

American Government, 2016-2017

“Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.”

-James Madison

Course Overview

Students will study the purposes, principles, and practices of American government as established by the Constitution. Students are expected to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens and how to exercise these rights and responsibilities in local, state, and national government. Students will learn the structure and processes of the government of the state of Tennessee and various local governments. The reading of primary source documents is a key feature of United States Government and Civics standards.

Failure to complete assignments will lead to failing the class, which in turn would prevent graduation as American Government is a required course for a high school diploma in Tennessee.

Materials Required

Students will need a notebook, for class and reading notes, and writing utensils in class. Students should not use red ink pens for any class assignments.

Course Readings

The primary textbook for the course is:

Magruder’s American Government

Students can expect to have a reading assignment frequently, and by the end of the school year students will have read and discussed the majority of the text. Specific reading assignments will be given out at the beginning of each new unit.

In addition, students will have 4-5 outside articles to read per unit. Students that do not have regular internet access at home should speak with the instructors about obtaining hard copies of these articles as they will generally serve as a heavy basis for class discussion. Additionally, relevant essays, articles, and court cases will be required for specific units, and these will be provided in class or posted on the class website.

Current Events

Students will also be expected to remain informed about current events pertaining to U.S. government and politics. While the focus of this course is on analyzing the structure and operation of U.S. government, current events will provide a basic framework for much of the discussion about general topics of study. Since we will often analyze the general themes of U.S. government through the lens of news analysis, students must stay informed about news concerning the actors and institutions of U.S. government. Current events can also provide strong examples for the Free Response portion of the AP Exam. Students should get in the daily habit of looking at the online front-page of a major national newspaper such as *The New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. In addition, students should seek to enhance their knowledge of current events by watching prominent national news programs such as CNN’s *The Situation Room* or PBS’ *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*. Unit reading materials will also frequently be supplemented with relevant editorial articles from leading publications like *Time*, and these articles will be used as sources of in-class and online debate over major political issues. A list of other major print, broadcast and internet media sources will be distributed in class and links to these sources are maintained on the course website.

In order to adequately address these topics, our course will be divided into a brief introduction and nine major units of study. The first semester will cover the intro and first four units, and the second semester will cover the final five units. They are:

Sequence and Major Assignments

Introduction: What is Government?

Unit 1: Foundations of US Government- The Constitution and Federalism

Unit 2: Politics at the Personal Level- Political Behavior and Beliefs

Unit 3: Basic Building Blocks- Parties, Campaigning and Elections

Unit 4: Influencing Government- Interest Groups and the Media

Unit 5: Congress

Unit 6: The President and the Federal Bureaucracy

Unit 7: Institutional Linkages: Creating Economic, Domestic and Foreign Public Policy

Unit 8: The Federal Courts

Unit 9: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

PBL- Election Campaign

- Every Student section will participate in a PBL where they will run a campaign for a fictional candidate. This embedded project will take place over the first and second quarter.

Grading

Average of total points

Late Work and Make-Up Policy

Any assignment that is not turned in within one week of the original due date will not be eligible to receive a passing score. Extensions on due dates can be granted on a case-by-case basis, but an extension will only be granted if the student informs the instructors of the need for an extension *prior* to the due date. **DO NOT TURN IN WORK LATE:** AP courses are supposed to be taught at the college level, and you will find little patience for late work in college.

Students will be able to make-up missed assignments for excused absences only. In the case of an excused absence on a test day, each student will have one week from the date of their return to class to complete the test; if the test is not taken within this period the student will receive a zero. Projects, papers or other out-of-class assignments are expected to be turned in on the day that students return from their absence unless it is digital assignment; otherwise, the late work policy described above goes into effect. In-class assignments will be handled on a case-by-case basis; if it is a large assignment the student will be given one week to make up the work, and if it is a minor assignment the student will have the option of completing the work in one week or dropping the assignment. *In all cases*, it is the responsibility of the student to find out what they missed in class.

Extra Help

The material in this course is extensive and often quite complex, so please do not hesitate to approach us with questions or concerns. Feel free to stop in before school, during lunch, or come by our rooms throughout the day. As always you can contact us via email.

Class Rules

- 1) **RESPECT your classmates and their opinions.** We will discuss complicated and often emotionally-charged issues in this class, but we expect you to maintain respect for others at all times regardless of how you feel about their viewpoint. You are free and encouraged to disagree academically, but we will not tolerate personal attacks.
- 2) Academic dishonesty of any form will NOT be tolerated. Academic dishonesty can include (but is not limited to) plagiarism, cheating on a test, or lying. Again, this class is considered an introductory college course, and in college, such actions are dealt with very harshly, including potential expulsion. As such, you should expect severe penalties for any form of academic dishonesty, including a grade of "0" for the assignment in question and referral to school administration.
- 3) Come to class prepared. We have a lot of material to cover in this class, and we will have little patience for delays at the beginning of a class period due to lack of preparation.
- 4) All school-wide policies apply to this class, including the tardy and ID policies.
- 5) **BE READY WHEN THE BELL RINGS.**