written clearly and carefully, without unnecessary words. It contains no substantial factual errors. It is well organized and uses facts to support a point, not just because they're there. Typographical and grammatical errors, if present at all, are not serious enough or numerous enough to cause the reader to wonder whether the writer knows the subject. The paper gives the impression of being thoroughly thought out, not hastily assembled.

A B paper still answers all parts of the assignment and demonstrates reasonably clear thinking. Factual errors and omissions are minimal and do not undermine the paper's central point. It usually differs from an A paper in one or more of the following ways: (1) the language is not as clear, perhaps indicating that the writer has not thought enough about what s/he is trying to say; (2) the paper relies too heavily on reciting evidence and provides insufficient context for interpreting that evidence; (3) the evidence presented contains easily remediable gaps.

A C paper still answers all parts of the assignment and supports its main points with evidence, but sometimes the author chooses weak evidence when stronger evidence is readily available. Small gaps in evidence and/or argument are numerous. Writing is sometimes awkward and may indicate "muddy thinking." Some C papers contain factual errors that cause the reader to question the author's credibility, but even here, such errors should not be serious enough to undermine the paper's main point or points.

A D paper still answers all parts of the assignment, but the connections may be unclear, resulting in a paper that looks like a question-and-answer session without the questions. D papers often wander and lack direction. Sometimes an introduction or conclusion is missing. Repetitive language, indicating that

the author has run out of things to say before hitting the word limit or the time limit, frequently shows up in a D paper. D papers often commit the fatal flaw of treating an interpretive statement as though it were a factual one, or trying to use an unsupported generalization to prove another hypothesis. It differs from an F paper in that it demonstrates a basic understanding of the issues involved.

An F paper. What can I say? Every failing paper fails in its own unique way. An attempt to draw major conclusions based on grossly inaccurate statements of fact is one sure way to blow it. Another is to write an essay that wanders so far from the intended subject that the author never gets around to answering the question in a meaningful way. Or the paper may fall well short of the assigned length or fail to address some major part of the question. In general, a paper that fails to demonstrate even a basic understanding of the issues involved will receive an F.

Extra credit: No extra credit is available in this course.

Adjustments to your grade: If you believe your work has been graded incorrectly, you must inform me *in writing* (e.g., by email). In your communication, explain as thoroughly as possible 1) what mistake you believe I made and 2) how you think it should be remedied. As you do so, please keep in mind the criteria listed for essay grading found in this syllabus. I am perfectly willing to reread any written work and change any grade that was assigned incorrectly, but you should be aware that I will not “curve” grades to compensate for poor performance by the class as a whole.

Course Policies

Attendance/makeup exams/conduct: I do take roll, but there is no required attendance policy for this course in the sense that absence automatically results in a set grade reduction. Be warned, though, that the less often you show up, the poorer your performance on quizzes and examinations is likely to be. In any event, if you miss a class for whatever reason, you are still responsible for whatever material was covered or assignments were made during that class. In short, you’ll get out of the course what you put into it. The Department of History and Social Sciences reserves the right to contact students whose number of absences is excessive.

Please make all *reasonable* efforts not to come into class late. (“Reasonable” here means efforts that don’t endanger the life, health, welfare, or safety of students or others.) Late arrivals interrupt the class and are a disturbance to your fellow students. Be on time. (“On time” means on time, not a minute or two after the class begins.) If you foresee regular difficulty in arriving on time, please see me about this.

In addition to arriving on time, students are expected and required to conduct themselves in a civil manner that is respectful of, and avoids disturbing, the instructor and other students. Students who violate this policy will be referred to the Office of Student Affairs for disciplinary action as outlined in the MGSU Student Handbook. If one or more students cause a disturbance in class, I reserve the right, in order to protect other students’ right to learn and physical safety, to do any or all of the following unilaterally: a) move the student to a different seat; b) require the student to leave the class; c) dismiss the class; d) assign a penalty of up to 25 class participation points for disrupting the classroom exchange (see pp. 4-5 above); and/or f) any other reasonable disciplinary action within my purview as an instructor. N.B. *If I dismiss the class for disciplinary reasons, all students will be responsible for learning on their own any material I would have covered during the missed class time. This is a necessary consequence of the fact that my class time is limited and I am not able to “make up” the material that I would have covered absent the disruption.*

Class Web Page/Internet materials: Most course documents and handouts will be available for download on the course website. You have the responsibility to check this page daily for updates (and checking it before class on the days that our class meets). You are responsible for learning any materials or carrying out any class assignments I post on the website. You are further responsible for the content of any Internet-based materials I access during class.

Electronic devices: During lecture sessions, electronic devices are permitted without restriction, so long as their use does not affect the learning environment for other students. I reserve the right to ban electronic devices if they become a distraction/disturbance for me or for one or more of your fellow students. I also submit that if you spend your time in class surfing, texting, or gaming, you're likely in for an unpleasant experience when you receive your exam and course grades.

During quizzes and exams, all electronic devices are strictly prohibited. Don't let me see or hear them. You are on notice that I will interpret the accessing of any electronic device or information contained therein or conveyed thereby (except for the information projected by the classroom computer) during any quiz or exam as prima facie evidence of cheating in this course. Thus, *if I personally witness a student interacting with an electronic device during a quiz or exam I will presume that cheating is occurring given that in light of this notice no innocent reason can exist for such interaction; I will thus immediately collect the student's paper, assign a grade of zero for the assignment, dismiss the student, and refer the incident to the Office of Student Affairs for further appropriate disciplinary action as outlined in the MGSU Student Handbook.*

Collaboration: Students are encouraged to collaborate during exam preparation and to share class notes with students who are unable to attend a class meeting. Students are further encouraged to engage in thoughtful and civil responses to and analysis of other students' in-class statements. *No collaboration or communication between or among students during any in-class written evaluation (i.e., exams and quizzes) is permitted. If I personally witness such collaboration or communication, either actual or attempted, I reserve the right to presume that cheating is occurring and immediately collect the student's paper, assign a grade of zero for that assignment, and refer the incident to the Office of Student Affairs for further appropriate disciplinary action as outlined in the MGSU Student Handbook.*

Class Behavior Expectations and Consequences for Violations: Middle Georgia State University students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the MGA Student Code of Conduct. Student Code of Conduct, Responsibilities, Procedures, and Rights are found at http://www.mga.edu/student-affairs/docs/MGA_Student_Handbook.pdf#page=47

The published minimum sanction for academic dishonesty in this course for a first offense is as follows: For any academic dishonesty, a failing grade (i.e., an F) for the entire course. Academic dishonesty amounts to a) stealing from other students by devaluing their hard-earned academic credentials; b) defrauding the taxpayers who are subsidizing the student's education and who are expecting an honest return on their investment; and c) fraudulent misrepresentations to the student's future employers, patients, clients, and customers, who have the right to expect both competence and honesty from the people with whom they deal. There is no excuse for such behavior, and it will not be tolerated in this course.

Policy on Disability, Personal Hardship, and Other Accommodations: Students seeking academic accommodations for a special need must contact Middle Georgia State University Office of

Disability Services in Macon at (478) 471-2985 or in Cochran at (478) 934-3023. Students may also visit the Disability Services Office in room 266 of the Student Life Center on the Macon campus or in Sanford Hall on the Cochran campus or consult the following Web page: Students seeking ADA accommodations must contact Middle Georgia State University Office of Disability Services in Macon at (478) 471-2985 or in Cochran at (478) 934-3023. <http://www.mga.edu/disability-services/>

Students who are experiencing personal hardships unrelated to medical or health-related special needs and seeking accommodations should contact the Office of Student Affairs at 100 University Parkway, Macon, GA 31206, (478) 757-7383 to determine if it will grant an accommodation. Students who must miss a quiz or an examination due to participation in a university-sanctioned event (such as a sporting event) should ensure the appropriate university office or official authorizes an accommodation for such an occasion.

In order for you to receive an accommodation in this class for any of the above reasons, you must ensure that I receive your official paperwork in a timely manner directly from the appropriate office or official as noted above. You also must ensure that, for exams, *you* schedule/make any special testing arrangements *and* that I receive timely notice of these arrangements from the testing center. If one (or more) of these things does not happen, you may not receive appropriate accommodations. The burden is on you to make these arrangements.

Withdrawal Policy: Students are encouraged to read the withdrawal policy found at <http://www.mga.edu/registrar/dropadd.aspx> before dropping/withdrawing from the class.

Delayed Opening or Closing of the University: In the event that the University closes due to unforeseen circumstances, students should continue to consult the course Web page for further instructions.

HB 280 Campus Carry Legislation: <http://www.mga.edu/police/campus-carry.aspx>

Copyright/Records retention and disposal: In consideration of your enrollment in this class, you hereby grant me a non-exclusive copyright in any materials you turn in to me (e.g., quizzes and examinations). This copyright is for the educational, non-commercial purpose of allowing me (while maintaining your anonymity) to use your material to illustrate ways of answering examination questions to other students. All of the material I present in this course, in whatever medium (e.g., print, screen, lecture) that is my own creation is copyrighted by me.

I shall retain records of your grades as well as unclaimed student materials in my possession (e.g., quizzes and examinations) for a minimum of one year after the date of the final examination. After that date I reserve the right to destroy or otherwise dispose of such records.

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. The instructor may supplement these online evaluations with hard-copy evaluations. All responses are anonymous.

University Policy Information: Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and adhering to all Middle Georgia State University student policy, including those linked on the [Syllabus Policy](#) page.

Miscellaneous: I encourage you to contact me at any time with any concern or question that you may have regarding any aspect of the course or with the study of history. Enjoy the class!