Advanced Placement U.S. Government & Politics Mr. David Reeser

Madison High School

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Welcome to AP Government. The following information is very important as it describes what you need to do in order to be successful in this class.

**Course Description:**

The intent of this yearlong course (2 Trimesters) is to increase understanding of the American political system, its frameworks, traditions and values with the goal of having each student pass the AP exam. This course is concerned with the nature of the American political system, and its development over the past two centuries. We will examine in detail the principle processes and institutions through which the political system functions, as well as some of the public policies which these institutions establish and how they are implemented.

**Overall Course Goals:**

Students successfully completing this course will:

* Know important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to U.S. government and politics
* Understand typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences (including the components of political behavior, the principles used to explain or justify various government structures and procedures, and the political effects of these structures and procedures)
* Be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to U.S. government and politics

**Course Materials**

**Text:** James M. Edwards, et al. *Government in America: People, Politics and Policy.*

**Companion Website:** http://www.pearsonmylabandmastering.com/northamerica/mypoliscilab/

**Supplemental Text**: Select readings from *The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity* edited by Serow & Ladd

**Other Materials:** Assigned and used in class: articles from current newspapers, such as The New York

Times or The Wall Street Journal; news magazine excerpts from Time, Newsweek, or The

Economist; news footage and documentaries; C-SPAN’s coverage and current events materials; numerous websites

**Student Materials**

Each student is responsible to keep all of the designated classroom material in a 3-ring Binder. The binder must have 6 dividers (Constitutional Underpinnings, Political Participation, Elections & Media, Congress & Public Policy, Presidency & Bureaucracy, Judiciary & Rights). They should be kept up to date, with the most current material on top. Binders can be stored in the classroom.

**Assignments in this Course**

* Learning Objectives are due at the beginning of class period (completed after each chapter reading assignment)
* Key vocabulary words will be identified in each Learning Objective and online resources will be demonstrated that will support your learning.
* Reading Comprehension Quizzes will be given during the week. You will be able to use your Learning Objectives on these.
* Unit Tests will have multiple choice questions, vocabulary, free response questions, or a combination of all three.
* First Trimester Final will be a practice Advanced Placement American Government Test.

**The A.P. US Government and Politics Exam**

The AP US Government and Politics exam, administered in early May, is 3 hours long. It includes a 80 minute multiple-choice section consisting of 55 questions (worth 50% of your grade on the exam) and a 100-minute free-response section consisting of 4 questions (worth 50% of your grade on the exam).

* The multiple choice portion of the exam includes questions requiring an analysis of a selection of text from a Foundational Document, Supreme Court Opinion, or other source; questions requiring an analysis of charts, tables, infographics and graphs; analysis of visual sources such as maps, political cartoons, or other images; and questions assessing basic knowledge
* The Free Response Question portion of the exam consists of 4 questions. One question will assess the application of a governmental concept (20 min.). Another question will require a quantitative analysis (20 min.). The third question will require a comparison of two Supreme Court Decision (20 min.), while the final essay will require the creation of an argumentative essay on a specific topic (40 min.).

The AP US Government and Politics exam is graded on a five point scale. Generally, most public universities award credit or placement to students who earn a 3 or higher, while many private colleges require a score of 4 or higher. However, since each school is free to set its own policy, students need to check the specific policies of the institutions they are interested in attending.

**Classroom Policies**

* Cell phones placed on the table in the front of the room.
  + May be used in activities, but only with teacher permission.
  + Personal laptop computers or chromebooks may be booted up, but lid closed until permission is given to use them.
* Treat each other with respect and common courtesy.
* Come to class prepared.
* Abide by school policies regarding attendance and discipline.

**Absences:**

* If there is a scheduled assignment due and you are absent on that day, you may hand in that assignment first thing the following day, OR you may hand it in previous to the date.
* Late work will be accepted, but only for half credit and only for up to 1 week. After that, the zero is final.
* If you are found cheating or plagiarizing on any tests, projects, assignments, current events, etc., you will receive a “0” on that assignment and/or an “F” in the class.
* Grading will be based on a percentage of total possible points.
* Absences must be verified with the office within 48 hours of absence in order for makeup work to be accepted. You will have as many days as you were absent plus 1 to turn in late work for the possibility of full credit.
* If you miss a test or a quiz, you have one week to make up that test or quiz. After that, it will be recorded permanently as a zero.

All students enrolled in this class are highly encouraged to take the AP exam. Each exam costs approx. $85. Any student who does not take the AP exam will be required to take a similar exam on the same day that will comprise 20% of that student’s second semester grade. Official AP exam scores will not be published until July.

**Grading: (weight):**

• Tests - # of questions (x 2)

• Project Citizen – 20% of final grade in Section 2 of the course

**Grading Policy**

The total points earned divided by the total possible points in the class will determine your grade at the end of the trimester.

**Grade Scale: (Set by School District #321)**

94 += A

90-93 = A-

87-89= B+

84-86= B

80-83 = B-

77-79= C+

74-76= C

70-73= C-

67-69= D+

64-66= D

58-60= D-

59 and under = F

Grades will be updated at least weekly.

**Course Outline and Reading Assignments**

**Course Introduction**

**Unit 1: Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government**

Readings:

* Government in America Text- Chapter 1, 2, and 3
* Federalist Papers #10, #23, #47, #51, #72, #78
* Lanahan Text- pp. 43-50, 56-63, 97-102, 119-124

**Unit 2: Political Participation, Special Interest Groups and Political Parties**

Readings:

* Government in America Text- Chapter 6, 8, 10
* Lanahan Text- pp, 51-56, 459-467, 543-549, 557-560, 560-563

**Unit 3: Elections and the Media**

Readings:

* Government in America Text- Chapters 7, 9
* Lanahan Text: pp. 489-496, 515-543.

**Unit 4: Congress & Public Policy**

Readings:

* Government in America Text- Chapters 11, 16, 17
* Lanahan Text: pp. Part 5, pp. 631-668

**Unit 5: The President, the Budget, and Bureaucracy**

Readings:

* Government in America Text- Chapters 12, 13, 14
* Lanahan text- Part 6 (small group presentations)

**Unit 6: Civil Right and Civil Liberties**

Readings:

* Government in America Text- Chapters 4, 5, 15
* Lanahan text- pp. 345-419

**CONTENT - What you need to learn before taking the AP Test (from AP course guide):**

1) Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government (8-12 Multiple Choice questions)

a) Theories of Democratic Government

b) Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution

c) Separation of powers

d) Checks and Balances

e) Federalism

2) Political Beliefs and Behaviors of Individuals (5-8 MC Questions)

a) Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders

b) Processes by which citizens learn about politics

c) The nature, sources, and consequences of public opinion

d) The ways in which citizens vote and otherwise participate in political life

e) Factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of their political beliefs and behaviors

3) Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media (11-15 MC Questions)

a) Political parties and elections

i) functions

ii) organization

iii) historical development

iv) effects on the political process

v) Electoral laws and systems

b) Interest groups (including PACs)

i) the range of interests

ii) the activities of interest groups

iii) the effects of interest groups on the political process

iv) The unique characteristics and roles of PACs in the political process

c) The mass media

i) The functions and structures of the news media

ii) The impacts of the news media on politics

iii) The news media industry and its consequences

4) Institutions of National Government: The Congress, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, and the Federal Courts (14-20 MC Questions)

a) The major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power

b) Relationships among these four institutions and varying balances of power

c) Links between these institutions and the following:

i) Public opinion and voters

ii) Interest groups

iii) Political Parties

iv) The media

v) State and local governments

5) Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (7-10 MC Questions)

a) The development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation

b) Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties

c) The impact of the 14th Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties

6) Public Policy (“Folded Into” Other Topics)

a) Policy making in a federal system

b) The formation of domestic & foreign policy agendas

c) The role of institutions in the enactment of policy

d) The role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation.

e) Linkages between policy processes and the following:

i) Political institutions and federalism

ii) Political parties

iii) Interest groups

iv) Public opinion

v) Elections

vi) Policy networks

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I have read through the syllabus and understand what is expected of me as an AP student

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Student signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**BRING THIS TO CLASS BY MONDAY FOR 5 BONUS POINTS!**