**Introduction to American Government**

**790:104**

**Fall 2014**

**Instructor**: Kelly Clancy

Department of Political Science

Rutgers University

**Dates:** Online Sept 2-Dec 10, 2014

**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 in November 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:**

*These books can be purchased from the campus bookstore or online. Be very careful buying them 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).
2. *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics (Ninth Essentials Edition).* [Benjamin Ginsberg](http://www.google.com/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Benjamin+Ginsberg%22&source=gbs_metadata_r&cad=4), [Theodore J. Lowi](http://www.google.com/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Theodore+J.+Lowi%22&source=gbs_metadata_r&cad=4), [Margaret Weir](http://www.google.com/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Margaret+Weir%22&source=gbs_metadata_r&cad=4), [Caroline J. Tolbert](http://www.google.com/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Caroline+J.+Tolbert%22&source=gbs_metadata_r&cad=4), [Robert J. Spitzer](http://www.google.com/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Robert+J.+Spitzer%22&source=gbs_metadata_r&cad=4)

Your version should have this cover:



**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 by week (1, 2, 3, etc) under the “Resources” tab.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

10% Reading Quizzes

30% E-blogs (10% each)

20% Weekly blogs

20% Exam I and II (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 week. Even though we won’t meet together as a class you will be expected to have the reading done and the Prezi lecture watched early in the week so you can then take your reading quizzes, write your blog post, read your peers’ blogs posts, and post a response. The time you spend on your blogs 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 “Resources” tab. Each normal week will consist of a lecture, reading, reading quiz, blog post, and blog response. Some weeks will also have exams or e-blogs 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) Blog post assignment (for more information, see “Blog Posts” below).** Please see description below under “Class Components.” You must complete blog posts activities **every week** unless otherwise indicated.

**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**](mailto: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.

**Late Policy:**

No assignments whatsoever will be evaluated late. Quizzes, tests, and the final essay cannot be submitted past the due date and time, and blog 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>.

**PART TWO: ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASS COMPONENTS**

**I. Reading Quizzes (10%)**

The readings and lectures for the course will serve as the spring board for the class discussions (via the blogs). 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 Blogs (50%)**

In this course, you are required to maintain a blog. The blogs will be the primary platform that you will use to communicate with me and each other. You will be able to access each other’s blogs via the blog tab on Sakai. In addition, I will be blogging along with you – you can read my blog posts on the Sakai blog tab. I will also write weekly blog posts, and I will post other interesting things I come across over the course of the semester.

There are three ways in which your blog will be utilized:

1. ***Weekly Posts (20%)****:* Each week, I will pose a question to the class that expands upon the week’s readings. The blog posts will ask you to connect the course material to what is happening right now in American politics. Additionally, you will be assigned a competitive race for the 2014 elections that you will follow and write about in about half of your blog posts.

Each post will consist of (1) a statement that replies to a question I have posed for that week and (2) a response, which is a reply to **one** of your peer’s blog posts and (3) a comment in response what your colleague wrote on your post that addresses the points or issues they raise. I will be following these posts and joining in the conversation by posting comments and questions of my own.

(1) Blog Post: After reading my question for the week, you will answer with post. **Your blog post must be posted online by midnight every Wednesday.** 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 Wednesday.** Late posts will not be given credit.

(2) Blog Response: After the blogs have been posted, you will respond to ONE of your peer’s blog posts. **Your response to a peer’s blog post must be posted online by midnight every Friday.** 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 blog post no one has commented on yet.
* Your response must be on topic and reflect a consideration of your peer’s blog post.
* Your response cannot be a simple agreement or disagreement with your peer’s blog 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.
* **Your response must be posted online by midnight every Friday.** Late responses will not be given credit.

(3) Follow up response: You must respond to the questions or issues your classmates raised in response to your post.

**You will be writing your blog post by Wednesday and your response by Friday for a total of TWO posts every week (unless otherwise indicated).**

1. ***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-blogs will ask you to comment on the midterm election results the week of November 4.
2. ***Extra Posts:*** I’d like the blogs in the class to be fun, interesting, and dynamic. To this end, I would also like you to use your blog to post things you find interesting or worth discussing over the course of the semester. Consider posting political cartoons, clips from shows like *The Daily Show,* newspaper articles, etc. **Students who use their blogs in this way, and who actively comment on their classmates’ blogs, will also be eligible to earn extra credit.**

**III. Exams (10% each)**

Exam 1 for this course will be held via Sakai on Week 3. The exam will be posted at 6 pm on Wednesday, September 24, and is due at midnight on Friday, September 26. You will have TWO HOURS from the time you download the exam until the time you complete the exam to turn it in. All questions must be answered on Sakai – you will not email the exam to me. Exams will be composed of IDs, short answers, and essays.

Exam 2 for this course will be held via Sakai on Week 11. The exam will be posted on Wednesday Nov 12 and is due by 6 pm on Friday, Nov 14. You will have TWO HOURS from the time you download the exam until the time you complete the exam to turn it in. All questions must be answered on Sakai – you will not email the exam to me.

**Important:** I recommend that you type your exam in Word or something similar and then copy and past the answers into Sakai to make sure that Sakai doesn’t crash and eat your work. Because the exam is timed, make sure you are somewhere quiet, without distraction, with a reliable computer and internet access.

**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 December 19.**

**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 8/25/2014**

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| **Date** | **Lectures and Readings** | **Assignments** |
| **Week One (9/2-9/5)** | *1. Introduction*  (1) Read Syllabus: Introduction, Class Format, Expectations, Exam, and Essay | **Due:**  Reading Quiz *none*  Weekly Blog post 1  Weekly Blog response 1  Other *none*  **When:**  Weekly Blog post: 9/3 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 9/5 by midnight |
| **Week Two (9/8-9/12)** | *Lecture 1: Revolution and Rebellion*  Readings:  (1) WE THE PEOPLE Ch 2 | **Due:**  Reading Quiz 1  Weekly Blog post 2  Weekly Blog response 2  Other *none*  **When:**  Reading Quiz: 9/10 by midnight  Weekly Blog post: 9/10 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 9/12 by midnight |
| **Week Three (9/15-9/19)** | *Lecture 2: The Constitution*  Readings:  (1) Federalist #10  (2) Federalist #51  (3) The Constitution, with attention to the Bill of Rights (1st through 10th Amendments), and the 14th Amendment. | **Due:**  Reading Quiz 2  Weekly Blog post 3  Weekly Blog response 3  **When:**  Reading Quiz: 9/17 by midnight  Weekly Blog post: 9/17 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 9/19 by midnight |
| **Week Four (9/22-9/26)** | 1. *Lecture 3: Rights and Liberties*Readings:  (1) WE THE PEOPLE Ch. 4 | **Due:**  Reading Quiz *none – exam week*  Weekly Blog post 4  Weekly Blog response 4  ***Other: Exam I***  **When:**  Reading Quiz: 9/24 by midnight  Weekly Blog post: 9/24 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 9/26 by midnight  ***Exam I opens 6 pm Wednesday, September 24, and is due at midnight on Friday, September 26.*** |
| **Week Five (9/29-10/3)** | Lecture 4: *The First Branch, Congress*  Readings:  (1) WE THE PEOPLE Ch. 9  (2) Additional readings posted on Sakai | **Due:**  Reading Quiz 3  Weekly Blog post 5  Weekly Blog response 5  **When:**  Reading Quiz: 10/1 by midnight  Weekly Blog post: 10/1 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 10/3 by midnight |
| **Week Six (10/6-10/10)** | *Lecture 5: The Executive Branch: The President, Bureaucracy, and Unilateral Power*  Readings:  (1) WE THE PEOPLE Ch. 10  (2) WE THE PEOPLE Ch. 11  (3) Additional readings posted on Sakai | **Due:**  Reading Quiz 4  Weekly Blog post 6  Weekly Blog response 6  ***Other: E-blog 1***  **When:**  Reading Quiz: 10/8 by midnight  Weekly Blog post: 10/8 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 10/10 by midnight  ***E-blog 1 due Friday, 10/10 by midnight. Responses to E-blog 1 due Monday 10/13*** |
| **Week Seven**  **(10/13-10/17 )** | *Lecture 6: The Supreme Court*  Readings:  (1) WE THE PEOPLE Ch 12  (2) Additional readings posted on Sakai | **Due:**  Reading Quiz 5  Weekly Blog post 7  Weekly Blog response 7  **When:**  Reading Quiz: 10/15 by midnight  Weekly Blog post: 10/15 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 10/17 by midnight |
| **Week Eight**  **(10/20-10/24 )** | *Lecture 7: American Foreign Policy*  Readings available on Sakai | **Due:**  Reading Quiz 6  Weekly Blog post 8  Weekly Blog response 8  ***Other: E-blog 2***  **When:**  Reading Quiz: 10/20 by midnight  Weekly Blog post: 10/20 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 10/22 by midnight  ***E-blog 2 due Friday, 10/22 by midnight. Responses to E-blog 2 due Monday, 10/27.*** |
| **Week Nine**  **(10/27-10/31 )** | *Lecture 8: Social Movements, Activism, and the Media*  Readings:  (1) WE THE PEOPLE CH 6  (2) Additional readings posted on Sakai | **Due:**  Reading Quiz 7  Weekly Blog post 9  Weekly Blog response 9  **When:**  Reading Quiz: 10/29 by midnight  Weekly Blog post: 10/29 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 10/31 by midnight (Happy Halloween!) |
| **Week Ten**  **(11/3-11/7 )** | **Election Week! Activities TBD** | **Due:**  Reading Quiz *none*  Weekly Blog post *none*  Weekly Blog response *none*  ***Other: E-blog 3***  **When:**  ***E-blog 3 due by midnight on Friday, November 7. Responses to E-blog 3 are due Monday, November 10.*** |
| **Week Eleven**  **(11/10-11/14 )** | *Lecture**9:**Issues in Representation: Race, Gender*  Readings on Sakai | **Due:**  Reading Quiz *none*  Weekly Blog post 10  Weekly Blog response 10  ***Other: Exam 2***  **When:**  Weekly Blog post: 11/12 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 11/14 by midnight  ***Exam 2 opens 6 pm Wednesday, November 12, and is due at midnight on Friday, November 14.*** |
| **Week Twelve**  **(11/17-11/21 )** | *Lecture 10*: *What the Framers Couldn't Know*  Readings: Dahl, Chapters 1-4 | **Due:**  Reading Quiz 8  Weekly Blog post 11  Weekly Blog response 11  **When:**  Reading Quiz: 11/19 by midnight  Weekly Blog post: 11/19 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 11/21 by midnight |
| **Week Thirteen**  **(11/24-11/28 )** | **Thanksgiving/catch up week/political ethnography** | **Due:**  Reading Quiz *none*  Weekly Blog post 12  Weekly Blog response 12  **When:**  *Post-Thanksgiving festivities end* |
| **Week Fourteen**  **(12/1-12/5)** | *Lecture 11: Prospects of a More Democratic Constitution*  Readings: Dahl Chapters 5-8 | **Due:**  Reading Quiz 9  Weekly Blog post 13  Weekly Blog response 13  **When:**  Reading Quiz: 12/3 by midnight  Weekly Blog post: 12/3 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 12/5 by midnight |
| **Week Fifteen (12/8-12/12)** | **Wrap Up/Final Thoughts** | **Due:**  Reading Quiz *none*  Weekly Blog post 14  Weekly Blog response 14  **When:**  Weekly Blog post: 12/12 by midnight  Weekly Blog response 12/12 by midnight |
| **Finals Week** |  | **Due: Critical Essay**  **When: 12/19, midnight** |

*Note: Each week’s Prezi lecture and reading quiz will be posted by Sunday*