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AP United States Government and Politics Syllabus

Course Description

The AP course in United States Government and Politics is a Social Studies elective for juniors and seniors and will be taught for one full academic year. The course will give students an analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States. This course will include both the study of general concepts used to interpret U.S. government and politics and the analysis of specific examples. It will also require familiarity with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute U.S. Government and Politics. Students will be acquainted with the variety of theoretical perspectives and explanations for various behaviors and outcomes.

Goals and Topics for the Course

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 (including data presented in charts, tables, and other formats)
- be able to critically analyze relevant theories and concepts, apply them appropriately, and develop their connections across the curriculum

Teaching Strategies

The course is evenly divided between lecture, Socratic seminar, and class discussions. Students are responsible for keeping up with events in the news and politics. Following current events allows students to make concrete connections between the vocabulary and concepts from the text and how they are applied to the political world. There will be extensive use of charts, graphs, and political cartoons to encourage student discussion and develop their knowledge base.

Student Evaluation for Quarterly Assessments

Students will be evaluated in several ways: (Approximate %'s are in parenthesis)

1. Unit Tests and Chapter Quizzes – (30%)
2. Free response questions (FRQ's) – (20%)
3. Homework Assignments – Study questions, definitions of vocabulary and concepts, are assigned with the readings. The frequency and length of these assignments varies according to the topics of the class. (25%)
4. Quarterly Research Projects – Subjects depend on the topics being discussed and reviewed in class. For example, during election years, students may be asked to evaluate and analysis of a Mock Election at FHS. One project for each of the first three terms. (15%)
5. Participation – Students will be expected to contribute to class discussions on a number of topics from this class. In addition, asking for clarity of terminology and concepts is very helpful for both students and the teacher and is strongly encouraged. (10%)

The AP Exam – 3-hour exam given in early May

- **Part 1 – 55 Multiple Choice Q's in 80 minutes**

These are based primarily on the content of the course, vocabulary and document analysis

- **Part 2 – 4 Free Response Question in 100 minutes**

Unlike DBQ's, FRQ's are more limited in scope and do not require writing in an essay style, rather, each FRQ focuses on a certain aspect of the course:

#1 – Historical content on how the US government operates (ex. check and balances or federalism)

#2 – Analysis of statistical charts, graphs, etc.

#3 – Comparison of important Supreme Court cases (you will need to know 15 of these cases and they will be reviewed during the year)

#4 – Reading a prompt, developing a response which applies a few historical documents you will need to know (there will be 10 of these which will be reviewed during the year). This is all predicated on taking a position, stating a claim, and proving the claim with evidence.

APGOV – Summer Essay

Write a 700-1,000 word political manifesto which reflects your own political beliefs. In other words, what do you believe in, at least politically speaking. This is an open-ended essay which should be written as if you were going to give it as a speech to the class.

Some suggestions to consider and help you along.

- a. Where would you place yourself on the political spectrum? Are you a liberal, conservative, moderate, progressive, libertarian?
- b. What social, political, and economic issues support your political ideology?
- c. What do you think the role of government should be as it relates to the citizens of this nation?
- d. How do you view the current state of politics in the US today?

If you happen to use statistics or quotes in your work make sure they are properly cited. If you are not certain where how you think politically there are plenty of online surveys that you can take on your own to see where you stand on the political spectrum. Again, the purpose of this essay is to get an idea of how you think politically and what you believe the role of the US government should be as it relates to its citizenry.

Rubric for Grading (30 pts)

- _____ The paper expresses your own political beliefs (10 pts)
- _____ At least 2-3 issues are discussed which reflect your political beliefs (10 pts)
- _____ The paper is the appropriate length, typed, and double-spaced (5 pts)
- _____ A hard copy of the paper is turned in on time and has your name on it (5 pts)
- _____ Sources are appropriately cited if they are used in the paper (points deducted if not so)

Due Date – September 5th (the third day of class)