

Government - Syllabus

Guidelines for Mr. Wood's 2014/15 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 fully disengaged from the people they are sworn to serve. The reasons for this are numerous; however the single greatest cause is obvious; public policy and public interest are disengaged. "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 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 dysfunction. In order to do so, we will roll up our sleeves and dig in, not only to our political history, but to your current role in that play. And we will act! 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.

We will focus on the following topics:

MP#1 - Civil Rights Movement up close culminating with Selma, AL. (concentration on 14th Amendment)

MP#2 - The words and the spirit of the the Declaration of Independence.

MP#3 - The Constitution's structure and the power of the Bill of Rights.

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, our discussion will be active. I expect that you will answer these questions in detail and in your own words. Assignments are worth 50 points.

VOCABULARY - PODCAST POSTS on the Buddha Blog

I have been working diligently in the past couple of years to incorporate the Buddha Blog into your comprehension of course terms. Nearly all of the terms posted on the front white board for Economics and Government, are defined by me in audio podcasts located on my blog. The podcasts generally run 3:00 to 5:00 in length. Make sure to listen and review these terms regularly through out the course as they will be the basis for all quizzes, and as a review for chapter tests and the Final Exam.

QUIZZES - 25%

A list of key Government terms will be located on the front white board throughout the chapter study. Make careful note of these terms as they will serve as a basis for our course 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. You can review these terms on audio podcasts located on the Buddha blog. We will not quiz until you fully understand posted terms. This understanding will be measurable - I will place the number of the class hour next to an individual term when I feel the class has full understanding. I will NOT put the numeral up until everybody in the class agrees on its placement. One person may veto the placement of the numeral. However, once the class hour is posted for that particular term, it is fair game for any quiz. 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 #2* 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 #3* 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. *Extra Credit* will be all about ACTION. Groups 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.

At the end of this 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.

OHS Proficiency Policy for passing Government

- 1 - A student must average 60% on two Marking Periods (40% & 40% of final grade) and Final Exam (20%).
- 2 - All students must take the final exam.
- 3 - A student must average 60% on all Common Assessments.
- 4 - Student must satisfy the high school attendance policy.

Primary Materials Provided: Textbook

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

Common Assessment Topics / Text Chapters / Topics

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| #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 |