

# American Government Course Syllabus

*“Non Scholae Sed Vitae”*

– “Not for school, but for life”

**Instructor:** Mr. Dain Leytem

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**Prep:** 7<sup>th</sup> period, before and after school by appointment. Room B-138.

## Course Overview

This course is designed to provide students with the background knowledge of the American governmental system at the National and State levels and how it works to meet the needs of its citizens. It is also designed to increase the student’s level of awareness about local and statewide issues that affect our daily lives.

The student will be challenged to become an informed citizen and develop his/her own opinions regarding the role of government in our lives. They will evaluate the actions of the American government and learn to understand the role each of us plays in this democratic society. The students will be confronted with differing viewpoints that will challenge their personal reasoning, helping to develop critical thinking skills necessary for life beyond high school. Students will also be exposed to civic events to introduce them to the lifelong responsibilities of being an American Citizen.

Along with our US Government studies, it is important to me that you learn to become a class community where every student feels safe and confident to actively participate. Students will also be expected to work cooperatively with their peers, a skill that needs to be mastered for life after high school.

## Materials you will need:

- Text Book- Fraga, Luis, US Government: Principles in Practice. Holt McDougal, 2010.
- 3 ring binder
- Spiral Notebook (for this class only)
- Writing utensils (highlighter included)
- School Planner

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 and Timeline

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. Foundations of the American Political System
- II. Legislative Branch (National, Iowa)
- III. Executive Branch (National, Iowa)
- IV. Judicial Branch (National, Iowa)
- V. Political Parties and Interest Groups
- VI. Citizens’ Rights
- VII. Current Events/ Civic Participation (throughout semester -- Classroom Activities)

**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.

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

- The Constitution of the United States
- Declaration of Independence
- Federalist Papers 11, 71
- Lanahan Readings
- Supreme Court Decisions (Marbury v. Madison, Mapp v. Ohio, Miranda v. Arizona, Brown v. Board of Education, Gideon v. Wainwright, etc.)

**Learning Goals:**

1. To introduce students to the American governmental system.
2. Promote civic responsibility as an American citizen.
3. To strengthen students’ reading, writing and argumentative skills, which are vital to other academic subjects and life after high school.
4. To promote critical thinking, an important skill for individuals in a democratic society.
5. To establish a learning community where students can use each other as resources and guides in learning endeavors.

**Standards:**

- CLE Standard 4.2- The student will analyze the interactions between groups, institutions, individual human development, and personal identity.
- CLE Standard 5.2- The student will analyze the interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions and their impact on society.
- CLE Standard 6.3- The student will explain how people create and change structures of power, authority, and government.
- CLE Standard 7.3- The student will apply the economic principles of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.
- CLE Standard 9.1- The student will evaluate the impact of globalization and interdependence.
- CLE Standard 10.1- The student will demonstrate citizenship in a democratic republic.

**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 Principle 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. Learning Skills and Work Habits' points can be lost by lack of participation in class discussions, lack of preparedness, disruptive behavior, and tardiness.

### **Extra Evidence:**

Extra Evidence is an alternative means of showing competency in an area of study. EE comes on a very limited basis, so don't expect it. In addition, EE is added on to the semester grade only.

### **Assignments:**

If you do your homework consistently you will greatly increase your chance for success on tests and quizzes. 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. Do this ahead of time and not on the day an assignment is due.

\* 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.

### **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 in. 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.

### **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.**
- 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 and forming your own thoughts on areas of discussion. Notebooks will be checked periodically for completion.
- 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.
- Do not line up by the door at the end of class.
- 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.
- ABSOLUTELY NO electronic devices should be seen or heard in this classroom unless given permission by the instructor.** If you are caught using any devices in my room without permission 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.

**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

**Success Depends on You!**

Success is a choice that everyone can choose to make. In order to succeed in American Government 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 this year.

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 for my student.**

*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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