

AP US Government and Politics

Welcome to Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics! We are excited that you have decided to take on the challenge of college level work as high school students. We look forward to an exciting semester of hard work, learning, and fun.

This course is designed to prepare you to take the AP Government and Politics exam on **May 15, 2012**. The exam provides a way for you to compare your knowledge with high school students throughout the country. Success on the exam could lead to college credit and/or course waivers.

Course Expectations

As AP students you are held to the same academic expectations as college students. Those expectations are as follows:

- You are responsible for attending class regularly and on-time.
- You are responsible for completing all reading assignments as scheduled.
- You are expected to complete all assignments thoroughly, thoughtfully, and on time.
- You are expected to participate in class regularly by asking questions and contributing to large and small group discussions.
- You are expected to be a part of a three-member study group and present readings to the class.
- You are expected to take the AP US Government exam on **May 15, 2012**.
- You are expected to have an imagination, a sense of humor, and a positive attitude, at least most of the time.

Course Content

The course will cover the following six units:

- I. Constitutional Underpinnings (Foundations) of United States Government
- II. Political Beliefs and Behaviors
- III. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media
- IV. Institutions of National Government
- V. Public Policy
- VI. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

The AP Exam

The AP US Government and Politics exam will be administered on Monday, **May 15, 2012** in the morning. The test consists of two sections, each worth 50% of your score. The first section requires you to complete 60 multiple choice questions in 45 minutes. The second section asks four mandatory essays, that should be completed in 25 minutes each, for a total of 100 minutes. Assignments and activities in the course are designed to prepare you for this exam.

Course Materials:

Every student will need to have:

- a three ring binder with tabs
- highlighters in at least two different colors
- pens in at least two different colors

The primary textbook for the course will be American Government, by James Q. Wilson. The textbook has a companion website: www.college.hmco.com, that may aide you as you read the text. We will also assign supplementary readings throughout the course. We also recommend the use of the website www.hippocampus.org as a valuable tool to help further understand class readings and discussions.

Course Structure

We will begin each unit with a syllabus that outlines the topics of study, reading assignments, assignments, and due dates. Please note that readings must be completed prior to the class period listed.

We will spend class time enhancing concepts covered in your reading. We will not recap every detail of the reading. Therefore, you are responsible for asking for clarification on any points not discussed in class.

Throughout the course, you are expected to read the newspaper and watch the news on a daily basis. Weekly news shows and discussion groups are also valuable resources, as are websites and radio shows. You will also be asked to complete current events assignments regularly.

I recommend the following news sources:

National Public Radio – 90.1 FM
The Washington Post
The New York Times
Nightly News on any major network

Our goal is to build your knowledge of government and to use that knowledge to develop your critical thinking skills. Therefore, we will use reading, writing, graded discussions, seminars, quizzes, tests and projects to build and assess your learning.

Course Grades:

Your grades will be determined by scores on assignments in the following categories:

- Summative Assessments-50%
 - Tests and Long-Term Projects –
 - Your tests will mimic the AP exam. They will have 50 multiple choice questions and two free-response questions.
 - Long term projects are assignments for which you are given a week or more to complete. These projects will allow you to show deep knowledge of a subject.
 - Tests and Long-term projects **may not** be reassessed.
 - Reading Quizzes
 - You will have weekly quizzes that assess mastery of the week’s learning objectives.
- Formative Assessments-40%
 - Writing Assignments
 - These will include current events, writings, reading presentations.
 - These assignments may be reassessed unless otherwise noted by your teacher.
 - Short term-projects are homework assignments and tasks that are due within 2-3 days. These assignments will require you to collect, analyze and summarize information..
- Homework– 10%
 - At times, you will be asked to do homework in order to prepare for in-class activities, this will include meeting with your study groups in outside of scheduled class time. This work will be checked for completion and overall quality

Late Work:

If you are absent, you are expected to take any missed reading quizzes and tests during lunch or after school within two days of your return. Late assignments will be accepted until the end of each unit. For example, work done during a unit may be turned in late until the unit test, after the test, the assignment becomes a zero. Remember, partial credit for late work is ALWAYS better than a zero.

Attendance:

Montgomery County has adopted a new attendance policy this school year. All classes will follow the same procedures, please see the handout regarding attendance.

Academic Support:

Advanced Placement courses are designed to be harder than any course you’ve ever taken before. We expect that you will struggle, even if you’ve been a straight A student up to this point. When you struggle, don’t despair and don’t give up, ask for help. That’s what we’re here for.

I am available for extra help, by appointment, before school, during lunch, and after school, please do not hesitate to ask for help!

Student Signature: _____ Parent Signature: _____