



**AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

(5 credits)

SGS 210

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Term and Year: Fall 2024

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



**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In our 12<sup>th</sup> 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, and with this analysis you should leave this class with your own views on this subject.

**COURSE GOALS**

My top goal is to help students craft and refine their voice, which in here will be their 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, writing of various kinds and group presentations. To quote moveon.org, “Democracy is not a spectator sport.” So be ready to participate.

**TEXTBOOKS AND/OR REQUIRED READING**

*Government Alive: Power, Politics, and You, 2020.*

\*This book is a piloted book for the semester. It offers extensive online resources. Those resources will largely be accessed through Clever, which can be accessed using your school login information.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

Content Area	Chapters	Unit Outline
1. Foundations of American Government	3+4, 6	8/19-9/6
2. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	5	9/9-9/27*
3. Political Participation & Behavior	7-10	10/7-10/25
4. The Legislative Branch	12-12	10/28-11/8
5. The Executive Branch and The Federal Bureaucracy	13-14	11/12-11/22
6. The Judicial Branch	15-16	12/2-12/13
7. Civic Empowerment Project Wrap Up	–	12/16-12/20
8. Final Review	–	1/6-1/10



## GRADING

Ongoing Self Assessments	A log where students keep track of their progress on all class assignments preparing them for the Summative Assessment.	10%
Projects	Civic Empowerment Project	30%
Summative Assessments	Multiple choice, short answer, essay and presentations.	60%

## GRADING BASED ON MASTERY (On the standards indicated below)

[California State Standards](#)

[National Standards for Personal Financial Education](#)

[Common Core Standards for Social Studies](#) (pp. 85-95).

## GRADING SCALE

Grade	Score Point	Criteria
A	4 (89.5-100%)	<b>SUPERB - Exceeded the standard</b>
B	3 (79.5-89.4%)	<b>PROFICIENT - Met the standard</b>
C	2 (69.5-79.4%)	<b>DEVELOPING - Student has key gaps in their understanding of the standard</b>
D	1 (59.5-69.4%)	<b>NOVICE - Student is unable to demonstrate Proficient or Superb levels without assistance</b>
<b>Incomplete</b>	<b>Incomplete</b>	<b>No evidence</b>

Rubrics will be used for assignments ranging from presentations to papers. The 1-4 scale demonstrates their proficiency in those areas. The percentages used for summative assessments in IC should be viewed relative to this scale as well.

**1- Novice** Learner knows part of the standard, but may still have learning to accomplish, misconceptions to clear up and practice is needed. They are beginning to understand the standard.

**2- Developing:** Learner knows part of the standard, but still makes mistakes because confidence in their knowledge is developing. More practice is needed to improve their confidence.

**3- Proficient:** Learner knows the standard, but might make a few small mistakes because they are human. They are confident in their learning.

**4- Superb:** Learner knows the standard and can make connections to how this standard relates to other standards. They make little to no mistakes and can justify their thoughts with background knowledge. They can transfer their knowledge to similar, yet different scenarios.



## **GRADING & INFINITE CAMPUS**

Instead of assignment headings like Ch.1 Quiz, you will see something like this 1. Found Docs, 2. SCOTUS Cases. This is intended to demonstrate to students and parents alike exactly where a student is on given standard. Students can then pinpoint their challenge areas, and retake the portion of a quiz that only targets that specific area. In this respect this grading system should help make grades more transparent and students more empowered.

**Extra Credit:** You have enough work to do in the class without extra credit. Focus on developing proficiency on the required standards instead by taking advantage of retakes, and prepping extensively for the projects.

**Late/Incomplete Work:** You may turn in 3 assignments late per semester, but each will require a Late Form fully completed and attached to your assignment. You can find the Late Forms in Google Classroom.. Late Forms will primarily be used on project stages. **I do not accept late work for your Ongoing Self Assessments (OSAs).** My reason is that the whole purpose of the OSA is to prepare you for the quizzes. Turning in OSAs after your quizzes then makes no sense. If you're absent for a quiz, just turn in your OSA for that week after your makeup quiz.

## **STANDARDS BASED GRADING**

Here are a few articles to learn about Standards Based Grading

- <https://kappanonline.org/standards-based-grading-equity-reform-feldman/>
- <http://my.aasa.org/AASA/Resources/SAMag/2019/May19/Feldman.aspx>
- **Grading for Equity** by Joe Feldman (2019: Corwin, Thousand Oaks, CA)

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS & RIGOR:**

**Formative Assessments:** Mastery of content in this class requires participation in group and class discussions and activities, as well as individual study and preparation. Students will be required to complete an ongoing **Student Reflection on Formative Assessment by Standard** to help prepare them for summative assessments. **Formative assessments will be reviewed for accuracy (in class), but not graded.**

**Summative Assessments:** After being introduced to a particular topic, students will be expected to prepare for in-class content application (Presentations/Writing Assignments/Portfolio/Quizzes/Tests).

**Retakes:** Standards Based Grading is about developing a growth mindset. So retakes are a large part of the course. Students will have the opportunity to retake a given assessment on the target standards they are seeking to reach proficiency or above in. Retakes will be offered once a week on Wednesdays during B lunch or before school at 7:30 am. In order to do a retake, the OSA for that content must be complete.

**Makeups:** Students who miss class, will need to make up any Summative and Formative Assessments they are missing **ASAP**. Students can make up the Summative Assessments on the same day and time retakes are offered. Students who are far behind should reach out through Remind, or email so we can coordinate a plan together to get caught up. **Don't let yourself fall behind; advocate for yourself.**



### **Ongoing Self-Assessment**

- This will be a google document that learners will keep track of where they are in the learning process. It will be similar to a portfolio of all their work (formative assessments). It will be a reflective exercise done after each assignment, practice and confidence building, group activity, discussions, reading, and write-ups.

### **REQUIRED MATERIALS**

- Computer - bring to class every day
- Google Classroom will be used to turn in assignments, assessments and projects.
- A device(this can be your laptop) to take and upload pictures of your work to Google Classroom.
- A binder with binder section dividers for this class (Formative Assessments, Handouts, Warmups)
- Lined binder paper
- Pencils and pens(black/blue - no red please)

### **PROJECTS**

#### **Civic Empowerment Project**

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](#).

#### **Presentations/Simulations**

The students will also engage in simulations of town hall meetings, mock Congress, and other multi-day projects that will zero in especially on their ability to master Common Core standards like listening and speaking as well as how best to respond to counter arguments.

### **BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS**

1. Students are expected to be respectful, courteous, and civil. The following are a few of the more notable expectations students will follow:
2. Be on time physically and mentally.
3. Treat others with respect at all times
4. Be on task, and offer help to others if you finish early (when appropriate)
5. Keep your electronic devices hidden and silent unless the instructor approves use.

### **FINAL NOTE**

Please note that after teaching for 21 years I have learned that every group of students is different. With that in mind, I reserve the right to change the 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 by saying what an honor it is to teach 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

This executive summary of the Syllabus is meant for your binder. The full syllabus should be accessed at <https://sites.google.com/scusd.edu/government-with-williams/home> and read closely. Once you and your parent have done so, please complete the Syllabus Verification form on Google Classroom where the full Syllabus can also be found.

- Be ready to take risks. We're all going to be wrong at some point this semester. Let's grow from that.
- Your grade will be based on the standards related to this course alone. Formative assessments, which are practice, will not be graded.
- Summative assessments (quizzes, exams, presentations) and projects (the CEP) represent 90% of your grade in the class. Prepare accordingly, and be willing to try different approaches.
- Retakes (on summative assessments) are an integral part of the class. Take advantage of them and build your proficiency in all the required standards. Retakes will be offered Wednesdays during B Lunch or before school at 7:30.
- Finding information about due dates, review tools, project resources and more can be found on my website [here](#) and of course on Google Classroom.
- Homework in the course will include any prep work students complete through the [TCI website](#) for the text in preparation for the Summative Assessments, smaller projects or the [Civic Empowerment Project](#).
- The homework will largely consist of students reading and taking notes on chapters from the text. However, these notes can take many different forms.
- The projects are largely group projects, so please be ready to work as part of a diverse team.
- Quizzes will happen once a week and nearly always fall on Fridays, so please do all you can not to miss those days.
- All students are eligible to retest any section of any unit quiz once they have either completed the relevant homework and or attended a lunch tutoring session before the retest.
- Late work will not be accepted without a completed Late/Incomplete form. You can find the Late Forms in Google Classroom. You get 3 per semester.
- **Late work will not be accepted for OSAs.**
- 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 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.

Again, please fill out the Syllabus Verification Form on Google Classroom to ask any questions or express any concerns about the course. You can also email me anytime at [brett-williams@scusd.edu](mailto:brett-williams@scusd.edu) or call me at 916-395-5090 Ext. 506304.

Scan the QR code below to access my website.

