Introduction to American Government
790:104
Spring 2015

Instructor: Kelly Clancy
Department of Political Science
Rutgers University
Dates: Jan 20-May 12, 2015
Office Hours: By appointment, via Sakai chat room or email.

Course Website: http://sakai.rutgers.edu, “Introduction to American Government”
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PART ONE: NUTS AND BOLTS

Introduction:
With the midterm elections of 2014 behind us and the 2016 presidential election looming, this is an especially important time to learn about the nuts and bolts of American politics and policy. This course will introduce you to ideas about institutional structures, political actors, and constitutional debates in American government and politics. We will explore the historical development and founding of the United States, discuss major debates about the structure of our republican form of government, connect the three branches of government to contemporary politics and elections, examine the role of race and gender in American politics, and critique the American constitutional system. In doing so, we will place ourselves as citizens, activists, and policy-makers within the current American political system.

Required Texts:
I recommend e-versions of these books. If you choose to get hard copies, these books can be purchased from the campus bookstore or online. Be very careful buying hard copies online, though – if they are shipped media mail, they might not arrive until after your first readings/ quizzes.

1. How Democratic is the American Constitution? Second Edition. Robert Dahl (Yale University Press: 2003). This is available in the Rutgers bookstore, but you may want to comparison shop online – just make sure it’s here by the last month of the semester. You can also download an e-version from Amazon.

2. We the People: An Introduction to American Politics (Tenth Full Edition). Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, Robert J. Spitzer. I strongly suggest you buy the online version of the book here: http://books.wwnorton.com/books/detail.aspx?id=4294987966. However, the bookstore should also have copies. Be sure to buy the Tenth Full Edition – other editions contain outdated information.
Electronic Readings:
Electronic versions of the readings not from these textbooks can be found on the course's Sakai site, which can be located at http://sakai.rutgers.edu. You can find readings organized by lesson.

Course Requirements and Grading:
- 10% Reading Quizzes
- 30% E-forums (10% each)
- 10% Weekly forums
- 10% Participation (blog and comments)
- 20% Summary Papers (10% each)
- 20% Final Critical Essay

Sakai Website:
Students are required to familiarize themselves with the course Sakai site by the first week of classes (http://sakai.rutgers.edu).

Class Organization:
Introduction to American Government is organized by lesson. Even though we won't meet together as a class you will be expected to have the reading done, the Prezi lecture watched, and the podcast listened to early in the week so you can then take your reading quizzes, write your forum post, read your peers’ posts, and post a response. The time you spend on your forums should roughly correspond to the amount of time you would be in class each week.

For each week, I will post necessary materials under the "Lessons" tab. Each normal week will consist of a lecture, podcast, reading, reading quiz, forum, and participation. Some weeks will also have summary papers or e-forums due.

(1) The week's required readings: All readings, except for How Democratic is the American Constitution?, and We the People will be posted as pdf documents online.

(2) Prezi lecture presentation links Prezi presentations are dynamic, visual presentations that highlight the most important elements of the reading for this class. Think of them as reading outlines: they are not exhaustive, and they require active reading on the part of the student. I welcome questions and comments on the lecture, which you can post in the chat room.

(3) Podcast: My brief introduction to the course material for the week, as well as some thoughts on what's going on politically.

(3) Forum Assignment (for more information, see “Forum Posts” below). Please see description below under "Class Components." You must complete forum post activities every week unless otherwise indicated.

(4) Participation: Each week, you should participate actively in discussion on class forums, and by posting about politics on your blog – and responding to what you read on other
people's blogs as well. Your goal should be to post 3 comments/forum and 1 blog post per week. You will earn points for the comments and blog posts. Be careful though - if you don't post anything for the week, you will lose points. This is to make sure we maintain active conversations throughout the semester.

(5) Additionally, you will be responsible for a weekly reading quiz designed to make sure you understand the readings’ main ideas. Those will be posted under Quizzes on Sakai.

**Submitting Class Work:** All class work will be submitted on the Sakai website. Please refer to the instructions on each assignment, which will instruct students on how to submit work on the Sakai site.

**Netiquette:**
As the Internet is ubiquitous in school, at home, and at work, we often overlook how visible our written words, images, and videos are to others. Growing up with these technologies makes them seem natural to all of us—we’ve surfed websites, posted photos to Facebook, and commented on bulletin boards. “Netiquette” is a portmanteau of the words “network” and “etiquette”: much like how our real life, face-to-face interactions require rules of civility and respect (shaking hands and saying hello to meet someone new, or saying thank you, for example), our online interactions also require rules of civility and respect.

In this course, we will be discussing political issues that will garner as many different reactions as there are students in class. As we live during a volatile and dynamic period in American political history, I welcome full student participation and disagreement—specifically participation and disagreement situated in the reading and topics for that class. During all class work, treat your peers and your instructor with civility and respect, no matter the similarities and differences you may encounter.

**Office Hours and Contact:**
I am here to help! If you have questions, concerns, or need extra discussion for readings and assignments, I am your resource. Please email me (kelly.clancy@rutgers.edu) with any questions or to schedule a chat.

Students can reach me on weekdays, Monday through Friday. Please note that I check my email periodically between 9 AM and 5 PM; depending on the complexity of the question and day it was emailed, allow one to two days for a response, Monday through Friday. This is important to keep in mind since assignments are due at midnight – if you email me at 10 pm, I probably won’t see the email until it’s too late!

**Late Policy:**
No assignments whatsoever will be evaluated late. Quizzes, papers, and the final essay cannot be submitted past the due date and time, and forum posts and responses will not be read and evaluated if they are submitted past the due date and time. Any late assignment will be given a zero.

**Plagiarism:**
Plagiarism and cheating are taken very seriously at Rutgers University. All statutes of the Academic Code of Conduct apply for this course. A detailed discussion of this policy can be found at [http://cat.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html](http://cat.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html).
PART TWO: ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASS COMPONENTS

I. Reading Quizzes (10%)
The readings and lectures for the course will serve as the springboard for the class discussions (via the forums). Each week, there will be a reading quiz posted on Sakai that will test your understanding of the reading and lectures for the week. The reading quizzes will consist of several multiple choice questions from the readings. Each reading quiz is due on Wednesday by midnight. The Reading Quizzes will be available online under Tests and Quizzes, and will be timed (you will have 10 minutes for the entire quiz). **You will not be able to take the quizzes late. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.**

II. Interactive Forums (40%)

**Weekly Posts (10%):**
Each week, I will pose a question to the class that expands upon the week’s readings. The forum posts will ask you to connect the course material to what is happening right now in American politics.

After reading the forum questions, you will answer with post. Your post should answer the question to the best of your ability as informed by the week’s readings. Your post must have the following to receive full credit:

- Your post must be 2—3 paragraphs long. This translates to 200 to 300 words.
- Your post must be on topic and respond to the question posed by the instructor.
- Your post must use at least one quote or piece of evidence from the readings that is cited as such.
- Your post must be checked for grammar and spelling.
- **Your post must be posted online by midnight every Friday.** Late posts will not be given credit.

**Experiential Posts (30%):**
In addition to the weekly posts, you will write three posts over the course of the semester that ask you to analyze or engage in the political process in some way. **These posts must some how incorporate visuals – a YouTube video, data visualization, a photo essay (thoughtfully done – not just pictures cut and pasted from the internet).** If you have questions about whether your idea will meet the assignment parameters, just ask. One of the E-forums will ask you to participate in a political activity of some kind.

III. Participation (10%)
You can earn up to 200 participation points in the course. You can earn points two ways: through posting blog posts and through commenting on other people’s forum and blog posts. Your goal should be to post at least 3 comments per week and one blog post per week. More will earn you extra credit. If you don’t post at least one comment during a week, you will lose 7 participation points – which you can earn back by posting extra following weeks.
A. **Blog Posts (5 points each)** In addition to forum posts, you will each keep a blog in this class. The blog should be a place for you to post interesting political tidbits you come across as the semester progresses. I’d like the blogs in the class to be fun, interesting, and dynamic. Consider posting political cartoons, clips from shows like *The Daily Show*, newspaper articles, etc. Include comments on why you posted what you did and its relevance to the course. These should be at least 100 words in order to get credit.

B. **Comments (5 points each)** Forum and Blog comments: Your response must have the following to receive full credit:

- Your response must be 1—2 paragraphs long. This translates to 100 to 200 words.
- If you can, you should comment on a forum post no one has commented on yet.
- Your response must be on topic and reflect a consideration of your peer’s forum post.
- Your response cannot be a simple agreement or disagreement with your peer’s forum posts (“I agree with Amy that the unilateral executive is a bad thing!”). Add details, expand the point, and make an argument. Simple agreements will receive no credit.
- Your response must use at least one quote or piece of evidence from the readings that is cited as such.
- Your response must be checked for grammar and spelling.

### IV. Summary Papers (10% each)
You will complete two summary papers in the course. These will be a 3-5 page synthesis of the course material. They are due week 7 and week 14. You will turn these in under “Assignments.”

### IV. Final Critical Essay (20%)
Your final in Introduction to American Government will be an essay that reflects the last portion of class, our reading of *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* The prompt for the final critical essay will be posted under the “Assignments” tab, and the final critical essay is due no later than 11:59 PM on Friday May 12.

### V. Extra Credit
There will be extra credit assignments announced periodically throughout the semester; most will involve attending events in the Political Science Department. Because this class is online, this will be a great way for you to connect with the life of the department. Students are strongly encouraged to attend.
### PART THREE: CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Revised 1/20/2015

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Lectures and Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week One</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Introduction</strong>&lt;br&gt;(1) Read Syllabus: Introduction, Class Format, Expectations, Exam, and Essay&lt;br&gt;(2) Watch: The State of the Union</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong>&lt;br&gt;1. Introductory Blog Post&lt;br&gt;2. State of the Union forum&lt;br&gt;<strong>When:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Midnight Friday, 1/23&lt;br&gt;Weekly participation due by Sunday, 1/25</td>
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<td><strong>Week Two</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 1: Revolution and Rebellion</strong>&lt;br&gt;Readings:&lt;br&gt;(1) WE THE PEOPLE Ch 1 and 2</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong>&lt;br&gt;1. Reading Quiz&lt;br&gt;2. Lesson 1 forums&lt;br&gt;<strong>When:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Midnight Friday, 1/30&lt;br&gt;Weekly participation due by Sunday, 2/1</td>
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<td><strong>Week Three</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 2: The Constitution</strong>&lt;br&gt;Readings:&lt;br&gt;(1) Federalist #10&lt;br&gt;(2) Federalist #51&lt;br&gt;(3) The Constitution, with attention to the Bill of Rights (1st through 10th Amendments), and the 14th Amendment.</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong>&lt;br&gt;1. Reading Quiz&lt;br&gt;2. Lesson 2 Forums&lt;br&gt;<strong>When:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Midnight Friday, 2/6&lt;br&gt;Weekly participation due by Sunday, 2/6</td>
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<td><strong>Week Four</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 3: Rights and Liberties</strong>&lt;br&gt;Readings:&lt;br&gt;(1) WE THE PEOPLE Ch. 4 and 5&lt;br&gt;(2) Additional readings posted on Sakai</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong>&lt;br&gt;1. Reading Quiz&lt;br&gt;2. Lesson 3 Forums&lt;br&gt;<strong>3. E-forum 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>When:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Midnight Friday, 2/9&lt;br&gt;Weekly participation due by Sunday, 2/15</td>
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<td><strong>Week Five</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 4: The First Branch, Congress</strong>&lt;br&gt;Readings:&lt;br&gt;(1) WE THE PEOPLE Ch. 12&lt;br&gt;(2) Additional readings posted on Sakai</td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong>&lt;br&gt;1. Reading Quiz&lt;br&gt;2. Lesson 4 Forums&lt;br&gt;<strong>When:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Midnight 2/20&lt;br&gt;Weekly participation due by Sunday 2/22</td>
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<td><strong>Week Six</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 5: The Executive Branch: The President, Bureaucracy, and Unilateral</strong></td>
<td><strong>Due:</strong>&lt;br&gt;1. Reading Quiz</td>
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| Week Seven  
Readings:  
(1) WE THE PEOPLE Ch 15  
(2) Additional readings posted on Sakai | Due:  
1. Reading Quiz  
2. Lesson 6 Forums  
3. Summary Paper One  
When:  
Midnight Friday, 3/6  
Weekly participation due by Sunday 3/8 |
|---|---|---|
| Week Eight  
(3/9-3/13) | Politics in Action | Due:  
1. E-forum 2  
2. Lesson 10 Forum Posts  
When:  
Midnight Friday, 3/13 |
| Week Nine  
(3/16-3/20) | Spring Break! | None – political ethnography extra credit. |
| Week Ten  
Readings:  
(1) We the People chapters 16, 17, or 18 (see Sakai for more information) | Due:  
1. Forum posts  
2. Reading Quiz  
When:  
Friday, 3/27 by midnight  
Weekly participation due Sunday 3/29 |
| Week Eleven  
(3/30-4/3) | Lesson 8: Information, Participation, and Social Movements  
Readings:  
(1) We the People chapters 6, 7 or 8 (see Sakai for more information) | Due:  
1. Forum Posts  
2. Reading Quiz  
When:  
Friday, 4/3 by midnight  
Weekly participation due Sunday 4/5 |
| Week Twelve  
(4/6-4/10) | Lesson 9: Issues in Representation: Race, Gender  
See Sakai for more information | Due:  
1. Forum Posts  
2. Reading Quiz  
When:  
Friday 4/10 by midnight  
Weekly participation due Sunday 4/12 |
| Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen | Lesson 10: What the Framers Couldn’t Know: Prospects for a More Democratic Constitution | Due:  
1. Lesson 10 Forum Posts  
2. Summary Paper Two |
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<tr>
<td>(4/13-4/24)</td>
<td>Readings: Dahl, Chapters 1-7</td>
<td>When: Friday 4/24, midnight</td>
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<td>Weekly participation due 4/26</td>
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<td>Week Fifteen (4/27-5/1)</td>
<td>Wrap Up/Final Thoughts</td>
<td>Due:</td>
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<td>1. Final thoughts</td>
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<td>2. E-forum 3</td>
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<td>Finals Week</td>
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<td>Due: Critical Essay</td>
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