

# AP American Government and Politics Course Syllabus

*“Non Scholae Sed Vitae”*

– “Not for school, but for life”

**Instructor:** Mr. Dain Leytem

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**Prep:** 3rd period, before and after school by appointment. Room B144

## Course Overview

This course is designed to give students an analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States. It includes the study of general concepts used to interpret our government as well as practice in the analysis of specific examples, current and historical. This course will familiarize students with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute our government and politics. In addition, students will explore the political theory and everyday practice that impact the daily operation of our government and shape our public policies. The purpose of this course is to prepare students to take the AP Exam for U.S. Government and Politics given yearly in May. It is expected that every student enrolled in this class will take the AP test. This course is taught on a college level and requires a substantial amount of reading and preparation. The class itself goes beyond a basic analysis of how our government works, and requires students to develop a critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the American Political System, as well as the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. This course will provide students with practice analyzing and interpreting data and other information relevant to U.S. government and politics. Students will read many supplemental articles, including primary source documents and contemporary news pieces.

## Materials you will need:

- Text Book:  
Magleby, O’Brien, Light, Peltason, Cronin, Government by the People. Prentice Hall, 2008.
- 3 ring binder
- Spiral Notebook (for this class only)
- Writing utensils (including a highlighter)
- Student Agenda

It is important for you to bring these items with you every day. Failure to be prepared for class could result in loss of points. If you have any problem obtaining any of these materials, please see me.

## Units of Study

In addition to the timeline below, throughout the semester, students will become familiar with current issues in our society through the use of current events.

- I. Constitutional Underpinnings of the United States Government
- II. Federalism
- III. Political Beliefs and Political Behaviors
- IV. Political Parties, Interest Groups and Mass Media
- V. Institutions of National Government
- VI. Public Policy
- VII. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

**Additional Course Readings** *(This is a sample, not all are listed):*

- The Constitution of the United States & Declaration of Independence
- Lanahan Readings; The American Polity
- A People’s History of the United States (Shay’s Rebellion) – Howard Zinn
- Why we have a Bill of Rights – Leonard Levy
- Supreme Court Decisions (Marbury v. Madison, Mapp v. Ohio, Miranda v. Arizona, Brown v. Board of Education, Gideon v. Wainwright, etc.)

**Methodology:**

This course will incorporate many different learning strategies and activities throughout the semester. They include, but are not limited to: teacher and student led lecture/discussion, independent reading and note taking, research, in-class simulations, debates, guest speakers, presentations, field-trips and campaigning. If at any time a parent/guardian objects to their student participating in a particular activity, they can contact me so an alternative assignment can be arranged for that lesson.

**Learning Goals:**

1. Students will be able to describe important facts, concepts and theories pertaining to the U.S. Government and politics, including the fundamental feature of the American Government and the processes by which public policy decisions are made.
2. Students will demonstrate understanding of the typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences (including: components of political behavior, principles of various government structures and procedures, and the political effects of these structures and procedures).
3. Students will be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to the U.S. Government and its associated politics (including data presented in charts, maps, graphs, tables and other formats).
4. Students will be able to critically analyze relevant theories and concepts, apply them appropriately, and develop their connections across the curriculum.
5. Students will be able to communicate with their elected officials on a local, state, and federal level.
6. Students will be able to make informed, responsible decisions when participating in the American political process.
7. Students will learn to establish a “learning community” where students use each other as resources and guides in their learning endeavors.

**Grading Scale**

|    |        |    |       |    |       |
|----|--------|----|-------|----|-------|
| A  | 93-100 | C+ | 77-79 | D- | 60-62 |
| A- | 90-92  | C  | 73-76 | F  | 0-59  |
| B+ | 87-89  | C- | 70-72 |    |       |
| B  | 83-86  | D+ | 67-69 |    |       |
| B- | 80-82  | D  | 63-66 |    |       |

*\*Any act of cheating will result in a meeting with your parents/guardians, guidance counselor, Assistant Principal and myself to discuss disciplinary actions.*

### Evaluation/Assessment:

Grades will be based upon, but not limited to, daily reading/homework, tests, projects, quizzes, essays, attendance, participation, FRQ's and a semester exam. Each of these areas will be added together for your final cumulative grade. Participation points can be lost by lack of participation in class discussions, lack of preparedness, disruptive behavior, and tardiness. Students not taking the AP test in May will be issued a final prepared by the instructor at the end of the semester.

### Extra Evidence:

Extra Evidence comes on a very limited basis, so don't expect it. Also, EE is added on at the semester grade only.

### Assignments:

If you do your homework consistently you will greatly increase your chance for success on quizzes, tests and most importantly the AP Exam. All assignments are expected to be turned in on the date due. Any assignment turned in after the due date will result in half credit and will only be accepted up to that unit's final assessment. You will get full credit for work that is original, complete and done on time. If you have a situation or problem, it is in your best interest to at least tell me why you are not prepared for class.

\* It is **YOUR** responsibility to find out what assignments you missed in your absence and make arrangements to make up missed work. If you are absent, you will be given the same amount of days in which you were absent to make up your work (Example: If you miss 2 days, you will be given 2 days to turn in missing assignments when you return). It is in your best interest to not be absent for this class as we will cover a substantial amount of material each day.

### Food and Drink:

Food and all drinks besides water are not allowed in this classroom. There will be one warning and then a possible referral to the AP.

### Expectations and Behaviors

1. **Show RESPECT for your classmates, your teachers and our learning community.**
2. In order to get the most out of this class you need to be an **active learning participant**. An active learning participant completes all readings and assignments prior to class and participates during class discussions. This includes taking your own notes. Notebooks may be checked periodically for points.
3. You are expected to be in class every day and on time. You will receive a tardy if you are not in your seat by the time the bell rings. If absenteeism or tardiness becomes a problem, I will address the issue on a case by case basis. This will include loss of daily participation points, interventions and possible referrals.
4. Do not line up by the door at the end of class.
5. Language is important. This is an academic environment and I expect you to conduct yourself in that manner. Inappropriate language and behavior will not be tolerated.
6. **ABSOLUTELY NO electronic devices should be seen or heard in this classroom.** If you are caught using any devices in my room I will confiscate the item and you may pick it up from me at the end of the day. If this is a habitual problem, the item will be sent to the AP office. I take this point very seriously.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism/cheating will not be tolerated in this class. By definition plagiarism is taking another person's work/ideas and passing them off as your own. Ignorance is not an excuse. You are responsible for the work you turn. Your work must be your own thoughts/ideas or you must properly cite the use of someone else's thoughts/ideas. Consequence for plagiarism/cheating will be receiving a zero for that grade and an office referral. (PVHS - Youngbauer)

**What you can expect from me**

1. Be reliable, fair, timely, resourceful and prepared
2. Treat you as a young adult
3. Treat you as a valuable part of this learning community
4. Help you succeed in American Government
5. Introduce you to the skills that you will need for life after high school

**Learning Standards:**

CLE 2.1 - The student will use historical perspective and habits of thinking to analyze how humans view themselves in and over time.

CLE 3.1 - The student will analyze geographical information about people, places, and environments.

CLE 4.2 - The student will analyze the interactions between groups, institutions, individual human development, and personal identity.

CLE 5.1 - The student will analyze the interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions and their impact on society.

CLE 6.1 - The student will explain how people create and change structures of power, authority, and government.

CLE 7.1 - The student will apply the economic principles of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

CLE 8.2 - The student will analyze the relationship between science, technology, and society

CLE 9.1 - The student will evaluate the impact of globalization and interdependence.

CLE 10.1 -The student will demonstrate citizenship in a democratic republic.

**Success Depends on You!**

In order to succeed in AP American Government and Politics and life after high school, you need to be willing to put forth effort! Therefore, I challenge you to work hard, have fun and try your best at everything you do.

Remember that you can always come to me with any questions or concerns you may have throughout the year. I will make myself available to you as much as I can. Come to class, work hard and you will find a great deal of fun and success in this course. Let's have a great semester!

-Mr. Leytem

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**I have read and understand my obligation for American Government.**

*Student's Name (Print)*

*Student's Signature*

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**I have read and understand the requirements and obligations of American Government.**

*Parent/Guardian Signature*

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If available, list both your student's email address, as well as your own, so that I can contact you with any important information throughout the school year. Thank you!

*Student Email*

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*Parent(s) Email*

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