



2021-2022 COURSE SYLLABUS

A.P. UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

(5 credits/semester) SXS 203

GENERAL INFORMATION

Term and Year: Spring 2022

Name of Instructor: Brett Williams

Room Number: C-304

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Class Website: <https://sites.google.com/scusd.edu/williams-ap-gov/home>



COURSE DESCRIPTION

This semester course is a study of the basic beliefs and ideals which underlie American democracy; its historical roots; and how it's legal, governmental, and economic institutions affect public policy at the local, state, national, and international levels. Special emphasis is given to preparing the student for the College Board's Advanced Placement Test in American Government and Politics. AP Government students attempt to answer three main questions:

1. How does our political system affect me and the people I care about?
2. What are the priorities of those in power, and what forces have shaped those priorities?
3. How can I impact the policy choices of those in power to help bring about positive change in my community?

COURSE GOALS

My goal, above all else, is to help students craft and refine their voice, and 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 Appropriations Committee hearings, and Socratic Seminars to whole class debates. To quote moveon.org, "Democracy is not a spectator sport." So be ready to participate.

TEXTBOOK

Edwards, George C., et al. Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy. 17th ed., Pearson Education, 2018.

- Hard copies of the text will be available along with digital versions posted on Google Classroom.

THE EXAM

This course is the equivalent of a college course and students are encouraged to prepare to take the AP Exam in the Spring Semester (Thursday, May 2nd, 2021, 8am). There are several advantages to taking the AP US Government exam: foremost is the potential to earn college credit while still in high school. The exam is **2 hours and 45 minutes** in length. Half of the exam is an **80-minute, 55 question multiple-choice** section. The other half of the exam is a **100-minute essay section** with three free-response questions and one argument essay. The A.P. U.S. Government exam is graded on a five-point scale. Generally, most public universities (most of the UCs) award credit to students who earn a 3 or higher while many private colleges require a score of 4 or higher. For example, a score of 3 or better will fulfill the American Institutions requirement at UC Berkeley. Others provide elective credit for a passing AP score. However, since each school is free to set its own policy, students are advised to check the policies of institutions they are interested in attending. You can do that here at: <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/creditandplacement/search-credit-policies>. It's also worth reflecting on your level of commitment in preparing for such an exam. Without that, a passing score is likely out of reach. The choice is yours.

Also note, that if any students have financial concerns about the cost of the exam eligible students can get fee waivers. Eligible students are any who are on free and reduced lunch. Others concerned about the cost, consider this, if a student passes with a score of 3 or higher, they may have spent \$94, but would have saved several hundred at most UCs. Aside from the potential of college credit, there are a number of other reasons to take the exam. First, the challenge of taking a three-hour exam alone prepares students well for



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the challenges college assessments pose. Second, qualifying scores create new opportunities for scholarships or other means of recognition from the universities students attend or from other prestigious organizations. Third, you'll have all the bragging rights of having excelled on an exceedingly challenging exam. Finally, even for those who do not pass, colleges pay attention to those who took the risk.

COURSE OUTLINE

Content Area	Dates
1. Foundations of Government	9/3-9/25
2. Political Beliefs, Ideologies, Parties and Policies	10/12-10/23
3. Linkage Institutions: Media, Elections and Interest Groups	10/26-11/13
4. Institutions of Government: The Congress, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, and the Courts	11/16-12/18
5. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	1/4-1/15
6. Final Review	1/18-1/22

GRADING

Quizzes	Multiple choice, short answer and essay. (Based on completion)	10%
Class Assignments	Worksheets, debate writeups, smaller projects.	15%
Projects	Debate Project and Civic Empowerment Project	30%
Unit Assessments	The quiz I end up scoring for the unit will count as your test	30%
Participation	Warmups, Class Surveys, On-task with group and assignments	5%
Final Exam	2 Day Exam: 45-50? s MC, 1 FRQ+1 Arg. Essay	10%

GRADING SCALE

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

CLASSWORK/HOMEWORK POLICIES (Read carefully here students)

The bulk of your **homework** will be reading from the text to prepare for your weekly quizzes, preparation for projects and varied group presentations. The rest will be smaller class assignments sprinkled throughout.

Chapter notes will not be collected this semester, but can instead be **used during in class quizzes**. Those notes must be done to completion before class begins or they will not be counted. I expect you to use my templates or gain permission from me in advance on a style of notetaking that works better for you. A variation of Cornell Notes is a must.

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. You can find it on my [website](#), in the sidebar. Each student is able to use **three per semester**.

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 on Google Classroom. If you are turning in work late because you were absent, be sure to tell me so I can note that 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



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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.

*Note, attendance may be strained due to periodic quarantines or challenges related to those quarantines. I understand that. This will force me to flex on some of the parameters I have set above. But, what I ask of you is to please communicate with me when attendance or meeting deadlines poses challenges. College professors will expect the same, and I think you will find both them and me flexible in many instances.

PROJECTS

Debate Project

You will also be engaging in a team debate on one of nine different issues that will be occurring throughout the semester. You will either be affirming the prompt, or negating it. The objective here is to learn how to effectively construct strong arguments based on valid sources, as well as how to refute counterarguments. Reading and listening critically are the keys to success here. Find out more about the debate project [here](#).

Civic Empowerment Project

The beginning stages of this project will be completed during the semester. But the bulk of the project will occur after the APGOPO Exam on May 2nd. The goal of this project is to apply what we've learned about the levers of power, and to mobilize behind an issue of our choosing in an effort to create, reform or repeal an existing policy. That policy might exist at Kennedy, in your neighborhood, in the city at large, the state, or even a national issue. Find out more about the Civic Empowerment Project [here](#).

TESTS/QUIZZES/PRESENTATIONS

Quizzes will be given once a week. The quizzes will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer and essay. The notes templates should prove quite helpful in preparing for them. Find them [here](#). The textbook will be your primary resource, but the chapter slides that can be found on my [website](#) can also be of great use. I have posted numerous resources on my website from Crash Course videos to presentation models. The quizzes, in most cases cannot be made up. In order to prevent losing quiz points you can turn in a [Vocabulary Template](#) on the assigned chapter by no later than the Friday after the quiz was given. Please label the Voc. Template clearly by which chapter it is, so I can tell which quiz to exempt you for. The Voc. Make sure the work is original.

Your quiz scores will be based on completion, and will require you to evaluate any written work using the provided rubric for the type of question assigned for that week. An explanation along with your score and that of a fellow classmate's is required, along with a brief explanation of the final score. You will also provide a prediction for your score on the multiple choice portion of each quiz, with an explanation of why you felt that was your score (i.e. I spent four hours this week completing the notes, and felt quite solid on the terms). 1st semester you had a bit more control over which quiz I'd end up grading. This semester I will decide which of the quizzes will grade for each class. The **score** for that quiz will count as your **unit test**. If you missed a quiz and had to turn in a Voc. Template instead then unfortunately you will not have a choice. Ensure you're there for every quiz if possible. If you miss each unit quiz, you will need to set a time to take an alternate make up quiz at a time that works for both of us.



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BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

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, especially when confronting ideas different than your own.
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 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 18 years I have learned that every group of students is different. Moreover, this global pandemic poses even more uncertainties. 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 communicate those changes with the students in advance, and announce those changes using Google Classroom and where possible, on my website.

I want to end saying what an honor it is teaching 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



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A.P. 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.

- A.P. U.S. Government is intended to provide students with a college level course.
- Students who take A.P. classes usually do much better in college in terms of both retention and graduating on time, but **be careful in managing your time.**
- High levels of participation are necessary to get the most out of this course to excel. So, spread the word and talk to whoever you can about this stuff.
- Review tools for these can be found on my website under [Unit Resources](#) or [Review Tools](#).
- The homework will largely consist of reading the assigned chapters of the textbook, preparation for your debate, and smaller group projects sprinkled throughout the semester.
- These projects are group projects, so please be ready to work as part of a diverse team.
- Quizzes will happen once a week and fall on Fridays. They will consist of MC, short answer and essay.
- The [notes templates](#) and the unit slides should serve as your resources. Find the slides under [Unit Resources](#) on my website.
- If you miss a quiz you can turn in a completed [Vocabulary Template](#) to excuse you from the quiz score.
- You will score each of your quizzes, and the one you score highest will be graded as your unit assessment for that unit.
- I do not expect memorization for presentations, but students are expected to present rather than read their main arguments/talking points. This conveys understanding, that the material is their own, and that they can help inform the rest of the class on the issue they were assigned.
- I frequently email and or post announcements so please make sure you check your school email regularly as well as your Google Class account for my class. I will also be using Remind to post class notices. Please ensure I have your primary contact information for these, not your parent's or your junk email accounts.
- Please check your student email each evening. I also send messages through Remind frequently.
- 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.
- Be ready to take risks. We're all going to be wrong at some point this semester. Let's grow from that.

Please contact me to provide me any information about your child that might be pertinent to his/her educational experience this semester in A.P. Government (i.e., physical or cognitive limitations, exceptional experiences or capabilities) or if you just have some questions.

I have read, understood, and will abide by all of the provisions of the entire A.P. U.S. Government and Politics syllabus, including the AP Executive Summary here.

Printed Student Name

Student Signature

Date

Printed Parent Name

Parent Signature

Date

