

Government - Syllabus

Guidelines for Mr. Wood's 2012/13 Government Course

The words that shape our Constitution are as potent now as they were when the founding fathers met in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. Unfortunately, American citizens and those who govern this nation are today a long ways removed from those ideals. The core of our problem is that the government of the United States is so totally disengaged from the people they are sworn to serve. The reasons for this are numerous; however the single greatest cause is obvious; "We the People" are virtually uninvolved in the process of governing. Good portions of us are ignorant not only to the chronicle of our founding, but the history that has shaped us since. We don't vote nearly in the numbers that a healthy democracy would necessitate. Maybe most dangerous of all, we allow others: in television and news media, on blogs, and radio talk shows to tell us how to think. A large majority of Americans have given up on the political process, except maybe to vote for a presidential candidate once every four years; and often then inspired by message of a 30 second TV commercial. The result is an impotent democracy manipulated by lobbyists, and corporate and special interests dollars. It will be our mission here to challenge this dysfunctional relationship. In order to do so, we will roll up our sleeves and dig in not only to our political history but your current role in that play. And we will act! One of the greatest assets of our Constitution is that the Bill of Rights begs for citizen participation. Freedoms of press and assembly and speech have driven involvement from the beginning; often in conflict with the very government that is contracted to protect those rights. The Civil Rights movement in the sixties flowered from the vine of the Constitution; as did the women's voting rights movement before it. Those rights are just as accessible today. They only need to be rediscovered. And that's what we intend to do. We'll work to secure that the relationship between citizens' rights and responsibilities gets the focus that it deserves and that our final product is not a standardized score on a standardized test but the nurturing of an informed and enlightened and involved citizenry.

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HOMEWORK - 25%

Focus Questions will account for a large majority of your homework grade. Focus Questions are a series of four or five questions and accompanying reading assignments (10 to 12 pages) usually two chapters. Focus Questions will be assigned prior to class discussion, so that when we discuss a concept, a chapter, our discussion will be active. I expect that you will answer these questions in detail and in your own words. Assignments are worth 40 points.

VOCABULARY - PODCAST POSTS on the Buddha Blog

I am trying something new this year in an effort to increase your vocabulary for A.C.T. Testing. I will regularly post terms that you need to know for each course. Those terms will be explained in depth, with examples in audio podcast form posted on my blog. You'll have continual access to the posts. We will test on the terms. In Economics these terms will be an essential part of Quizzes (below). So, check that blog and know those terms.

QUIZZES - 25%

At the beginning of each unit of study you will be provided a list of Government Terms. This list of terms will be noted on the front white board throughout the chapter study. These terms will serve as a focus for quizzes. Two question, twenty point quizzes of the **CLOSED NOTE** variety will be assigned regularly, so you should be reviewing your discussion notes on your own. We will not have any of these quizzes until we have thoroughly discussed the topics. You will **NOT** know when these quizzes will be announced.

PROJECTS - 25% ACT (ACTION COUNTS TODAY)

My number one goal for the study of United States Government is that students get involved. ACT gets students involved. Students will create their own Special Interest Group of two to four individuals. They will work for the semester in this group. They will find an issue that is important to them and become advocates for that cause. In *Marking Period #1* students will choose their issue and research it. They will follow their issue online and in the press. They will research both pro and con for their specific issue and write a mission statement for their ACT group. *Marking Period #2* will see ACT groups contacting similar interest groups and writing political representatives concerning their viewpoint. They will also be expected to and be graded on phone calls to their elected representatives. *Marking Period #3* will be all about ACTION. ACT groups are required to perform two of six tasks promoting their cause. They may 1 - choose to assemble and picket for the cause, or petition to inform the public. 2 - Groups may volunteer for a similar organization. 3 - They may circulate flyers in public, or the high school cafeteria or 4 - attend a political rally. Intervention 5 requires ACT groups to create and maintain both a Facebook Page and Blog that highlights their issue. At the end of the course it is my hope that students will recognize the potential benefits of being highly involved in their own government.

COMMON ASSESSMENTS - 25%

Five common assessment exams will concentrate on the basic terminology and fundamental concepts of Government. These common assessments will not be Open Notes. See course breakdown below for CA topics.

ELECTION VOLUNTEERING EXTRA CREDIT - you will have the opportunity to get fully involved in the 2012 election. Check Mr.Wood's Classroom philosophy statement for details.

Proficiency Policy for the study of Senior Current Issues

- 1 - According to OHS student handbook, student must pass three out of the four marking periods / final.
- 2 - All students must take the final exam.
- 2 - A 60% average on Common Assessments is a requirement for passing the course.
- 3 - Student must satisfy the high school attendance policy (Student Handbook page 17).

Primary Materials Provided: Textbook

McClenaghan, William A., American Government, (Department of Political Science, Oregon State University. 2002

Common Assessment Topics / Text Chapters / Topics

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| #1 - Conceptual Foundations of Civic and Political Life | Chapters 1 |
| #2 - Origins and Foundations of American Government | Chapters 2, 3 |
| #3 - Structure and Function of American Government | Chapters 4, 10, 11, 13, 14, 18 |
| #4 - The United States of America and World Affairs | Chapters throughout the semester |
| #5 - Citizenship in the United States of America | ACT - Chapters 19, 20, 21 |
| #6 - Citizenship in Action | ACT - Chapters 19, 20, 21 |