The Course
Welcome to American Government! This course is designed to provide an introduction to the major institutions of American federal government as well as the most important political processes and theories of political science more generally. We will use this knowledge to consider some of the major controversies, criticisms, and suggestions for reform in American politics. The learning objective for this class is to be able to explain the primary organs and functioning of the US government, and to be able to identify the mechanisms for change in policymaking.

This is a hybrid face-to-face and online class that will have weekly assignments and specific due dates. One third of your in-class work will be done online on our CUNY Academic Commons Site. You should expect to do as much work for this class as you would a regular face-to-face class- so at least six hours a week for regular class reading and discussions, plus additional time for larger assignments. This course is a Zero Textbook Cost Course, meaning the required readings and viewings are available to you at zero cost.

The Requirements

Attendance (10 Points)
Attendance is a required part of this class- without attending the class, you cannot participate in class activities and discussions and it is very unlikely that you will do well. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class, so it is important to be in class on time. If you are late, it is your responsibility to see me at the end of class to have your attendance recorded (at a discounted rate). Students who are more than 30 minutes late will not be counted as attending. Attendance is worth 10 points of your final grade, and will be graded according to the following breakdown:

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1 This syllabus sets forth the requirements, procedures, and schedule for the course, but it is subject to change when circumstances require alteration. To show that you understand the importance of reading the syllabus in its entirety, please bring a picture of a dinosaur to the second class on March 8.

CUNY: Kingsborough Community College POL 51 American Government and Politics - Hybrid: Shawna M. Brandle is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance Policy</th>
<th>2 lates = 1 absence</th>
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<tr>
<td>10 points</td>
<td>3 or fewer absences (and/or equivalent latenesses)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 points</td>
<td>4 absences (and/or equivalent latenesses)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 points</td>
<td>5 absences (and/or equivalent latenesses)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 points</td>
<td>6 absences (and/or equivalent latenesses)</td>
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<tr>
<td>0 points</td>
<td>7 or more absences (and/or equivalent latenesses)</td>
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**Commons Blog Posts (22 points)**

Each week, you will be responsible for writing blog posts on our commons site (prompts are provided for each week). Each blog week starts on Tuesday at 12:00am and ends on Monday at 11:59pm (Eastern Time Zone). If you don’t post your blog posts by Monday night, you will lose points, which is to encourage you to read, watch, and interact with the assigned materials before we discuss them in class. Discussion boards will be graded according to the following rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Timeliness/Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Student responds to all Blog prompts, Posts are thoughtful and demonstrate understanding of the material</td>
<td>Student frequently comments on/interacts with other students in threads</td>
<td>Student posts early and often during the week</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students respond to one or some Blog prompts, but not all, Posts do not relate directly to the reading, or indicate that the student has not really looked at the reading/videos/assigned material.</td>
<td>Student comments on/interacts with other students in comments only once or twice.</td>
<td>The only posts are made in one burst at the end of the week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Student responds to no blog prompts, Posts do not relate to the course contents at all.</td>
<td>Student does not comment on/interact with other students in threads at all.</td>
<td>Posts are not made before the next week begins.</td>
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**Blackboard Quizzes (11 Points)**

A short multiple-choice quiz will be available every week on Blackboard (closing Monday at 11:59pm), consisting of ten questions. These quizzes are meant to check your understanding of the course materials, give you practice before the exams, and provide even more incentive for reading the assigned materials as they are due. Each quiz will be worth 1 point of your final grade. There will be no makeups for missed quizzes, so stay on top of them (setting aside a specific time each week to work on your quizzes and blogs is a very good idea).
**Meme Assignment (10 Points)**
Working with academic content in unexpected and creative ways is shown to create deeper learning, so each student will create a meme that explains or illustrates part of American government, and write a short essay explaining their meme, which will be due on **April 5**. An assignment sheet will be handed out in class.

**Congressional Simulation (10 Points)**
The class will participate in an in-class congressional simulation on **May 2** for which everyone will prepare a short dossier. An assignment sheet will be handed out in class.

**What’s Your Problem (10 Points)**
Throughout the semester, we will work on identifying problems and possible solutions in American Government. To that end, each student will identify and research a pressing problem in American Government about which they feel strongly. They will then write a letter to one member federal government explaining the problem and proposing a solution. An assignment sheet will be handed out in class, and the final letter is due by **June 4**.

**Political Participation (5 Points)**
Completion of this course fulfills one civic engagement requirement, so prior to **May 30**, each student will participate in a civic or political activity of their own choosing, and write a short (5 paragraphs) reflection on the experience, relating it to class materials. Students who have safety or other concerns about this assignment are encouraged to see me in office hours. Reflections can be posted to the commons site and tagged “Political Participation” or submitted to me in hard copy.

**Examinations (20 points each)**
There will be two online examinations for this course- a midterm exam online during **Week 8**, and a final exam from June 5-7. Makeup will be given in cases of documented emergencies only and will be more difficult than the regular exam. Examinations will be a combination of multiple choice and written response, and the final exam is cumulative.

**The Grading**
You may notice that these points add up to 118- there’s 18 extra credit points built in to the grading scheme! You’re welcome. This is to help cover the occasional misstep that happens to us all at one time or another- computer problems, illness, life interference, etc. One bad week will not doom your grade in this class, though you will need to work hard and consistently throughout the semester to do well. You can calculate your final grade yourself, and convert it to a letter grade using simple math and the letter grade allocation from the student handbook, reprinted below:
Course Policies

1. **Access-Ability Services**: It is the policy of Kingsborough Community College and of this instructor to provide all reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a physical, psychological, or learning disability, please contact the Kingsborough Community College Access-Ability Services (AAS) located in room D205

2. **Commons Site, Blackboard, & Email**: A copy of the syllabus and all assignments and course documents will be posted on our Commons Site. It is extremely important that you get logged into the site as soon as possible so you don’t miss out on the class activities. Weekly quizzes will be conducted on Blackboard. I will email the class through Blackboard’s email function, so as soon as possible, be sure that you know how to use Blackboard and how to access the email that is linked to it.

3. **Courtesy and Civility**: Students must treat each other and the facility with respect. Any electronic devices are for classroom purposes only- our textbook is digital and we will be using technology in class, so feel free to bring your tablet or laptop, but remember that during class, it is a tool for learning about course content, not Facebook/Snapchat/etc. Make the accommodations necessary for your best learning, but please do be considerate of the instructor and your fellow students- so far as it is possible, try to refrain from leaving the room during class, keep food and drink to a discreet minimum and clean up after yourself. Some of the topics we will cover may be traumatic for different students because of their personal experiences. If you anticipate or are experiencing any such difficulties with course materials or assignments, please email me as soon as possible so an alternative assignment can be arranged.

4. **Academic Integrity**: Academic integrity is of the utmost importance. Cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be punished to the fullest extent possible, including academic and disciplinary sanctions (i.e. failure or suspension). This includes, but is not limited to, having other people do your coursework, buying prepackaged or custom answers to papers, tests, or assignments, and working with other students on class projects when not specifically permitted to do so. Keep in mind, if you can find a place to buy
a paper/answers on the Internet, your professors probably can find the same place, because we have the Internet too. Please familiarize yourself with the official KBCC policy.

5. **Support Services:** Take advantage of the many, many opportunities for support in your development as a student available at Kingsborough. Some offices on campus that may be helpful to you include (but are not limited to):
   - [Tutorial & Academic Support Center](L-605, x5118)
   - [Single Stop](V-231, x5411)
   - Food for Thought Campus Food Pantry - T-4 216
   - [Counseling Services](D-102, x5975)
   - [Health Services](A-108, x5684)
   - [Women’s Center](M382, x4700)
   - [Other Student Services](

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**Schedule & Readings**

All readings are to be done **before** the class for which they are assigned. You are strongly encouraged to take **notes** while you are reading—yes, this means actually writing—both what you understand and **a list of questions for discussion or clarification in class**. You are strongly encouraged to bring both your notes and your textbook to class. Class slides are provided for each week—these are meant to **assist** your comprehension of your reading and class discussions—**not to replace** your reading. More simply, if all you do is study the slides without reading the assigned chapters or participating actively in class, you will likely not do well on the exams/in the course.

The required text for this course is [American Government, edited by Krutz et al.](#). It is a free digital download provided by OpenStax.org. Each week also has a **Topic of the Week** listed. Students should do independent reading on each topic and be prepared to discuss the topic (as well as where they obtained their information) in class on each Wednesday.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Duration of Days</th>
<th>Topics to be Discussed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>March 2-5 (March 6-7 in class)</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>March 8-12 (March 13-14 in class)</td>
<td>Founding of the Country: Geography &amp; History</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>March 15-19 (March 20-21 in class)</td>
<td>The Constitution</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>March 22-26 (March 27 in class)</td>
<td>Federalism</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>March 28-April 2</td>
<td>Spring Break (NB: April 5- Meme Due)</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>April 3-9 (April 10-11 in class)</td>
<td>Civil Liberties</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>April 12-16 (in class April 17-18)</td>
<td>Civil Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>April 19-23 (no class April 24-25)</td>
<td>NB: Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>April 24-April 30 (May 1-2 in class)</td>
<td>Legislative Branch</td>
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<td>May 2 Congressional Simulation in Class</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>May 3-7 (May 8-9 in class)</td>
<td>Executive Branch</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>May 10-14 (May 15-16 in class)</td>
<td>Judicial Branch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>May 17-21 (May 22-23 in class)</td>
<td>Political Participation</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>May 24-May 28 (May 29-30 in class)</td>
<td>Political Parties</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>May 31-June 4</td>
<td>Foreign Policy</td>
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<td>June 4 What's Your Problem Due</td>
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<td>Final Exam online</td>
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**Detailed Schedule**

**Week 1: March 2-5. Introduction**

**Reading & Slides:**
- Chapter 1
- Slides

**Guiding Questions**
- How is political science different from hard sciences?
- What is Government? What is its purpose? How do we classify types of governments?
- What is democracy? Is it always good?

**Assignments due by March 5:**
1. Log in to Cuny Academic Commons, and make an Introduction Post. (Tag as: Introduction)
2. Complete Who Represents Me? Assignment
3. Blog Prompt: (Tag as: News) Take a look at the [guidelines for evaluating quality of news sources](#). What do you think of the guidelines? Is there anything missing? Describe a time when you were taken in (or almost taken in) by a misleading news story or a story that was
later debunked? If that has never happened to you, write about your process for evaluating what you read/listen to/watch to prevent that.

**Week 2: March 8-12. Founding of the Country: Geography & History.**

**Reading & Slides:**
- Chapter 2 (p35-44)
- Founding Slides
- Crash Course Founding

**Guiding Questions**
- Describe the topography/climate of the American colonies. How did the climate/geography influence the development of government there?
- What were the primary socio-economic groups present in the American colonies? How did the geographic distribution of these groups influence the structure of the future independent USA?
- What are the Intolerable Acts? Why were they instituted, and why did the colonists find them so intolerable?
- What was the first form of government for the United States after independence? How was it structured, and why was it structured that way? What weaknesses were there in the structure/why didn’t it last very long?

**Topic of the Week:** Gun Control

**Assignments:**
1. Blog Prompt: (Tag as: Back in the Day) It is hard to imagine how different life in the American colonies was to our lives today- but I'd like you to try. Thinking about your day, what would have been different in 1776 than how you lived it? What do those differences have to do with government? Dig into this idea, as we will continue to work with it all semester.
2. Blog Prompt: (Tag as: Expectations) What is the purpose of government? What were the expectations of the American colonists when they drafted the Articles of Confederation- what did they want the new government to be able to do or not do? Were they successful in achieving those goals? How do the Articles' framers' expectations compare to your own today- what do you expect government to be able to do or not do? Feel free to answer this question both in terms of what you currently expect and what you would like to be able to expect.

**Week 3: March 15-19. The Constitution**

**Reading & Slides:**
- The Constitution
- Chapter 2 (p45-68)
- Constitution Slides

**Guiding Questions**
- What is federalism? Why is it part of the US Constitution- both the practical and philosophical reasons? How is it different from checks and balances and the separation of powers?
• What is the separation of powers? Why was it included in the design of the US Constitution? How is it related to checks and balances?
• What is a bicameral legislature and why does the US have one? What are the differences between the House and the Senate in terms of responsibilities for the chamber, term of office, and requirements to hold the office, and what are the reasons for those differences?
• What were the major compromises that show up in the Constitution? Explain the two major compromises, why were they included, and what groups they were meant to satisfy.
• Summarize the structure of the Constitution in your own words- what are the most important pieces from each part?

**Topic of the Week: DACA/DREAMers**

**Assignments:**

1. Blog Prompt: (Tag as: EX) Both the Articles and the Constitution can be read as “things we didn’t like about our ex”- some parts of the Articles were inspired directly by things the colonists didn’t like about British rule, and some parts of the Constitution were inspired directly by things the framers didn’t like about either British rule or the system under the Articles of Confederation. Pick one such example and write about the evolution from “the ex” to the Constitution. Remember to be specific and cite the sources of your evidence.

2. Blog Prompt: (Tag as: Revolution) Was the American Revolution a revolution? Scholars argue back and forth- read Dr. Gayle Olson-Raymer’s *Evolution or Revolution?* after you finish your assigned textbook reading for this week and write a post explaining what a revolution is and whether the American Revolution qualifies as one, providing evidence to back up your opinion. Remember to be specific and support your argument with evidence- quote any information you use and cite the source.

**Week 4: March 27-April 2. Federalism**

**Reading & Slides:**

- Chapter 3
- Federalism Slides
- Crash Course: Federalism

**Guiding Questions:**

- What is federalism? Why was it included in the US Constitution?
- How is federalism different from the separation of powers?
- What is an expressed power? What is an implied power? How are they related?
- What is a reserved power? What is a concurrent power? How are they related? What is the potential for conflict between Article 1, Section 8 and the 10th Amendment?
- What is the Interstate Commerce Clause and why has it been important?
- How has the relationship between the states and the federal government evolved over time? In food terms, what is the evolution from layer cake to marble cake, and what does it mean for who is in charge? How did this change come about?
- What are some advantages and disadvantages of the American federal system?
- Is a federal system necessary today, given advances in transportation and communication technology?
Assignments:

1. Blog Prompt: (Tag: F-Word) Take a look at these maps: Discuss these maps and how they relate to federalism. Make sure your post is thorough, evidence-based, and cites all of the sources it uses.
   - Map of State Felon Voting Laws
   - A look at U.S. marijuana law
   - Common Core State Standards Initiative
   - How each state chooses to execute its death row inmates

2. Blog Prompt: (Tag: FederalismPlusandMinus) Discuss one advantage of the US federal system as it currently exists, and one disadvantage. In your post, remember to be specific, avoid generalities, and make specific references to sources or evidence (and don’t forget to cite those sources!)

Week 5: March 25-April 2: Spring Break
- Meme Assignment Due on Commons Site by April 5 by 11:59pm.

Week 6: April 3-April 9. Civil Liberties
Reading & Slides:
- Chapter 4
- Civil Liberties Slides
- Crash Course: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Guiding Questions
- What are civil liberties? What are civil rights? How are they different?
- How is the First Amendment different from the rest of the Bill of Rights? What has this difference meant over time?
- In regards to federalism, what is meant by Dual Citizenship? What court case initiated it? Can you think of any problems that might arise from the practice of dual citizenship?
- What is meant by “Nationalizing the Bill of Rights”? How was it done?
- Is there a right to privacy in the US? If so, on what is it based?

Topic of the Week: Freedom of Speech
Assignments:

1. Blog Prompt (Tag as: CL1) Take a look at one or more of the following crash course videos, and discuss two things you learned from watching the video. Why did you choose the video you did, and what is the most important piece of information in that video? In your blog, remember to be specific, avoid generalities, and make specific references to sources and evidence (and don’t forget to cite those sources!)
   - Freedom of Religion
   - Freedom of Speech
   - Freedom of the Press
   - Due Process
   - Search and Seizure
2. Blog Prompt: (Tag as: CL2) Relate one issue covered in this week’s readings to a current issue. Find a newspaper article (from a quality newspaper, like The New York Times or The Washington Post, not The Daily News or The Huffington Post) and post a link to it, then explain how the issue covered in the article relates to the class materials this week. In your blog, remember to be specific, avoid generalities, and make specific references to sources and evidence (and don’t forget to cite those sources!) And to make this discussion board even more interesting, no repeats- that means you must read all of your classmates’ posts before you write your own, so you know which examples have already been discussed. Don’t forget to comment on your classmates’ topics- this should be extremely interesting.

Week 7: April 12-16. Civil Rights
Reading & Slides:
• Chapter 5
• Civil Rights Slides
Guiding Questions
• What legal means has the US government used to discriminate against African Americans?
• Explain the litigative strategy pursued by the NAACP- why were the courts seen as the best way to seek change on civil rights issues? What is the significance of Brown v. Board of Education?
• What legal changes have affected civil rights in America?
• What other groups struggle/have struggled for civil rights in America?
Topic of the Week: Residential Segregation
Assignments:
1. Blog Prompt: (Tag as CR1) Take a look at one or more of the following crash course videos, and discuss two things you learned from watching the video. Why did you choose the video you did, and what is the most important piece of information in that video? In your post, remember to be specific, avoid generalities, and make specific references to sources and evidence (and don’t forget to cite those sources!)
   • Equal Protection
   • Sex Discrimination
   • Discrimination
2. Blog Prompt: (Tag as CR2) Relate one issue covered in this week’s readings to a current issue. Find a newspaper article (from a quality newspaper, like The New York Times or The Washington Post, not The Daily News or The Huffington Post) and post a link to it, then explain how the issue covered in the article relates to the class materials this week. In your blog, remember to be specific, avoid generalities, and make specific references to sources and evidence (and don’t forget to cite those sources!) And to make this discussion board even more interesting, no repeats- that means you must read all of your classmates’ posts before you write your own, so you know which examples have already been discussed. Don’t forget to comment on your classmates’ topics- this should be extremely interesting.

Week 8: April 19-25. Midterm Exam Online. No in-class meetings.
Week 9: April 24-30. The Legislative Branch

Reading & Slides:
- Chapter 11
- Legislative Branch Slides

Guiding Questions
- What does the Constitution set forth about the Congress? How has this changed over time?
- Describe what does Congress does- legislation, taxation, budget production, casework, oversight, confirmation:
- What is the demographic breakdown of the 114th US Congress? Why? Does it matter? Does your representative have to look like you to represent you?
- What is incumbency? How does it affect the makeup of Congress? Why? Are term limits legal currently?
- Explain the institutions that have been created to increase the cooperation, efficiency and/or expertise of the Congress over time, including leadership positions, committees, and rules of procedure in each house.
- What are the differences between the House of Representatives and the Senate? What is the reason for those differences?
- How does a bill become a law? How likely is it that a bill can become a law? What are the veto points in the legislative process?
- What is pork barrel spending? What is the distributive tendency in Congress? Where does it come from? What are the pros and cons of this tendency?

Topic of the Week: The Budget & Federal Spending

Assignments:
- Congressional Simulation Assignment sheet must be ready for in-class simulation on May 2.

1. Blog Prompt: (Tag as Congress) View the following videos (yes, really, watch them all- they’re more fun than reading your textbook anyway!) Which of the videos is your favorite and why? Select one quote from your assigned textbook reading and connect it to a specific quote from one of the videos. Remember to be specific, and no repeating what your classmates have already said!
  - The Bicameral Congress: Crash Course Government and Politics #2
  - Congressional Elections: Crash Course Government and Politics #6
  - Congressional Committees: Crash Course Government and Politics #7
  - Congressional Decisions: Crash Course Government and Politics #10
  - Congressional Leadership: Crash Course Government and Politics #8

2. Blog Prompt: (Tag as Cartoon) Had enough videos? Try some political cartoons! Explain a funny political cartoon and its relevance to Congress. Then find another political cartoon about Congress, include the image or a link to it in your post, and explain the meaning of the cartoon for your classmates. Remember to be specific, cite your sources, and don’t use the same political cartoon of your fellow students- there are plenty of good ones out there!

Week 10: May 3-7. The Executive Branch

Reading & Slides:
Guiding Questions

- How is the US president elected? Nominated? Why is it that way?
- What are the legal requirements to be president? What are the informal requirements? Who is likely to be president?
- What are the expressed powers of the president? Delegated Powers? Inherent Powers?
- How has the power of the president evolved over time? How did the New Deal era change the presidency?
- What formal and informal resources does the president have at his/her disposal?
- What concerns are there about the rise of presidential power?

Assignments:

1. **Blog Prompt: (Tag as Delegation)** Watch these two videos:
   - Congressional Delegation: Crash Course Government and Politics #13
   - How Presidents Govern: Crash Course Government and Politics #14
   Why does Congress delegate to the executive branch? Find a real example of Congress delegating to the Executive Branch. Why did you choose this example? Do you think this is a smart delegation, or is it problematic? Be as specific as you can, cite your sources, and don’t repeat anyone else’s example (there are plenty to choose from!)

2. **Blog Prompt: (Tag as EO)** What is an executive agreement, and why do presidents use them? What is an executive order, and why do presidents use them? Do a little research and find an interesting executive order from any president, current or past. Why do you find this one interesting or important? Don’t forget to read your fellow students’ responses- there are so many executive orders, there is no need to repeat someone else’s interesting executive order!

**Week 11: May 10-14. The Judicial Branch**

Reading & Slides:

- Chapter 13
- Judicial Branch Slides
- Crash Course: Structure of Court System
- Crash Course: Supreme Court
- Crash Course: Judicial Review

Guiding Questions

- Where does the Judicial Branch’s strength come from?
- What is Judicial Review and where does it come from?
- What is the term for a federal judge, and how do they get their jobs? What is the reason for the term of office and the manner of getting the job?
- What are the types of courts in the US judicial system? What is the structure of the federal court system, and what types of cases does each court handle?
• What types of cases are heard at the Supreme Court level? How is the case flow controlled? How does a case make it to the Supreme Court?
• What is the process of hearing a case at the Supreme Court?

**Topic of the Week:** District Court Judicial Nominees

**Assignments:**

1. **Blog Prompt:** (Tag as scotus) Find an awesome/interesting/infamous scotus decision. Find a Supreme Court decision you think is important and tell us about it - why is this case important, and how did the justices decide? What was the controversy? Have there been any follow-up cases or issues? There are plenty of awesome scotus decisions, so be sure to read your classmates’ posts before you find one for yourself - no repeats! (while you’re reading their posts, don’t forget to comment on them- it is a great chance to participate in the discussion while learning about other scotus cases). Remember to cite your source.

2. **Blog Prompt:** (Tag as Judicial Review) Watch Judicial Review: Crash Course Government and Politics #21
What is judicial review and where does it come from? Some people say that the judicial branch is the most powerful branch of government, while others say the judicial branch is the weakest of the three. Which do you lean towards, and why? Use specific evidence and at least 3 examples/cases to support your argument. How does the power of judicial review (and/or its origin) affect your answer?

**Week 12: May 17-21. Political Participation**

**Reading & Slides:**

- **Chapter 7**
- **Political Participation Slides**
- **Crash Course: Election Basics**
- **Crash Course: Gerrymandering**

**Guiding Questions**

- What is the point of voting?
- What are the different ways (rules of the game) to decide who wins an election? Which is the most democratic?
- How does the Electoral College work? What are some of the concerns about the Electoral College? What are the options for reforming/removing the Electoral College?
- Why are there two parties in the US? Is there a possibility of a third? (Don’t forget to include Duverger’s Law in you answer)
- What are some historical barriers to political participation? What are some current ones?
- Does low voter turnout matter? Where does it come from? What can be done about it? What types of people tend to participate politically, and does that matter?
- How has the mass media affected political campaigns? Campaign spending/finance?

**Topic of the Week:** Gerrymandering

**Assignments:**

1. **Blog Prompt:** (Tag as Turnout): What percentage of eligible voters actually vote in the US in federal elections? Local elections? Does low voter turnout matter? Where does it come from
(you may refer both to your assigned reading and your own experience/the experience of your friends and family)? What can be done about it? What types of people tend to participate politically, and does that matter?

2. **Blog Prompt: (Tag as Campaign)**: Find a campaign video (for a federal election- house, senate, or presidency- it can be current or historical, and no repeating a video chosen by one of your classmates) and embed/post a link so we can view the video. Why did you choose this video- what stands out to you in the video? What is the message of the video and who is the video trying to appeal to? Do you think it would be successful? Why or why not?

**Week 13: May 22-28. Political Parties**

**Reading & Slides:**
- [Chapter 9](#)
- [Political Parties Slides](#)
- [Crash Course: Political Parties](#)

**Guiding Questions**
- What is a political party? Why do parties form and stay together? How are political parties different from interest groups?
- How did Washington and Madison feel about political parties? Are political parties helpful to democracy in the US or not?
- What do parties do? What functions do they serve in the US?
- What do the two main parties in the US stand for currently? How far apart are the parties ideologically? What demographic groups of people tend to support each party? How has party membership changed over time in both parties?
- What is meant by the term “Third Party”? What are some examples of third parties in American political history? Why is it so hard for third parties to survive in the US? What are the possible outcomes of third parties?

**Topic of the Week:** Campaign Finance

**Assignments:**
1. **Blog Prompt: (Tag as Political Quiz)** Take the [Political Typology Quiz](#) and the [Political Parties Quiz](#) from the Pew Research Center. What did you think of the quizzes? Of your results? Do you think of yourself as being as conservative or as liberal as the quiz identified you? Did the quiz match you to the party you identify with? Based on the demographic description of typical conservatives and typical liberals in your assigned reading, are you typical? (i.e., do you feel like you would vote for the party your demographic indicators would indicate you towards?) What other observations or criticisms of the political typology quiz do you have, if any?

   **Please note:** you do not have to mention your political beliefs/party leanings or demographic indicators if you do not want to. You are welcome to, but not required to- unlike in our other posts where specificity is demanded, here you may speak in generalities here if you prefer.

2. Find a third party in the US (can be a current third party or a historical example). What does the party stand for? How big is it? Where are they active? Of the four likely fates of third parties, what do you think is the likely outcome for the third party you are discussing? There
are plenty of third parties out there, so no repeating anyone else’s, and remember to provide citations (likely web links) for where you get your third party information.

Week 14: May 31-June 4. Foreign Policy
- **What’s Your Problem Paper** due by 11:59pm on June 4

Reading & Slides:
- **Chapter 17**
- **Foreign Policy Slides**
- **Crash Course: Foreign Policy**

Guiding Questions
- What does Isolationism mean in the context of American foreign policy? How has it played out over time? What does unilateralism mean in the context of American foreign policy? How has it played out over time?
- Explain the roles played by the major players in foreign policy—what are their powers, and what controversies surround the use or limitations of those powers? Make sure your answer covers the presidency, Congress, the bureaucracy, and interest groups.
- Who has the power to declare war in the US? What limitations are there on the president’s power to respond to security threats as commander in chief? Why does it matter if the US is at war or not?
- What was the Cold War, and how did it shape American foreign policy? Use specific examples in your answer.
- What are some current national security threats, and why are they difficult to address? Make sure your answer includes at least globalization, nonstate actors, terrorism, WMDs, and climate change.

Assignments
1. **Blog Prompt: (Tag as FP-Isolationism)** Is isolationism still a dominant theme in American Foreign Policy? Why or why not, and what evidence supports your argument? Remember to be specific, use data/evidence to back up your claim, and cite the source(s) of your evidence.
2. **Blog Prompt: (Tag as FP-Priorities)** What do you think is the most pressing concern of American Foreign Policy today, and why? Remember to be specific, use data/evidence to back up your claim, and cite the source(s) of your evidence.