

Welcome to **American Government and Politics online!** There is no time better than now to become better informed on the issues besetting our political system and understanding how that system is responding to them. This course will be designed to encourage students to think critically and knowledgeably about our political system and thus become engaged in the democratic process. We will examine both the formal structures of government as well as the informal structures of American political culture, including political values, interest groups and the media. In the process, we will see that democracy is not a utopia to be arrived at but rather an ideal that must be constantly struggled for.

While this class online will eliminate commute time and allow you greater flexibility than a regular class in terms of when you do your work, it will require diligent and self-structured study. There will be weekly reading and writing assignments as well as regular exams, so it will be essential for you to keep up with the material. The assignments will include responding to material in the text and online lecture notes, doing a number of guided web activities, and engaging in online dialogue with classmates about political issues.

While much of the writing will be informal, it is necessary that you have decent reading and writing skills as these are our sole mechanism of communicating. It is also important that you have basic computer skills and are comfortable navigating the web, saving work in progress, as well copying and pasting work.

A detailed syllabus which details of how the course will operate will be available on the course site by August 16th. At that time the first week's assignments will also be posted, so you will be welcome to get started with the first assignments and get a feel for how things will work.

There will be a 90 minute introduction to the course on the evening of August 23rd from 6 to 7:30PM in the Conference room on the 4th floor of BCC. It is important that all students attend this meeting in order to understand the mechanics of the course and to hit the ground running.

It is also essential that you have the two required texts by the time the course starts.

- 1. *America's Democratic Republic*** by Page and Greenberg. Used copies will be available in the book store. A good online source for cheap used books is: <http://www.dealoz.com>. Try to get the 2th edition.
- 2. The Course Reader.** Available only through the BCC bookstore (<http://berkeleycity.bkstr.com>). (This is a compilation of readings put together by your instructor which will be central to the course.)

Feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely, Blake Respini
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