

CIS: 1435 American Government and Politics

Mr. O'Brien- Room 114

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Course Description

This course is primarily a study of the individual in relation to government. It examines the actors and institutions of contemporary American government and politics. Topics of study include American political thought, the Constitution, federalism, public opinion, interest groups, political parties, campaigns and elections, the mass media, Congress, the President, the bureaucracy, and the Judiciary. There is special emphasis on citizen participation. The emphasis will be on political parties and the changing relationships between voters and political parties. The course will survey the influences at work today on political parties- public opinion, interest groups, and polling and voting behavior. Campaign organizations and how campaigns are financed will be studied, as well as American political cultures and ideologies, and the impact of the media on elections. The course will include the chapters on the Congress and the Presidency, but the emphasis again will be on citizen participation. There will be a number of additional readings based upon current events. The semester will conclude with Mock Trial.

This syllabus is your course guide. Additional copies are available through the school website. This course is college-level for college credit through Central Lake College. Parkers Prairie High School does not guarantee the transferability of credits. For transferability details, see Mrs. Thorson.

Goals and Objectives

- 1- to know and understand the political process
- 2- to understand the impact of the individual and citizens in the political and electoral process and how it influences the institutions of Congress, the Presidency, and the federal courts, and ultimately public policy in American life.

Course Materials

- ♦ American Government and Politics Today
- ♦ Numerous Articles and Book Excerpts
 - All assigned reading material is to be read and is fair game on tests.
- ♦ Every student is expected to follow current events. Every Friday there will be a current events quiz. There will be 15 questions and you must answer 10. Great sources for the news include the 6:30 nightly network news, the Star Tribune, and washingtonpost.com. International, national, and state issues are fair game on the quizzes.
- ♦ There is a small course fee, which will be determined based upon which seminar you are in. It will not exceed \$15.

Grading System

This course is college-level. Therefore the expectations are raised. As always, learning is the number one priority. The second is grades- A GRADE BELOW A 'C' CAN LAND YOU ON ACADEMIC PROBATION BEFORE YOU EVEN LEAVE FOR COLLEGE! Mr. O'Brien does not give grades- you EARN them. No late work will be accepted outside emergencies, illness, etc. If you miss a quiz or test, it must be completed within three school days or it will be a zero. Take good notes, be engaged in classroom discussion, ask questions, and be on time and ready to go. We have a lot to do.

All this said a couple of points need to be inserted regarding this class. Whining about homework, readings, class work, etc. is not acceptable in this course. This will affect your grade. If you want a high school course, switch out of this class and take a high school course. If you are among PPHS's best and brightest, you are expected to carry yourself as such. Lastly, I am available for help but only if you have already made an honest attempt.

Grading System

Quizzes and Exams: 40%

Final Exam: 10%

Course Work: 25%

Service Learning Project: 15%

Seminar 10%

A Typical Week

M & W: Lecture and class activities

-This portion of the class involves rigorous note-taking and the atmosphere will be very formal. Students will be expected to maintain thorough and complete notes through the semester if they wish to succeed. This course will have a cumulative final and students who fall behind early (or at any point) will have great difficulty performing well on the final.

T: Community Service/Volunteer Work and Seminar Day

- Seminars are a course within a course. The class will be split into three groups which will each be investigating a different area of politics. We will meet as a class the first Thursday to determine these groups. Each group will meet every third Tuesday. Grade will be determined by attendance, participation, and writing assignments.

T: Discussion on readings and class activities

F: Current Events Quiz and Current Events Challenge day.

-Current Events Challenge is included in the course work grade and points are earned on participation.

Tests can land on any day of the week.

Community Service/Volunteer Work

This project will be discussed as a class the first couple of Tuesdays. Tentative plan would involve 10 hours of community service/volunteer work and the additional requirement of attendance of one Student Council meeting, one School Board meeting, and one City Council meeting. This is worth 15% of the course grade. The attached form must be completed for credit along with a reflective essay.

Seminar Day

Current working ideas for seminar days include:

- Political Climate during times of Presidential Assassinations
- Major Political Current Events in Context
- The Media Gets it Wrong: A Look at 10 Misreported Political Events

Writing Assignments

Whenever a source is used, it must be cited in your paper. Use MLA style citation. If you do not know what it is, you have options: go online, ask your English teacher, or- if needed- I will hold a special session during advisee time the second or third week of class to address the topic.

Note: Assignments listed are by no means the only assignments- rather they are the major assignment for the week.

Course Calendar (subject to change)

Unit One: The Constitution

Activities: lecture 1

Reading: AGP 1-22

Assignment: Read ahead!!

Unit Two: The Constitution

Activities: lecture 2, The Constitution Challenge

Reading: AGP 28-55, Federalist 39, 47, 48, 51 (Madison), 16, 17 (Hamilton)

Assignment: The Bill of Rights: Keep One, Drop One with rationale; The Bill of Rights in modern vernacular

Unit Three: Federalism

Activities: lecture 3

Reading: AGP 78-102, TEST

Assignment: Essay One: Compose a letter to the editor on a current issue. Detail which newspaper it would be sent to. Use proper format.

Unit Four: Civil Right and Civil Liberties

Activities: lecture 4, View Unfinished Business

Reading: AGP 109-141, 170-183

Assignment: Essay Two: Case Summaries of the following: Buck v. Bell, Roe v. Wade, Gitlow v. New York, Everson v. Board of Education, Brown v. Board of Education, Engel v. Vitale, Griswold v. Connecticut, Lee v. Weisman, Miranda v. Arizona, Gideon v. Wainwright, Near v. Minnesota. Summarize the case, the year, and the impact.

Unit Five: Public Opinion

Activities: lecture 5, Quiz on cases

Reading: AGP 191-214

Assignment: work on ad

Unit Six: Interest Groups

Activities: lecture 6

Reading: AGP 221-244

Assignment: Create your own special interest ad (due Wednesday of this week for viewing and discussion).

Unit Seven: Political Parties

Activities: lecture 7, The Third Party Debate, maybe a Nader movie for Trent

Reading: AGP 249-278, 'Political Parties in Divided Government' by Mayhew

Assignment: Using information from your reading, either endorse or create a 3rd Party.

Unit Eight: Voting and Elections

Activities: lecture 8

Reading: AGP 285-329, 'Voting Behavior: Rational or Irrational' by Berelson, Lazarsfeld, McPhee, 'Lessons for Political Science' from Electing Jesse Ventura

Assignment: Voter Apathy is back! The reforms proposed by The Vanishing Voter, agree or disagree and provide rationale.

Unit Nine: Campaigning for Office

Activities: lecture 9, view Can Mr. Smith Still get to Washington?, discuss Nixon/JFK debate, view Willie Horton ad, Daisy Girl ad, and deliberative discourse on the Primary System

Reading: 'The Responsible Electorate' by Key

Assignment: Mr. Smith evaluation

Unit Ten: Flex Week

Unit Eleven: The Congress

Activities: TEST ON MONDAY!, lecture 11

Reading: AGP 337-365, 'Ten Things I Wish Political Scientists Would Teach About Congress' from American Politics

Assignment: Prepare for Mock Congress

Unit Twelve: The Congress

Activities: lecture 12, Mock Congress

Reading: Gingrich 'Contract with America'

Assignment: Watch Political Shows! Compose a reaction and reflection

Unit Thirteen: The President

Activities: lecture 13

Reading: AGP 373-400, Some Theories of the US Presidency, Lord Bryce reading

Assignment: What Makes a Great President? Essay

Unit Fourteen: The President

Activities: The President's -----

Reading: Bush 41 'Address on the War with Iraq'

Assignment: Compare/Contrast Presidencies, Presidential Line of Succession

Unit Fifteen: the Bureaucracy

Activities: lecture 14, select topic and prep

Reading: AGP 407-430

Assignment: The Bureaucratic Presentation Challenge

Unit Sixteen: The Courts

Activities: Begin Mock Trial preparation, lecture 15, Who's on the Supreme Court?

Reading: AGP 425-458

Assignment: Prep for Mock Trial

Unit Seventeen: Mock Trial

Activities: Mock Trial

Reading: Read all Mock Trial Prep Material

Assignment: Prep for Mock Trial

Unit Eighteen: Finals Week and Service Learning Wrap-up

Activities: STUDY!

Reading: see above

Assignment: see above

Unit Nineteen: GOODBYE SENIORS!

COMMUNITY SERVICE/VOLUNTEER WORK HOURS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>SIGNATURE</u>
-----		SCHOOL BOARD MEETING	
-----		CITY COUNCIL MEETING	
-----		STUDENT COUNCIL MEETING	