



**JOHN F. KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL
COURSE SYLLABUS
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE**

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**(5 credits)****SGS 210****GENERAL INFORMATION**Term and Year: Fall 2016Name of Instructor: Brett WilliamsRoom Number: C-304Telephone Number: (916) 395-5090 Ext.506304E-mail Address: brett-williams@scusd.eduClass Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/govwithmrwilliams/>**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In our 12th grade American Government class we will pursue a deeper understanding of the institutions of our government. We will analyze the history of our Constitution (our nation's 200 year experiment in progress), the Bill of Rights, and the current state of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. Understanding the relationship between these three levels of government provides us a clearer understanding of the way our government attempts to serve our diverse needs. By looking at the Democratic and Republican parties today we will also gain insight into the roles these parties feel the government should have in our lives today, and with this analysis you should leave this class with your own views on this subject.

COURSE GOALS

My goal, above all else, is to help students craft and refine their voice, or political identity. I plan on helping facilitate that through a variety of different activities this year. Much research indicates that students learn far more from doing than through lecture. That being said, great emphasis will be placed on student discussion and debate. The forms these take will range from simulated town hall meetings and press conferences to whole class debates. To quote moveon.org, "Democracy is not a spectator sport." So be ready to participate.

TEXTBOOKS AND/OR REQUIRED READING

McClenaghan, William A. *Magruder's American Government*. Needham, MA, 2005.

GRADING

As the course will be reliant upon so many different styles of learning it is critical to pull these apart in the grading program to isolate specific strengths and challenges for each student. However, there will not be category weighting for these areas below. In other words, 10 points on a quiz is no different than 10 points for a homework assignment.

Homework: Chapter Notes, close reading of articles, occasional worksheets
Projects: Term Paper, Debate, Press Conferences, etc.
Class Assignments: Anything we complete during class. PACE Comm. Svc. And Field Trips will be here as well
Assessments: Quizzes, FRQs, Multiple Choice exams

A=89.5%+	B=79.5%+	C=69.5%+	D=59.5%+	F=59.4% or below
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COURSE OUTLINE

Content Area	Chapters	Unit Outline
1. Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government	Ch.1-4	9/1-9/23
2. Political Beliefs, Behaviors and Elections	5-7	9/26-10/7
3. Media and Interest Groups	8-9	10/10-10/21
4. Legislative Branch	10-12	10/24-11/4
5. Executive Branch and The Federal Bureaucracy	13-14	11/7-11/18
6. Policy	15-17	11/28-12/9
7. Judicial Branch, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	18-21	12/12-1/13

HOMEWORK POLICIES (Read carefully here students)

We will cover all that we can in class, but there will be a fair amount of reading, researching and writing outside of class as well. The bulk of the homework will be from the text. I believe there are many paths to successfully understanding content from the text, so students will be given several different options for how best to convey their understanding of a given chapter. The rest of the homework will be devoted towards preparing for class presentations be it a class debate, a Socratic seminar, or the term paper.

We will be moving very quickly, so get all your work in on time. **Late work** will receive **zero credit**. I understand things come up though, so in the event that you are not able to turn something in on time, please make sure you attach the **Late/Incomplete Work form** to your assignment before submitting it. This is not an inexhaustible resource, so they should be used sparingly. If a pattern forms we will need to meet and discuss different options. If you are absent, you have as many days as you were absent to make up the material. You are responsible for getting any assignments you missed. If you are turning in work late because you were absent, be sure to tell me so I can check it off rather than marking it late. **I will not accept work on a unit of study after we have tested.** You will also need to contact me if you are late on the day of a group presentation by phone or email and get clearance from attendance for illness, **without these expect a 0.** First and foremost though, please remember to communicate with me regarding your absences and/or inability to get work in on time. We need to work together this year, and the only way we can do that is if we are open and honest with each other.

PROJECTS

Term Paper

A 5-10 page term paper will be required 2nd semester. Most of this project will be done outside of class, with a handful of workshop days in the lab. Many of the assignments will require you to turn in **both a digital copy** to turnitin.com **as well as a hard copy on the day the assignment is due.** Like last year this project will be carried out over an extended period. The research and the planning will be completed first semester with the rough and final drafts due 2nd semester. Each of the prompts are indicated below. The due dates for the different stages will be up on the website by no later than Friday, Sept. 9th.

1. Should millennial voters support third party candidates?
2. Does the financial industry have too much influence over Congress?

3. Does the U.S. Senate have a constitutional duty to hear and vote on President Obama's U.S. Supreme Court nominee?
4. Is Obama an imperial president?
5. Does the federal bureaucracy lack accountability?
6. Should federal judges seek to uphold the "original intent" of the founding fathers in making their decisions?
7. Is Obamacare creating an unsustainable entitlement system?
8. Has the Obama Administration done enough in its fight against ISIS?
9. Do the courts go too far in protecting the accused at the expense of the general public?

Expect smaller projects throughout the semester as well. These will offer more class time preparation, and should not last more than 3-4 days.

ASSESSMENTS

Quizzes will be given at least once a week. These quizzes could take a variety of different forms, and combinations of students. Sometimes, they may be multiple choice questions to answer individually, and other times they may be an oral vocabulary quiz for a group. All quizzes though will place special emphasis on the vocabulary terms, so please ensure you stay on top of those each unit. I have posted numerous resources on my website from Crash Course videos and study guides to graphic organizers among others. These quizzes, in most cases cannot be made up since they are assigned in groups oftentimes, so in order to make up the points students may turn in the Vocabulary Template from my website on the assigned chapter. Those templates will be due the Friday following the quiz that week.

Tests will be given usually on Fridays. The typical test will range from 25-35 multiple choice questions and from 1-3 short answer questions. You will have 20-30 minutes on the multiple choice portion and the remainder of the period on the short answer portion.

Tests can be made up Thursday mornings at 7:25 sharp or after school Thursday afternoons during 6th period. Note that the teacher may use an alternate test.

RETESTING POLICY

Each student has an opportunity to retest on any portion of any unit exam throughout the term. In order to be eligible for this opportunity the teacher will require homework on the specific sections of the exam, and/or attend a lunch study session. These lunch study sessions will occur the Tuesday before the exam and the Tuesday following the exam. These retests will take place the same time as the makeup exams indicated above and should be done within one week of the original exam. These requirements are intended to help the student meet with success.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to be respectful, courteous, and civil. The following are a few of the more notable expectations students will follow:

1. Be on time physically and mentally.
2. Treat others with respect at all times
3. Be on task, and offer help to others if you finish early (when appropriate)
4. Keep your electronic devices hidden and silent unless the instructor approves use.
5. Adhere to the JFK and PACE expectations of academic integrity.*

*Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the attempt to pass off the ideas, research, theories, or words of others as one's own" (College Board). There are however a number of assignments throughout the year where the teacher will encourage you to talk about your responses with your classmates, but note that your work is **your work** and should always remain in your possession unless the teacher is currently grading it. Plagiarizing **any** assignment will **result in a 0** for that assignment. Cheating on any quiz or exam will also immediately result in a zero for that assignment. Students caught cheating will not be able to make up the points lost on these assignments. Plagiarizing or cheating a second time will lead to an Unsatisfactory mark for Citizenship for the semester and a parent conference with the possibility of

more severe consequences depending on the situation. The teacher and administration determine the degree of the severity of the consequence. In this class my ultimate goal is for you to develop **YOUR VOICE**. You may use the cited ideas and arguments of others to help support your arguments, but they still must be your arguments. It's **your position** that I want above all else in this class.

FINAL NOTE

Please note that after teaching 14 years I have learned that every group of students is different. With that in mind, I reserve the right to change policies indicated above at any time during the semester. Before these changes occur though I will be sure to announce them in class and post a notice of these changes on the class website.

I want to end saying what an honor it is teaching these you this year. Please consider me your advocate here at Kennedy High School. You have a support system here at Kennedy as well as at home .Remember that and it will be a good year.

U.S. Government and Politics Executive Summary

Please sign below to confirm you have downloaded, read and understand the syllabus provided for this class. The full Syllabus can be found at <https://sites.google.com/site/williamsapgov/>. By signing students and parents understand that...

- Participation is critical to your success. Be ready to make your mark.
- Vocabulary is critical, and succeeding means consistently reviewing the basic terms and concepts. Review tools for these can be found on my website at: <https://sites.google.com/site/govwithmrwilliams>
- The homework will largely consist of students reading and taking notes on chapters from the text. However, these notes can take many different forms.
- Late work will not be accepted without a Late/Incomplete form attached.
- Quizzes will happen once a week.
- Unit exams will occur usually every two to three weeks on Fridays.
- All students are eligible to retest any section of any unit exam once they have either completed the relevant homework and or attended a lunch tutoring session before the retest.
- Retests and makeup exams will happen either Thursday before school from 7:25-8:15 or during 6th period from 1:25-2:20 that day.
- Students will work on a term paper for their first and second semester projects. This semester they will complete their research and their outlines for the project.
- The rough draft and final draft of the term paper will be due next semester though.
- Please remember above all, that I am your advocate here, but in order to fight for you, I need you to be open with me about how I can best do that. We're part of a team.

In the space below, please provide any information about your child that might be pertinent to his/her educational experience this semester in Government (i.e., physical or cognitive limitations, exceptional experiences or capabilities).

I have read, understood, and will abide by all of the provisions of the entire U.S. Government and Politics syllabus.

Printed Student Name	Student Signature	Date
Printed Parent Name	Parent Signature	Date

Please sign and return the following page of the syllabus to Mr. Williams **by Wednesday, September 7th**.