



2017-2018 COURSE SYLLABUS

Term and Year: Fall 2017

Name of Instructor: Brett Williams

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Class Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/williamsapgov/>

Google Classroom: <https://classroom.google.com/u/0/h>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This semester course is a study of the basic beliefs and ideals which underlie American democracy; it's 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. Upon what historical precedents is public policy based?
2. How do people today influence policymaking?
3. What affect does public policy have on the American people and those they interact with?

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.

TEXTBOOK

Wilson, James Q. & Dilulio, John J. Jr. *American Government* Primary Textbook: *American Government*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

RECOMMENDED READING

Krieger, Larry. *AP U.S. Government and Politics Crash Course*. Piscataway, NJ: Research & Education Association, 2010. Print.

-Other review books are perfectly acceptable.

Google News Notifications on your assigned debate (You will be expected to have up to date information for your debate)

Google News Headlines each day to help prepare you for class discussions and debates.

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 10, 2018, 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 a 45-minute, 60 question multiple-choice section. The other half of the exam is a 120-minute essay section with four free-response questions.** 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 \$93, 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 near three-hour exam alone prepares students well for 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.

COURSE OUTLINE

| Content Area | % of Course Emphasis | Unit Outline |
|--|----------------------|--------------|
| 1. Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government | 5-15% | 8/31-9/22 |
| 2. Political Beliefs and Behaviors* | 10-20% | 9/25-9/29 |
| 3. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media | 10-20% | 10/2-10/20 |
| 4. Institutions of Government: The Congress, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, and the Courts | 35-45% | 10/23-12/1 |
| 5. Public Policy | 5-15% | 12/4-12/15 |
| 6. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties | 5-15% | 12/18-1/12 |

*Items from this unit will be covered throughout.

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. What is included in each category, as well as the category weights, are indicated below.

| | | |
|------------------------|--|-----|
| Tests | MC Exams w/FRQs, | 30% |
| Quizzes | Quizzes (Oral, Fill-in, MC) | 15% |
| In Class Assignments | Close Readings, Worksheets, *PACE Req.s, etc. | 15% |
| Writing Assignments | Shorter Writing Assignments & Essays | 20% |
| Projects/Presentations | Debate project, group presentations, Congress speeches, Civic Action Project | 20% |

*Only students who are in PACE will be required to turn in those assignments.

HOMEWORK POLICIES (Read carefully here students)

An A.P. Government course covers a great deal of content. 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 reading 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 your debate project, the Civic Action Project, smaller class debates and presentations, as well as for writing assignments.

Chapter notes will not be collected this semester, but can instead be counted as an insurance plan for your exams. If you do each set of chapter notes for a unit, and turn it in on the day of the test, assuming you scored less than 90%, you can receive up to a 10% bump, up to 90% on your total score. The thinking here is that we are not all test takers, but special recognition is only deserved for those who take special steps in effectively preparing.

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. The forms are located on the class website, in the left sidebar. You may use this form three times over the course of the semester, so use them wisely.

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. Much of the material can be found on my website under Unit Resources. 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.** The reason for this is that your whole group is counting on you. 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**Debate Project**

This project will require groups of four (two Pro, two Con) to debate on an assigned issue. The 9 different debate issues/ prompts can be found below in the directions for the Term Paper project. The format of the debate is Public Forum, and directions for this style can be found on my website. We will of course be discussing this format in class as well to help best prepare you.

1. Should states take additional measures to reduce voter fraud?
2. Should the electoral college be abolished and be replaced by the popular vote?
3. Are the actions of activist groups like Black Lives Matter threatening the safety of the American people?
4. Has Congress ultimately failed in its legislative oversight duties since Watergate?
5. Will increased drug enforcement under Attorney General Sessions reinforce discriminatory policies?
6. Are term limits necessary to put a check on the increasing politicization of the federal judiciary?
7. Should Congress significantly cut the budget of the Environmental Protection Agency?
8. Are claims of religious freedom being used to discriminate?
9. Do race based admissions criteria continue to undermine equal protection under the law?

Civic Action Project

My goal with the Civic Action Project is to empower students. Before doing so, we will be exploring what policy is, how it works, who is behind it, and how citizens can affect it. For this students will be working in groups of four working on research on a topic of their choice, conducting research on that topic, carrying out a larger public

relations campaign to the larger community, as well as engaging community experts and finally exacting influence themselves on said policy. This project will be split between A.P. Government first semester and Economics second semester.

Expect smaller projects throughout the semester as well. For these there will be more time to prepare in class. These smaller projects will not last more than 3-4 days.

All of these projects are group projects. These projects will require you to work as part of a diverse team. I am well aware of the challenges group work can pose, and will do what is in my power to mitigate some of those challenges on my end where I can. It's worth noting though that this is one of the primary areas many managers are saying is lacking among college graduates, according to an article in Fast Times in May 2016. More importantly, working as part of a team is what makes a democracy tick.

TESTS & QUIZZES

Quizzes will be given at least once a week. These quizzes could take a variety of different forms. Sometimes, they may be multiple choice or fill in questions to answer individually, and other times they may be an oral vocabulary quiz for a group, but will still be graded individually. 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 and released FRQ prompts. 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 or the Cornell Notetaking Template on the assigned chapter. Those templates will be due the Friday following the quiz that week. Please label the notes clearly so I can tell which quiz to exempt you for.

Tests will be given on Fridays. These tests will consist of both short answer (FRQs) and multiple choice. The typical test will have 1 FRQ and 25-35 multiple choice questions. You will have up to 20 minutes for the FRQ and between 25-30 minutes for the multiple choice portion. **Tests can be made up Thursday mornings at 7:20 sharp or after school Thursday afternoons during 6th period. Note that the teacher may use an alternate test.**

The Final Exam will model the College Board exam as closely as the schedule allows, with Part I consisting of 2 Short Answer questions, and Part II 60 multiple choice questions.

RETESTING POLICY

Each student has an opportunity to retest any unit exam throughout the term, including the Constitution test. The retakes must occur though before the next unit exam. 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. The second score will stand, so be ready to take the necessary steps to get ahead. 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.

GRADING SCALE

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

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, 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 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 communicate those changes with the students in advance, and announce those changes using Google Classroom.

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.

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.
- 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.
- 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/williamsapgov/>
- The homework will largely consist of reading the assigned chapters of the textbook, preparation for your debate project, the Civic Action Project and the other smaller projects throughout the semester.
- These projects are group projects, please be ready to work as part of a diverse team.
- If you complete all the chapter notes for a unit, you may use them to boost your exam score, if you score less than 90%. Just turn them in all together on the day of the exam.
- Late work will not be accepted without a Late/Incomplete form attached and completed.
- You may use three late forms this semester.
- Quizzes will happen once a week, typically on Mondays, and unit exams will occur usually every two to three weeks on Fridays.
- The quizzes will be based on the assigned chapter(s) for that week.
- All students are eligible to retest 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 7:20-8:15 or during 6th period from 1:25-2:20 that day.
- 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.
- 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.

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).

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

*Please sign and return the following page of the syllabus to Mr. Williams **by Wednesday, September 6th**.*