

**Political Science 790:104: Introduction to American Government  
Online, Spring 2017 - Rutgers University**

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**Instructor:**

- Arielle Bennett, Department of Political Science, [arielle.bennett@rutgers.edu](mailto:arielle.bennett@rutgers.edu)
- Office hours by appointment in Douglass Library – email me for a request to meet in person, skype, or over the phone

**Note about Online Learning:**

- This course has an in-person final at Rutgers at the end of the semester.
- This is an online course, but that does not mean that it is an easier course than a traditional in-person course. We will have reading and assignments due each week. Expect to read at least 2 chapters a week in order to keep up with the materials, and to turn in an assignment every week for your participation grade.
- Whether or not you are a political science major, there are a few important study habits to have:
  - Just like in a traditional class, ask your instructor a question if needed.
  - Stay on schedule and take notes for your readings and presentations I post just like you would for a lecture based class.
  - Review your notes at least once a week so the information becomes stronger in your memory.
  - You will need just as much time to study for this final as you would in a traditional course, so plan your study time early.
  - Find a study partner in your discussion group and exchange contact information so you have someone to talk about the course with.
  - When writing an email, paper, or an online discussion for any course, always use proper grammar and be considerate in your response.
  - If you are having trouble understanding the reading material, you can always find other reputable scholarly sources online as a supplement.
  - Assignments have clear due dates, so please adhere to them.

**Course Goals and Description:**

- This course covers the major components of U.S. government. Beginning with the philosophical origins of American constitutionalism and American ideology, we discuss the political and historical context the Constitution was written in, and then examine the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and key Amendments.
- We examine the structures, processes, and institutions associated with American democracy—federalism, voting/elections, political parties, political participation, civil rights/liberties, and interest groups. We also look at the institutions of the federal government: Congress, the Executive branch, and the Supreme Court. In short, you will learn about the institutions of American government established by the Constitution and the processes that define American democracy.
- It's my hope that the course will also make you interested in political participation and understand how the government actually works!

**Course Readings:**

- There will be a text book (online) and other articles or online readings posted to the “resources” section of Sakai.

- The course textbook is a free open-source online book - *American Government and Politics in the Information Age* by Paletz, Owen, & Cook (2011), found at: <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/BookDetail.aspx?bookId=64>
- Recommended optional book: *America the Unusual* by John Kingdon (Wadsworth/Cengage, 1999).
- Also, various writings are assigned from the philosophers Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu and will be posted to the online course portal.

### **How Your Grade Is Calculated:**

- Participation Assignments (30% total):
  - Online discussions occurring every other week are worth 15% of your grade.
  - Online quizzes occurring every other week are worth 15% of your grade.
  - Think of these two components as being your weekly participation grade to demonstrate that you are doing the readings and understanding the materials.
  - Feel free to turn in assignments early.
- Take Home Midterm – Research Paper (30%):
  - This take home midterm is an 8 to 10 page research paper. Detailed instructions will be posted to the course page so you can prepare early. You will need to turn this paper in through [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) to verify it has not been plagiarized.
- Final Exam – occurs in person at Rutgers (40%):
  - This exam is entirely essay based written on blue books. A review sheet to help you prepare will be given.
  - You must attend this exam in person with a photo ID. If you are not able to attend the exam date, you should sign up for another course.

### **Quizzes:**

- The quizzes are based only on your reading assignments that week, which occur every other week as seen on the course schedule below. They must be done during the week they are due, no later than Friday by 11:00pm. Focus on the key words in your readings – usually they are the most important things to highlight. Think about the big picture as you are reading (the thesis statement / the main point) of what the reading was talking about. When you finish a reading, try and figure out what the most important things were – these are the things that you will be quizzed on. Remember, this class is an intro to American Government, so anything important should relate back to that topic.

### **Absence from Final Exam:**

- Absence from an exam because of travel plans will not be excused.
- Only a note from your Dean of Students in your college at Rutgers stipulating a medical or family emergency will be acceptable as an excuse for missing an exam. If at all possible, I need to be notified before the exam of your inability to take it.

### **Academic Integrity & Plagiarism:**

- Plagiarism is not tolerated in this course. Paper assignments will be verified through [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). The university's rules about plagiarism are very strict – please see their policy here: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/>.

### **Disability Accommodations:**

- Rutgers encourages students with any needs for disability accommodations to get assistance from the university. This includes test and note taking services for approved students. Please see the Rutgers Office of Disability Services if you are interested: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations>. Please let me know if you have any questions.

### **Discussion Guidelines:**

- Every other week (as seen in the course schedule below) you will be given an online discussion prompt that is related to the assigned readings (so you must do your readings first). There are two posts that you need to write for each of these weeks. First, you will write 2-3 paragraphs (4 sentence minimum per paragraph) responding to the prompt I provide no later than Thursday at 11:00pm of that week. Second, you will write 1-2 paragraphs responding to one of your peers' prompts no later than Friday at 11:00pm of that week. These must be academic, thoughtful, responses that are only discussing the reading assignments for that discussion week. Feel free to respond to what your peers have written on your first post as well - we want to have an engaging conversation about the readings so that we can learn as much as we can from each other. Think of this as the opportunity to get great notes from your friends about the readings.
- **Rules:** Write only in proper English, with proper grammar. You need to cite your quotations with the page number from the text if you are using the author's words, otherwise you need to use your own words. You need to show that you have college level reading comprehension and writing skills, so please demonstrate this in your posts. These should not be casual and should not look anything like a text message. These discussion posts are simply short writing assignments, so think of them like a short paper you are posting online for your college peers and instructor to analyze.
- **Remember, online discussions have two parts and two deadlines:** Since you must respond to my prompt and then you must respond to one of your peer's posts, this means you have to wait until they post their first post in order to respond to it, so you will need to log in again before the second deadline. Remember, you need to write a minimum of 2 posts for each week we have online discussions. Unless everyone turns their posts in early, it would be unlikely that you can write both of your posts at the same time. The earlier the class posts their first post responding to my prompt, the quicker it will be for all of you to finish your second prompt before the deadline.

### **Web Etiquette Guidelines:**

- Please read this 1 page article on web etiquette to help you understand how to post properly in online classroom discussions: <http://teaching.colostate.edu/tips/tip.cfm?tipid=128>

### **Technical Support for Course Site:**

- Please see Rutgers's help desk for Sakai if you have technical support issues: <http://rci.rutgers.edu/~oirt/sakai/helpdocs2/index.php>.

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## SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

### Week 1: 1/17-1/20

- **Reading assignments:**
  - Familiarize yourself with the course Sakai site organization, assignments, syllabus, and first two powerpoints – email me with any questions
  - Optional Reading: America the Unusual by John Kingdon
- **Powerpoint Lecture:** Watch the “Intro Lecture” powerpoint, and the “America the Unusual” powerpoint
- **Online discussions due:** Since this is the intro week, we will not have a discussion due.

### Week 2: 1/23-1/27

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Textbook, Chapter 2 “The Constitution and the Structure of Government Power”
  - Article, Alberto Martinelli, “The Political Democracies of the United States and the European Union,” University of Milan (2007)
- **Powerpoint Lecture:** Watch the powerpoints on the assigned readings
- **Online quiz due:** by Friday 11:00pm

### Week 3: 1/30-2/3

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Articles posted to course site about current events in American Government, TBA
- **Powerpoints:** Watch the powerpoints on the assigned readings
- **Online discussions due:** first post by Thursday 11:00pm, second post by Friday 11:00pm

### Week 4: 2/6-2/10

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Selections from the philosophers Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu” - read everything listed on the document for this week, including the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy links
- **Powerpoint Lecture:** Watch the powerpoints on the assigned readings
- **Online quiz due:** by Friday 11:00pm

### Week 5: 2/13-2/17

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Textbook, Chapter 3 “Federalism”
- **Powerpoint Lecture:** Watch the powerpoints on the assigned readings
- **Online discussions due:** first post by Thursday 11:00pm, second post by Friday 11:00pm

### Week 6: 2/20-2/24

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Textbook, Chapter 4, “Civil Liberties,” Chapter 5, “Civil Rights”

- **Powerpoint Lecture:** Watch the powerpoints on the assigned readings
- **Online quiz due:** by Friday 11:00pm

#### **Week 7: 2/27-3/3**

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Textbook, Chapter 6, “Political Culture and Socialization,” Chapter 7, “Public Opinion”
- **Powerpoint Lecture:** Watch the powerpoints on the assigned readings
- **Online discussions due:** first post by Thursday 11:00pm, second post by Friday 11:00pm

#### **Week 8: 3/6-3/10**

- **Take home midterm research paper due 3/10, Friday, 11:00pm**
- No other assignments or reading due this week

#### **Week 9: 3/13-3/17**

- **SPRING BREAK THIS WEEK - NO CLASS**
- No other assignments or reading due this week

#### **Week 10: 3/20-3/24**

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Textbook, Chapter 8, “Participation, Voting, and Social Movements,” Chapter 9, “Interest Groups”
- **Powerpoint Lecture:** Watch the powerpoints on the assigned readings
- **Online quiz due:** by Friday 11:00pm

#### **Week 11: 3/27-3/31**

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Textbook, Chapter 10, “Political Parties,” Chapter 11, “Campaigns and Elections”
- **Powerpoint Lecture:** Watch the powerpoints on the assigned readings
- **Online discussions due:** first post by Thursday 11:00pm, second post by Friday 11:00pm

#### **Week 12: 4/3-4/7**

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Textbook, Chapter 12 “Congress,” Chapter 13 “The Presidency”
  - Begin reviewing the final exam review sheet to help you study
- **Powerpoint Lecture:** Watch the powerpoints on the assigned readings
- **Online quiz due:** by Friday 11:00pm

#### **Week 13: 4/10-4/14**

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Textbook, Chapter 14 “The Bureaucracy,” Chapter 15 “The Courts”
  - Begin reviewing the final exam review sheet to help you study
- **Powerpoint Lecture:** Watch the powerpoints on the assigned readings
- **Online discussions due:** first post by Thursday 11:00pm, second post by Friday 11:00pm
- **Optional extra credit assignment due 4/14, Friday, 11:00pm (no late papers accepted)**

**Week 14: 4/17-4/21**

- **Reading assignment:**
  - Articles posted to course site about current events in American Government, TBA
- **Online quiz due:** by Friday 11:00pm

**Week 15: 4/24-4/28**

- No other assignments or reading due this week
- Please study for your exam

**Final exam in person at Rutgers sometime between May 4-10.**

- **Time and location on campus to be announced once the room is assigned to us.**
- **Remember, please do not book any travel until you have confirmed your final exam schedule, as I cannot accommodate different test dates for travel.**