



**VALENCIA**  
**VALENCIA COLLEGE**  
**POS 2041 Online**  
**U.S. Government**  
**FALL TERM 2018**  
**CRN 11870, 3 Credits**

**Associate Faculty and Digital Professor: Nicolle Boujaber-Diederichs**

**[Valencia Faculty Front Door Website](#)**

**How to Contact Professor:** Please message me within the Canvas course. Use this way to contact versus e-mail since this will help me connect you to the correct course.

**Secondary Contact Method:** E-mail: [nboujaberdiederichs@valenciacollege.edu](mailto:nboujaberdiederichs@valenciacollege.edu)

**Monday, September 24 - Saturday, November 18, 2018 (8 Weeks)**

**Weekly Schedule:** There are six modules in this eight-week course. Some modules last for one week and others last for two weeks. Please print the course schedule at end of syllabus so you can ensure that you meet all assignment deadlines. Modules begin on Mondays at 12:01 a.m. and end at 11:59 p.m. on Sundays Eastern Standard Time (EST). The last week of class will end on Saturday, November 18 at 11:59 p.m. as this is final exam week and grades need to be submitted. These dates are not flexible. Also, please don't forget to read all announcements and messages on Canvas and check your Valencia email regularly as they include important course information.

**Orientation** will be held via PowerPoint presentation which is available on Canvas on the course homepage or "start here". [Valencia Canvas Website](#)

**Technical Assistance:** For immediate assistance with a Canvas-related problem, please call 407-582-5600 or email [onlinehelp@valenciacollege.edu](mailto:onlinehelp@valenciacollege.edu)

**Canvas Frequently Asked Questions**

**Drop/Refund Deadline:** October 1st, 2018 - 11:59 p.m.

**Withdrawal Deadline:** November 2nd, 2018, 11:59 p.m. – to receive a 'W'

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

*Theory, organization, principles, and functions of national government, stressing relationships of individual to all levels of government in the political system.*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

This course has been carefully designed to be of practical use to you. It should improve your ability to make informed decisions as a citizen and help you to understand the general workings of our national government. It is my belief that the most important virtue of an educated citizen is the ability to think critically about political issues. Details tend to slide out of our minds quickly. Skills and concepts do not. You will gain a substantial understanding of the United States political system in this course, but there will also be a significant emphasis on skill mastery, in particular, that of critical thinking.

When you finish this class you will have a much better idea of how the current U.S. national government works, and how it was originally designed to work by those who wrote the Constitution. You will have a better grasp of the rights you possess by virtue of living in this country and you will be better informed of the challenges and controversies facing the USA at this time.

We will begin working on the skill of critical thinking at the start of class and it will be carried through till the end of the course. We will start with readings and discussions and progress rapidly to activities that will enable you to practice critical thinking. The targets of our study will be political issues affecting you and other citizens of this country.

## **GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

### **I. Required Readings/Text:**

**A. We the People.** Ginsberg and Lowi, 11th Essentials Edition

**B. U.S. Government: A Look Inside.** Byrnes, Thomas.  
Electronic Version Provided on Canvas

**C. Current Event Articles** (accessible online)

**D. Academic and Peer Reviewed Journal Articles** from the Valencia Databases

Depending on the topic of the week, you may be assigned articles to read regarding current situations in U.S. Government from the Internet using various websites.

### **II. Monitor the News Media**

**A. You will be expected to pay attention to and be informed about news from various media sources for the duration of this class.**

A simple truth: educated people read. You may get a college education, but if you haven't developed a habit of reading regularly you will soon be left behind by those who do. There is more to know each day: don't get left behind. Read. The best source of information about politics is now found on the World Wide Web. If you are not currently online at home I strongly urge you to get connected soon.

**B.** Listen to National Public Radio 90.7 FM in the mornings and/or afternoons for programs like "All Things Considered". You can also listen to these programs online at the radio section of [www.wmfe.org](http://www.wmfe.org).

### III. Class Participation:

**30% of your grade will be based on participation!** As you can see, your grade in this class will depend heavily on participation. Regular and active participation is an essential, unmistakably important aspect of this online course. The expectation of the instructor is that original postings and/or current events should be posted by Thursday at 11:59 p.m. EST so others have a chance to respond. You must also **reply to three** of your classmate's postings during each module. Your replies should be a mixture of comments on current events and other discussion postings. I suggest you read through the following articles which will help you maximize your participation and success on the online discussion boards.

<http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/articles/2015/04/03/5-ways-to-ace-discussion-board-assignments-in-an-online-class>

<http://www.onlinecolleges.net/make-the-most-of-online-discussion-boards/>

<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/developing-assignments/blended-learning/online-discussions-tips-students>

It is critical that you read all of the materials (book, articles, information on websites) as well as all of the discussion materials. Your full participation ON A WEEKLY BASIS is not only a requirement; it is an essential aspect of the online course process. All students are expected to do the work assigned. **NO LATE WORK will be accepted at any point in this course.** Again, I highly recommend that you print out the course schedule found at the end of syllabus and keep track of what you have and haven't completed during each module.

Your participation grade will be based on your postings and replies and postings will be assessed based on quality and timeliness. In terms of quality, expectations are simple. Replies should be well written (please spell-check!) and clearly address the issues being discussed. Do not just write "good job" or "I agree" as this does not count as a substantive reply. I would suggest composing in a word-processing software and copying into the online platform or writing in the online webforum and checking it in the word-processing software. If we are discussing the national immigration debate, please

don't discuss boxing. Regarding timeliness, you must submit assignments within the week assigned. No matter where you are, this course is scheduled based on EST. Please do not submit postings and assignments out of order. If you have not submitted the required assignments and postings during the week, you will be marked absent. Being absent for one week in an eight-week course could lead to withdrawal.

**Important:** As the instructor I will look into the course frequently during the module. Do not expect that I will make a comment on every posting from every student but do know that I will be reading and valuing all of your postings. Student interaction is critical.

#### IV. Writing:

You will be given written assignments every week. I do this for several reasons, but the primary one is to make it more probable that you will do well on the tests and the critical thinking evaluations. I have found that students who try to cram for this class often are overwhelmed and end up withdrawing or getting low grades. I want you to succeed. If you do your work as we go along, your success is more likely.

This is a demanding college class. Be prepared to have some of your values challenged and understand that you will be required to do a substantial amount of reading, writing and thinking. In all of your writing you will be expected to use clear language organized into coherent sentences and paragraphs. If you make serious spelling, grammar or syntax errors, five or ten points will initially be taken off your grade. Valencia has a writing lab where you can bring in papers or other writing assignments and receive advice. Find out where the Reading and Writing Center is on the campus near you. Check their hours for availability on the Valencia website. Need additional help outside of our tutoring hours? **Valencia College has online tutoring websites for all students (yes, it's FREE!!!). Access [Smart Thinking Online Tutoring](#) by logging into [Atlas](#) and navigating to the Courses tab. Click the Tutoring (online)-Smarthinking link to go to your Smarthinking homepage. Most subjects are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can submit papers and have your writing reviewed by the tutors, chat with an online tutor, or ask questions 24/7.**

All papers must use 12-point font, double spaced and in Times New Roman font.

#### V. Test and Grading Policies:

**Reminder:** \*\*No late work will be accepted for this course. Students who do not post assignments according to the course schedule will be given a zero for those assignments. It is your responsibility to follow the course schedule. We all are juggling many different things so please manage your time wisely. Remember to print the course schedule and keep it in a prominent location so you do not miss any assignments. This course moves very quickly. Send me a message within the course if you have any questions about this. Thanks in advance for your hard work.\*\*

### **A. Participation (30%)**

Students must be an active participant in the online discussions and group work to be successful.

#### **a. Discussion Questions Based on Reading**

Each module has discussion questions based on the readings and can be found within the Module folders on the Course Content page on Canvas. Your answers to the discussion questions should be in essay/paragraph format and posted online. Each answer should be at least two paragraphs long. Students should post their messages during the first half of the module so students will have time to respond to them and student interaction will take place throughout the module.

#### **b. Responses to Classmate Postings**

You must respond to three of your classmate postings each module. One should be a response to current events and the other responses should be based on the discussion questions. These postings can be a bit more informal but still should be proofread and follow the principles of Netiquette. Students will not be given credit for postings that state “good job” or “I agree”. Postings should be in depth comments and provide deeper insight into an aspect of the material or your thoughts about it. See “What Makes a Good Discussion Posting”.

#### **c. Current Events on U.S. Politics/Government**

Students will be required to complete two individual current event assignments about U.S. politics according to the description posted online. Each student will be assigned a current event group and each student in this group must post their own current event assignment according to the course schedule at the end of this syllabus. **Group A will post during Module 1 and 4, Group B during Module 2 and 5, and Group C during Module 3 and 6.** You must choose articles from reputable news sources such as the New York Times, CNN, Christian Science Monitor, or the Washington Post. Students must monitor and respond to the class discussion about their article. Post your review under the current event discussion section online. Note, the only purpose of the group is to assign dates for current event postings (not for working together).

#### **d. Journal Reflections**

Students should read selections from the “WE THE PEOPLE” textbook and write journal reflections in the assigned locations based on the writing prompts.

#### What Makes a Good Discussion Posting?

Substantial - thoughtful, original, relevant and contributes to the overall learning of the group

Thought provoking - stimulates thinking and reasoning

Timely - post early to give your peers time to response, this contributes to a rich discussion  
Logical, concise and grammatical  
Conveys “your presence” - reinforce your conclusions with real life and experiences

**B. Two Multiple Choice Exams** (20% each, totaling 40% of your grade)

All exams in this course will be multiple choice. The midterm will cover the first half of the course. The final exam will not be comprehensive but will only cover the last half of the course. Each test will be graded on a percentage basis. **The tests will only be available during a 2 day (48 hour time) period during the week and they will be time limited** to 2 hours for the midterm and 2 and a half hours for the final. Please refer to the course schedule at the end of this syllabus for the testing dates. No late testing will be permitted. Once the testing window has closed it will not reopen.

**C. One Critical Thinking Evaluation** (30% of your grade)

Critical Thinking Evaluations are group research assignments which analyze editorials I have provided to you. This assignment should be approximately 1,200 words in length. Specific guidelines for critical thinking evaluations are posted online by clicking on the Critical Thinking Evaluations icon on the Course Homepage.

All students have been assigned to a group in which they will divide up the work for this paper. If you do not post in your group discussion space, the group will proceed without you. One cohesive paper should be submitted per group. All members must fully participate. I will be tracking the dialogue and collaboration the group members are having in this group space. Non-participants will receive a zero for this assignment. Each group should appoint a group leader who will submit the final version of the paper. In the group discussion space and at the top of the final submitted paper, all names of group members should be listed with the contribution or role they played in completing the paper.

**VI. Grading Scale:**

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F = Below 60

## **VII. Alternative Service Learning Assignment:**

Instead of writing one of the Critical Thinking Evaluation research papers in this course, students can choose to complete Activity 1 or Activity 2 of the Service Learning Project described below. Students must inform the professor through a message in Canvas by the beginning of Module 2 that you will be completing the Service Learning Project. Prior to service, students must submit a proposal to the Professor through a Canvas message following the proposal guidelines below. The proposal must contain research on the agency or candidate/political party and the issue(s) related to the agency/party they will be serving during this course. Each bullet should be one paragraph in length. In paper citations and a references page are required with at least three references, with at least one from the Valencia databases.

### **Direct/Indirect Political Campaign Service Proposal**

- Describe the political party and its overall platform.
- Describe the candidate whose campaign you will be working on for this service project.
- Explain and analyze at least three specific issues important to the political campaign and the candidate's views on these issues.
- If the candidate already has served as a politician, explain and analyze one piece of legislation he or she has sponsored or co-sponsored and whether you agree or disagree with it and why.
- Reflect on how you feel you can impact the political campaign through your service learning experience. How does the political party/candidate align to who you are?

### **Non-Profit Service and Advocacy Proposal**

- Describe the agency's mission, goals, services etc.
- Identify the causes for this issue (social, economic, political etc.)
- Identify some of the potential solutions, types of assistance etc.
- Find local statistics that indicate the nature of the problem(s) in Central Florida.

Reflect on how you feel you can impact this issue through your service learning experience. Students will complete this service to help elect their candidate or help the nonprofit organization gain resources or benefits for the people they serve.

**Activity 1: Direct/Indirect Political Campaign Service** - Students will volunteer five hours for a political campaign (i.e. making phone calls, putting leaflets on doors/canvassing, assisting in the campaign office, organizing a voter registration drive) to learn about political parties and how citizens can impact government. Signed documentation from the campaign office must be scanned and attached to a Canvas message to the professor by Module 6. After the service, students will write a five paragraph civic engagement reflection based on the guidelines listed below focusing on what they learned from the service that is connected to the course outcomes and content.

Here are the volunteer websites for the two main political parties: Democrats and Republicans, although you may volunteer for any party (see third link below for Florida political parties).

Democrat Party Volunteering <http://www.floridadems.org/get-involved/volunteer>

Republican Party Volunteering <http://www.florida.gop/volunteer>

Florida Division of Elections Links to Political Parties

<http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/candidates-committees/political-parties/>

How Working on a Political Campaign Can Help Your Career

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lindsey-pollak/how-working-on-a-political-campaign-can-help-your-career\\_b\\_84471.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lindsey-pollak/how-working-on-a-political-campaign-can-help-your-career_b_84471.html)

### **Civic Engagement Journal Reflection for Students Completing Political Campaign Service Activity #1**

Just like any scholarly writing, in paper/journal citations and a references page are required with at least three references, with at least one from the Valencia databases (put an asterisk next to the article from the Valencia databases.)

**What?** Give an objective description of a significant incident that occurred as a part of the service learning experience that affected your thinking about civic engagement (promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes).

**So What?** Examine: Development of deeper understanding of experience.

**Thoughts/opinions.** Interpret what you saw/heard during this incident. What does it mean to you? What is the significance of the incident? What knowledge and/or skills did you acquire? What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about others around you? Did this incident change your view of your community, state, nation, or the world? If so, how?

**Interpret:** How did this incident relate to civic engagement?

**Now What?** Explain how this experience has helped you gain a better understanding of your role as an active member of the community/society.

This journal will help students reflect on some of their experiences during their service learning activity with the hope that they will continue to be civically engaged throughout their life.

**Activity 2: Non-Profit Service and Advocacy** - Students will volunteer for five hours at a nonprofit organization to be able to learn about its important work and needs so that they can be a political advocate for the organization. During the time of service, students will set up an informational interview with a staff member to determine the needs of the organization or of the people they serve. After that, students will conduct research on



the need and write a research-based letter, which will include primary and secondary sources, to a Congressperson, either a United States Senator or Representative (see find my Senator or Representative links below). The letter will advocate for the identified need(s). In paper/letter citations and a references page are required with at least three references, with at least one from the Valencia databases. The following link will help you learn how to write an effective letter to Congress

<http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/uscongress/a/letterscongress.htm>

Here is an example of a non-profit service and advocacy activity to help you understand what it entails. A student could volunteer at the Farmworkers Association of Florida and write a letter to a Florida Senator advocating for farmworker rights such as protection against pesticides, a living wage, and protection under U.S. labor laws. After sending the letter to the Congressperson on their website, students are required to send the letter as an attachment to the professor on Canvas messaging. Second, a screen shot of the page which verifies that the electronic message was sent must also be sent as an attachment as a Canvas message. Finally, students will scan and attach the verification of volunteer hours with organizational signatures in a message to the professor within Canvas. After the service, students will write a civic engagement reflection focusing on what they learned from the service that is connected to the course outcomes and content and submit it to the professor as a Canvas message.

**Reflection for Activity 2:** Students completing the Non Profit Advocacy Activity #2 are not required to complete the prior reflection assignment. Instead, students will write a letter to a Congressperson and will provide a short reflection (what they learned from their experience) in the body of the Canvas message submitted to the professor with an attached copy of the letter and screen shot of the page when the letter was sent to the politician.

Note: If the professor has not confirmed receipt of a service learning assignment on Blackboard messaging, that means it hasn't been received.

How to Find Your Senator <http://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>

How to Find Your Representative <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>

## **VIII. School Objectives:**

In this class you will learn about critical thinking, effective communication skills and academic values, you and I will practice them. In terms of Valencia's Core Competencies, we will **act** on them. Valencia faculty have defined four interrelated

competencies (Value, Think, Communicate, Act) that prepare students to succeed in the world community. For a more complete description of the Valencia Student Core Competencies look at this website: <http://valenciacollege.edu/competencies/>

#### **IX. Academic Honesty:**

You are expected to complete your **own** work for this online course and not doing so is grounds for withdrawal. Please note that I use the College policy on Academic Dishonesty (6Hx28:10-16) which states, in part:

"All forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited at Valencia College. Academic dishonesty includes . . . plagiarism . . . alteration or misuse of documents. . . .

"All work submitted by students is expected to be the result of the students' original thoughts, research and self-expression. Whenever a student uses ideas, wording, or organization from another source, the source shall be appropriately acknowledged. . . .

"Any student determined by the professor to have been guilty of engaging in an act of academic dishonesty shall be liable to a range of academic penalties as determined by the professor which may include, but not be limited to, one or more of the following: loss of credit for an assignment, . . . ; a reduction in course grade; or a grade of 'F' in the course."

If someone is found to be cheating on an exam (which means that you are not doing your own work) the normal grade will be a zero for that test. Plagiarism will usually mean a zero on the work that is turned in. As with all policies, I reserve the right to change these policies, but only to benefit a particular student.

#### **X. Class Attendance:**

Participation online is the way you attend class. If you do not complete assignments and discussion postings during the week, you will be marked absent and you will not be allowed to make up these assignments. If you miss posting during one of the modules of class, this is grounds for withdrawal. This is a strict policy. Students must use a computer with reliable Internet access because excuses or failure to complete assignments or assessments due to computer error will not be permitted. You will be dropped as a no-show after the Drop deadline and during the No Show period if you do not complete at a reading based, discussion posting in the beginning of the course. Just logging in or posting an introduction does not count as attendance.

#### **XI. Student Conduct/Netiquette:**

Valencia is dedicated not only to the advancement of knowledge and learning but also to the development of responsible personal and social conduct. As a registered student, you assume the responsibility for learning and abiding by the general rules of good conduct listed in the current Valencia student handbook. Please refer to Valencia

Policy 10-18 on Student Code of Classroom Conduct to know exactly what is expected of you in class. [Valencia Student Code of Conduct](#)

I will treat you with respect. I expect the same of you towards me and your classmates. We will all refrain from using inappropriate names or language in our online discussions. During online discussions it is expected that students will acknowledge and appreciate the differing viewpoints of their classmates. If I find your behavior unacceptable, I will send you a message. If the behavior continues, you will receive written notification one time, anything more than that will require a conference with the dean and possible removal from class.

Please review the following website to read about the concept of Netiquette, a term coined for either **network etiquette** or **Internet etiquette**.  
<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

**XII. Students with Disabilities:**

If you have a disability which requires accommodations in this course, please provide me with the proper documentation from Valencia's Office For Students With Disabilities as soon as possible. I am happy to make appropriate adjustments to suit your needs.

**XIII. Disclaimer:**

I reserve the right to change any of the above policies due to extraordinary circumstances, but only to assist a student.

**COURSE SCHEDULE (Page 1)**  
**U.S. Government POS 2041**  
**N. Boujaber-Diederichs**  
**Valencia College**  
**September 24-November 18,**  
**2018**

**September 24-30 (one week) Module 1:** *Student Orientation, Introductions, Syllabus Review & Questions; An Introduction to Critical Thinking, U.S. Government, and Political Equality*

- Introduce yourself in the introductions discussion
- Watch/read the student orientation on Canvas
- Read the syllabus and assignments very thoroughly and carefully
- Ask questions about the syllabus and assignments in online discussion
- Read Byrnes text pages 1-29 (page #s may vary so follow section headings)
- Answer assigned discussion questions and post on Canvas
- Reply to three student postings
- Post questions or comments about syllabus
- Members of Current Event Group A post their current event assignment

**October 1-14 (two weeks) Module 2:** *Federalism and the U.S. Constitution*

- Read Byrnes text pages 30-65 (page #s may vary so follow section headings)
- Complete Critical Thinking Evaluation #1 with your group based on the assignment description and rubric found by clicking on the icon on the Canvas course homepage (This is a group research paper based on assigned editorial.) or complete the Alternate Service Learning Assignment
- Answer assigned discussion questions and post on Canvas
- Reply to three student postings
- Review Chapter 8, Interest Groups, pp. 251-262 and Figure 8.1 in “We the People” and write a Journal Reflection based on the journal question(s)/prompt(s)-Citizen Empowerment & Tactics
- Members of Current Event Group B post their current event assignment

**October 15-21 (one week) Module 3:** *Democracy, Individual and Civil Rights*

- Read Byrnes Text pages 66-77 (page #s may vary so follow section headings)
- Answer assigned discussion questions and post on Canvas
- Reply to three student postings
- Review Chapter 4, Civil Liberties and Civil Rights, in “We the People” and Write a Journal Reflection based on the journal question(s)/prompt(s)-Civil Liberties and Terrorism
- Members of Current Event Group C post their current event assignment
- Review for Test #1

**COURSE SCHEDULE (Page 2)**  
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**October 22-28 (one week) Module 4: Political Ideology, Political Parties and Elections**

- Read Byrnes Text pages 78-95 (page #s may vary so follow section headings)
- Take Test #1 (covers Modules 1-3). The test will be available on Wednesday, October 24 & Thursday, October 25 (only will be open for 48 hours).
- Answer assigned discussion questions and post on Canvas
- Reply to three student postings
- Members of Current Event Group A post their current event assignment

**October 29-November 4 (one week) Module 5: Polls, Courts and Criminal Justice**

- Read Byrnes Text pages 96-122 (page #s may vary so follow section headings)
- Answer assigned discussion questions and post on Canvas
- Reply to three student postings
- Members of Current Event Group B post their current event assignment
- Review Chapter 7, Political Parties, Participation, and Elections, in “We the People” and Write a Journal Reflection based on the journal question(s)/prompt(s)-Higher Voter Turn Out

**November 5-11 (one week) Module 6: Congress, Debt, Foreign Policy and Final Exam Review**

- Read Byrnes Text pages 123-163 (page #s may vary so follow section headings)
- Answer assigned discussion questions and post on Canvas
- Reply to three student postings
- Members of Current Event Group C post their current event assignment
- Review for Test #2 (Final Exam)

**November 14<sup>th</sup> & November 15<sup>th</sup> (ends on a Saturday) FINAL EXAMS**

Take Test #2 (Final Exam) (covers Modules 4-6 only) Test will be available on Wednesday, November 14<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup> (It will only will be open for 48 hours).

**November 18 - Final Grade Submission**