

AP U.S. Government & Politics Syllabus 2018-19
North Dorchester High School
Mr. Alsworth Room B-14
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Social Studies Mission Statement: To foster in students a sense of citizenship, global awareness, and social responsibility.

Course Description:

This course in U.S. Government and Politics is a year-long course that will give students an analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States. This course includes both the study of general concepts used to interpret U.S. politics and the analysis of specific examples. It also requires familiarity with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute U.S. politics. Students will become acquainted with the variety of theoretical perspectives and explanations for various behaviors and outcomes.

Course Goals:

Students 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.
- understand and interpret quantitative and visually presented information from sources such as political cartoons, maps, graphs and charts.
- be prepared to succeed on the College Board AP Exam for U.S. Government & Politics.

Course Expectations: You must assume the mindset and maturity of a college freshman and take on the necessary level of individual responsibility expected of you and required of you as a young adult in order to achieve the above goals. Communication with Mr. Alsworth is essential, especially when you are having difficulties, so you are strongly encouraged to do so whenever you need further assistance outside of what class time allows. That is what I am here for, so think in terms of a tag-team concept... two heads are better than one but you have to come see me ☺

Primary Text:

Government in America: People, Politics and Policy, Edwards, Wattenberg, Lineberry; Sixteenth Edition

Secondary Text:

Magruder's American Government, Willaim A. McClenaghan

Secondary Readings and Current Events:

The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity; Edited by Ann G. Serow & Everett C. Ladd; Fourth & Fifth Edition (provided on your home directory)

The Federalist Papers: Essays by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay; Library of Congress on line edition (<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html>); Edwards textbook; Class Handout

Other readings will include periodicals, i.e., *The Week*, and primary source documents to include historical documents, essays, maps, graphs, charts and political cartoons, as well as, audio visuals of current news casts in support of the current topic.

AP Exam Grades: The Readers' scores on the free-response questions (FRQ) are combined with the results of the computer-scored multiple-choice questions; the weighted raw scores are summed to give a composite score. The composite score is then converted to grade on AP's 5-point scale.

AP Exam grades of 5 are equivalent to A grades in the corresponding college course. A grade of 4 is equivalent to grades of A-, B+ and B in college. A grade of 3 is equivalent to grades of B-, C+ and C in college.

Chapter Quizzes: Format to be announced

Chapter Tests: All chapter tests will take place within a strictly timed class period. Most tests will consist of one day of 50 multiple choice questions in 58 minutes. Some tests will be over a two day period. Day one consisting of 50 multiple choice questions in 58 minutes and on day two answering one free-response question in the first 25 minutes of class.

Grading

70% Major Grades: Tests/quizzes/Projects

30% Minor Grades: Homework/classwork

Class Rules:

1. All school rules, as outlined in the student handbook, will be enforced.
2. Makeup assignments are your responsibility. See the student handbook.
3. All students will remain in their seats until dismissed by the teacher.
4. **Unassigned** phone use in class will result in administrative referral; no warning necessary... let this be your warning!
5. No student will lie, cheat or steal, nor tolerate those who do!

Course Outline:

*** Changes will be made to the schedule as necessary**

Week 1:

Introducing Government in America... Founders vs. Progressives

Readings:

Edwards: Chapter 1

Ch. 1- The Federalist 10 in Edwards page 700

John Locke- The Second Treatise of Government

Weeks 2-3:

Unit 3: Political Beliefs and Behaviors and Public Opinion (10-20%)

Essential Questions: How do we come by our political beliefs? What are the sources of public opinion? What is “political culture,” and is there a unique American political culture? What is the “political spectrum” and where do you fall and why? How do political beliefs define who we are as citizens? What is the role of the citizen in a civil society? Which citizens vote and why? What is the relationship between individual rights and the needs of the larger community?

- A. Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leader
- 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 political belief and behaviors

Readings:

Edwards: Chapter 6

Ch. 6- Lanahan 4th: *Why Americans Still Don't Vote* (72)

Weeks 4-10:

Unit 4: Political Parties, Campaigns, Elections, Interest Groups, and Mass Media (10-20%)

Essential Questions: What is the difference between a Democrat and a Republican? Are there other options beyond these two choices? How and why have political parties and interest groups come to play such an influential role in American politics and government? How do interest groups influence government decisions and policy making?

- A. Political Parties and elections
 - 1. Functions
 - 2. Organization
 - 3. Development
 - 4. Effects on the political process
 - 5. Electoral laws and systems
- B. Interest groups, including political action committees (PACs)
 - 1. The range of interests represented
 - 2. The activities of interest groups
 - 3. The effects of interest groups on the political process
 - 4. The unique characteristics and roles of PACs in the political process
- C. The mass media
 - 1. The functions and structures of the media
 - 2. The impacts of media on politics
 - 3. The news media industry and its consequences

Readings:

Edwards: Chapters 7-11

Ch. 7- Lanahan 5th: *How the Mass Media Divide Us* (80)

Ch. 8- Lanahan 4th or 5th: *Democracy in America* (59 or 61)

Weeks 11-13:

Unit 1: Constitutional Underpinnings of the U.S. Government (5-15%)

Essential Questions: What is the purpose of government? What was the founders' view of the purpose of government and the role of the citizen in the American Republic? Are these views still relevant today? How does the Constitution underpin U.S. government? Why is the concept of "checks and balances" a novel idea in the 18th century? How does Madison's concept of checks and balances challenge popular understanding of Montesquieu's theory of separation of powers?

- A. Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution
- B. Separation of Powers
- C. Federalism
- D. Theories of democratic government

Readings:

Edwards: Chapters 2-3

Ch. 2- Primary Source: The Declaration of Independence in Edwards

Ch. 2- The Federalist 51 in Edwards

Ch. 3- The Federalist 39: Library of Congress website or Adapted for the 21st Century edition

Weeks 14-15:

Unit 2: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (5-15%)

Essential Questions: What constitutes free speech? What forms of free speech are protected?

How does the national Bill of Rights apply to the states? How is the 1st Amendment affected in times of crisis? What constitutes "establishment"? What are the limits of "free exercise"? What is "equal protection" under the law? How does procedural due process differ from substantive due process? How has the interpretation of the equal protection clause change over time? How have laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and affirmative action influenced our understanding of the clause?

- A. The development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation
- B. Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
- C. The impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties

Readings:

Edwards: Chapters 4-5

Ch. 5- Lanahan 4th or 5th: *Simple Justice* (50 or 51)

Weeks 16-26:

Unit 5: Institutions of National Government: The Congress, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, and the Federal Courts (35-45%)

Essential Questions: How does Congress represent and reflect the interest and desires of the nation? Is Congress representative of the nation as a whole? What is public policy and is this the most effective and efficient way to make public policy? Compare and contrast the makeup and operations of the House and Senate. What are the formal and informal powers of the presidency? How does the president use his powers to influence policy? Is the president too powerful or not powerful enough in relation to the legislative and judicial branches? What role do the courts play in interpreting the Constitution and implementing public policy? What is "judicial activism" and is the court "guilty" of such action? How is public policy formulated? Define an "Iron Triangle," does it exist and if so how does it influence policy implementation? What is the bureaucracy and

who controls it: The president? Congress? The people? What are the pros and cons of government bureaucracy?

- A. The major formal and informal institutional arrangement of power
- B. Relationships among these four institutions and varying balances of power
- C. Linkages between institutions and the following:
 - 1. Public opinion and voters
 - 2. Interest groups
 - 3. Political parties
 - 4. The media
 - 5. State and local governments

Readings:

Edwards: Chapters 12, 13, 15 & 16

Ch. 12- Lanahan 4th & 5th: *Stalemate* (24)

Ch. 13- Lanahan 5th: *Leading From the Center* (37)

Ch. 15- Lanahan 4th or 5th: *Free to Choose* (85 or 84)

Ch. 16- Lanahan 5th: *The Dynamic Constitution* (47)

Weeks 27-29:

Unit 6: Public Policy (5-15%)

Essential Questions: How is public policy made? Does the “system” work as intended? Does the “system” work for citizens today? Who sets policy agendas for our nation? How does federalism affect public policy? How is the federal budget made? How is monetary policy different from fiscal policy? What is the “global economy” and how does it influence U.S. policy? What are subsidies and entitlements and how do they differ? What is the proper role for federal government in social issues, such as, education, welfare and crime? What should be the U.S. government role and relationship with the United Nations?

- A. Policymaking in a federal system
 - B. The formation of 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:
 - 1. Political institutions and federalism
 - 2. Political parties
 - 3. Interest groups
 - 4. Public opinion
 - 5. Elections
 - 6. Policy networks

Readings:

Edwards: Chapters 14, 17-20

Weeks 30-32:

AP U.S. Government & Politics Exam Review

Note: A more specific and detailed day to day calendar will be issued for the review.

AP U.S. Government & Politics Exam – TBD

Time: 7:30 a.m.

All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth.

- Aristotle