

**Rutgers University**  
**American Government**  
**790:104:90**  
**Fall 2020**

**Online Course**  
**Canvas**

**Instructor:** Rebecca Biebel      **Email:** rc936@polisci.rutgers.edu

**Course Description:** This course is a comprehensive examination of the basic principles of the U.S. constitutional system. It focuses on the operation of the democratic process; the organization, powers, and procedures of Congress; the presidency and the federal judiciary; interest groups; political parties; media; and voting. It emphasizes the leading political, economic, and social influences affecting democratic government.

**Required Text:**

American Politics Today, Sixth Essentials Edition  
Bianco & Canon  
ISBN 978-0-393-66460-7

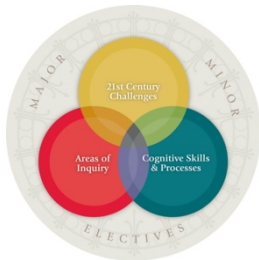
**Technical Requirements:**

Basic computer and web-browsing skills. Current Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7 or newer) with high-speed internet connection. Chrome or Firefox web browser. Speakers or headphones, microphone, and webcam.

For technical support contact the Canvas Help Desk

Email: canvas@rutgers.edu

Phone number: 848-445-8721 (Available 24/7)



**Core Curriculum Learning Goals**

<http://sasoue.rutgers.edu/core/core-learning-goals>

**SAS Departmental Learning Goals**

<http://sasoue.rutgers.edu/assessment/sas-department-and-program-assessment>

**Learning Objectives:**

Describe the central concepts in politics and government and explore the philosophical and practical problems of political organization, action, and governance.

Recognize and explain the major historical developments that led the pathway to the current American political system: from the founding fathers to Trump.

Explore how one's cultural and ethnic background shapes understanding of the American political system.

Evaluate the role of media in a democracy and how modern political campaigns are conducted.

Envision possible policy responses to improve the conditions in the United States, especially considering those most marginalized by the political system.

Apply critical thinking skills to interpret and debate contemporary political problems.

**\*CLASS STRUCTURE\*****Readings**

It is very important to stay on top of the readings. Each week will be a different chapter and tasks, discussions, and test questions will all be derived from the readings.

**Announcements**

It is important to check your announcements often, as this will be my primary means of communication to relay important information and updates on the course.

**PowerPoint Presentations**

PowerPoint presentations for course chapters are located in each week's folder.

**ProctorTrack**

Exams will be taken using ProctorTrack. You will need to take the onboarding 'quiz' the first week of class in order to take the midterm/final. Proctor Track requires students to take exams alone in quiet workspaces without any materials or notes.

In order to remain compliant with the federal requirement of student authentication in online courses, you will take your quizzes/exams in this course using Proctortrack software, a remote proctoring service.

There is no extra fees associated with use of Proctortrack.

Technical requirements: You will need a web camera and a desktop or laptop computer. Mobile devices cannot be used. Please view the complete technical requirements here as well as the FAQ.

Detailed instructions on how to use Proctortrack are provided in the Student User Manual. You will be asked via announcement in early MONTH to set up your account profile by taking an ungraded "onboarding" quiz. This quiz is intended to identify any potential software problems.

Questions and requests for tech support should be addressed by calling (888) 326-5219(888) 326-5219 X3 or by going to [www.proctortrack.com](http://www.proctortrack.com)

## **Participation Policy**

The outcome of this course depends entirely on your active participation. Since it is an online course, we will spend all our time together online expressing opinions on readings, current events, and giving feedback to each other's work. You are expected to complete the readings, participate in online discussions, give feedback to your peers through comments, share how you connect readings to classroom experiences, and so on. You are expected to participate in a variety of ways throughout the semester, and your various assignments will incorporate participation as part of the grade. In summary, you will be expected to do the following:

- Log into our website platform at least 8-9 times a week to keep updated on assignments, and peer discussions.
- Use study guide resources, including PowerPoint presentation and chapter reviews, to help you engage with and understand the content that is presented throughout the semester.
- Participate in online discussions via the threaded discussion boards under the Discussion Board section, to illustrate your understanding of weekly readings and how they connect to your daily lives.
- Meet deadlines for assignments.

## **Late Work**

No late work will be accepted for quizzes or exams. These assignments are open from Monday at 8am until Sunday at 11:55pm of the week they are due. Students who do not complete the quiz or exam will receive a zero.

Missed discussion posts can be emailed to the instructor for a maximum of half credit.

## **Faculty Feedback and Response Time**

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can email [canvas@rutgers.edu](mailto:canvas@rutgers.edu) or call 848-445-8721 if you have a technical problem.)

I will reply to e-mails within 24 hours on school days.

## **Academic Honesty**

Rutgers expects unwavering integrity with submitted work from its students. Acts of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated and may be subject to disciplinary action as detailed in the student handbook. Students are expected to give credit to all individuals who contributed to the completion of any assignment. Specific resources of all information, ideas and quotations not original to the author must be referenced.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. All written assignments will be submitted through Turnitin. Since what counts as plagiarism is not always clear, I quote the definition given in Rutgers' policy:

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another person's words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be

identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are:

- Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.
- Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one's own words another person's written words or ideas as if they were one's own.
- Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.

The Camden Plagiarism Tutorial (INTERACTIVE):

<http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModules/Plagiarism/>

Students should acquaint themselves with the college policy on plagiarism. Full text of the **Academic Integrity Policy** available at:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

Students are also advised to refer to the Office of Student Conduct website: <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/>

### **Special Needs**

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs and contact the Office for Disability Services. Also, students are also strongly encouraged to speak with the instructor whenever there is a problem. If family or work obligations, or any other extenuating circumstance threatens to interfere with the student's attendance or his/her completion of the course work, the student should notify the instructor as soon as possible.

- Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.
- Full disability policies and procedures are at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

### **Student-Wellness Services:**

Just In Case Web App

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

### **Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ [www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops,

crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

### **Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)**

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

### **Disability Services**

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

### **Scarlet Listeners**

(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

### **Grading Scale:**

A	90-100
B+	87-89
B	80-86
C+	77-79
C	70-76
D	60-69
F	59 & below

### **Grading**

Your grade for the semester will be based on the following:

Chapter Quizzes (15)	30%
Discussions (11)	20%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%
Documentary Discussions (2)	10%
Podcast assignment	5%
Politician profile	5%
	100%

Your final grade will be determined by these factors:

#### **1. Chapter Quizzes (30% of Final Grade)**

Since we do not meet as a class where lectures, in-person interaction and discussion augment student readings, we shall use frequent testing to assure that students read the assigned material and follow the course schedule. Quizzes are to be taken in accordance with the Course Schedule. There will be a short quiz for each chapter.

Quizzes will be available beginning on Monday at 8am when each module opens and till midnight on Sunday of their due date. They should be taken after you have read, outlined, and studied the material in each chapter. You may use your textbook and notes, but understand that reading the chapter is necessary for passing the quiz. You will have 10 minutes to answer 10 randomized multiple-choice questions. Failure to take a quiz within the designated time period will result in a grade of a zero for that quiz. Students will have 2 attempts for each chapter quiz with the higher test score being counted (different questions will be given for each attempt).

Testing is done online, and the results are forwarded electronically to each student and to the Instructor, after the testing period has closed.

#### **2. Online Discussions Forums (20% of Final Grade):**

Discussions will be focused on what we are learning and connecting that to current events. I encourage students to download 2-4 news apps on your phones to keep up with current

events. You may use news from different viewpoints but they must be appropriate sources (journalists with credentials). For example, BBC, CNN, FOX, NY TIMES, NPR, PBS, NBC, ABC- if you are unsure just email and ask me. Students must link or cite their source for the news article within the discussion.

Since we will be creating a "virtual classroom", you are expected to post a minimum of two comments per week. Your initial post must be a discussion of a current event and how it connects to what we are studying in that particular week. I need to see that you have read and understand the chapter and have clearly made a connection to real world events. Responses to other students also cannot be just an "I agree" or "good point" comment. Add depth to your responses to your classmates to help all of us think more about this issue being addressed.

Discussions will be graded on quality of comments, accuracy of information as well as writing quality and clarity. Your entries must be relatively free of grammar and spelling errors and must have appropriate capitalizations and punctuations. (A minimum of 250 words).

Please put your post directly in the discussion box; do not attach your response.

The weekly discussions will be posted at 8:00 am Monday when the module begins and will close at midnight on Sunday of the week's due date. Your initial post each week must be completed by Friday. No discussion for Chapter 5 (documentary discussion instead), Chapter 6 (second documentary discussion), Chapter 8 (podcast assignment) and Chapter 10 (politician profile discussion).

### **3. Exams (15% each)**

A midterm and final exam will be administered to show your competency of the material. Each will consist of 5 essay questions. The midterm covering chapters 1-9 and the final will cover chapters 10-15. You will have 90 minutes to complete each exam. Failure to take a quiz within the designated time period will result in a grade of a zero for that quiz. Both exams will be taken using Proctor Track, make sure to take the onboarding 'quiz' as soon as possible.

Midterm due 11/1

Final due 12/20

### **4. Documentary Discussion Assignment (10% of Final Grade)**

Students will screen two documentaries relevant to current events in which topics in American politics are a primary focus. When viewing films, make sure to take detailed notes that will help you remember details, main ideas, and then put events into your own words. After viewing, students must write a detailed summary, touching on all main points of the film, including your own feedback and reaction to each point. Within the summary, I want to see what you learned, what you found surprising, how it might connect to other things you've learned, etc. Lastly the discussion must include how this film connects to what we are studying in class. This must be explained and in detail.

Responses to other students also cannot be just an "I agree" or "good point" comment. Add depth to your responses to your classmates to help all of us think more about this issue being addressed. You must comment on two classmate's posts.

These discussions are considered written assignments and not like an average weekly discussion post (minimum of 750 words). The documentary discussion posts and responses must be submitted by the posted deadline. Each student should create their own post and then comment on a minimum of two classmate's post. The films are available on Netflix and Youtube.

Last Date to Submit Discussion #1 on the film 13th: Sunday 10/4

Last Date to Submit Discussion #2 on the film Knock Down the House: Sunday 10/11

These discussions will be open all semester and can be completed any time before the due dates.

### **5. Podcast Assignment (5% of Final Grade)**

The Pod Save America- Iowa Episodes 1-5 give in depth explanation of first-hand accounts of how caucuses work. Students must listen to a minimum of 3 episodes for this assignment. All are available for free on podcast apps or at this link- <https://crooked.com/podcast-series/iowa/>. After listening to at least 3 episodes create an original discussion post about what you learned/found interesting and how it connects to our course (at least 500 words). Then comment on 2 classmate's posts to see what they found interesting.

Iowa Episode 1: The Stakes 11/19/2019

Iowa Episode 2: The history and the rules 11/26/2019

Iowa Episode 3: Endorsements, surrogates and criticisms of Iowa 12/3/2019

Iowa Episode 4: The final sprint 12/10/2019

Iowa Episode 5: Voting is not enough 1/28/2020

Discussion will be open all semester and can be completed any time before the due dates.

Discussion due Sunday 10/25

### **6. Politician Profile (5% of Final Grade)**

Students will choose a currently elected American politician they wish to profile and discuss with classmates. The profile must be posted on the discussion board and include a picture of the politician, their background, education, experience, their platform, party, and a video that illustrates who they are. A holistic explanation of who this person is. Students must confirm their politician choice with the instructor in order to limit multiple profiles of the same politician- the earlier you email, the more likely you will get your first choice. After your profile is posted, students must comment on two classmate's profiles and discuss what they learned and found interesting about the politician.

Confirm politician choice by 10/18 (rc936@polisci.rutgers.edu)

Profile due Friday 11/6

Discussion due Sunday 11/8



## **Class Schedule (subject to change)**

\*Additional links, videos, and readings will be posted in each week's folder on Canvas\*

### **Part I: Foundations 9/1-10/4**

Week 1

9/1-9/6 Carefully read syllabus & complete introduction and syllabus forums  
Take Proctor Track onboarding "quiz"- must be done to take exams  
Chapter 1 Understanding American Politics  
Discussion & Quiz on Chapter 1 due 9/6- initial post by 9/4

Week 2

9/7-9/13 Chapter 2 The Constitution and the Founding  
Discussion & Quiz 2 due 9/13- initial discussion post by 9/11

Week 3

9/14-9/20 Chapter 3 Federalism  
Discussion & Quiz 3 due 9/20- initial discussion post by 9/18

Week 4

9/21-9/27 Chapter 4 Civil Liberties  
Discussion & Quiz 4 due 9/27- initial discussion post by 9/25

Week 5

9/28-10/4 Chapter 5 Civil Rights  
Documentary Discussion on the film 13<sup>th</sup> due 10/4  
Quiz 5 due 10/4

### **Part II: Politics 10/5-11/1**

Week 6

10/5-10/11 Chapter 6 Public Opinion and the Media  
Documentary Discussion on the film Knock Down the House due 10/11  
Quiz 6 due 10/11

Week 7

10/12-10/18 Chapter 7 Political Parties  
Discussion & Quiz 7 due 10/18- initial discussion post by 10/16  
Confirm politician choice with instructor by 10/18 (email)

Week 8

10/19-10/25 Chapter 8 Elections  
Podcast Assignment/Discussion due 10/25  
Quiz 8 due 10/25

Week 9

10/26-11/1 Chapter 9 Interest Groups

Discussion & Quiz 9 due 11/1- initial discussion post by 10/30  
Midterm exam due 11/1

**Part III: Institutions 11/2-11/29**

Week 10

11/2-11/8 Chapter 10 Congress  
Politician profile due 11/6- discussion comments due 11/8  
Quiz 10 due 11/8

Week 11

11/9-11/15 Chapter 11 The Presidency  
Discussion & Quiz 11 due 11/15- initial discussion post by 11/13

Week 12

11/16-11/22 Chapter 12 The Bureaucracy  
Discussion & Quiz 12 due 11/22- initial discussion post by 11/20

Week 13

11/23-11/29 Chapter 13 The Courts  
Discussion & Quiz 13 due 11/23- initial discussion post by 11/21

**Part IV: Policy 11/30-12/20**

Week 14

11/30-12/6 Chapter 14 Economic and Social Policy  
Discussion & Quiz 14 due 12/6- initial discussion post by 12/4

Week 15

12/7-12/13 Chapter 15 Foreign Policy  
Discussion & Quiz 15 due 12/13- initial discussion post by 12/11

Week 16

12/14-12/20 Final Exam due 12/20

***Note: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor and the needs of the class.***