

U.S. GOVERNMENT / AP – COLLEGE PARK HIGH SCHOOL

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FALL SEMESTER, 2020. Welcome! I look forward to exploring the discipline of political science and government with each of you and assisting you with other academic problems or concerns. I will be available before and after school to answer any questions you may have.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: During this course, we will examine various historical, philosophical, and legal aspects of our government, to gain a fuller understanding of how we as a nation fit into a rapidly changing world. Using the “4 Theories of American Government” as a theme, we will explore the numerous institutions and processes which comprise our system of government.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: By the completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a *basic* understanding of some of the concepts and terminology used in the philosophy of science and political science.
2. Identify and explain the four most commonly debated theories used to describe our system of government.
3. Identify the historical context and the philosophies of those who framed the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
4. Understand the dynamics of our “separation of powers” and the institutions (the courts, the executive, the legislature, and the media) that comprise them.
5. Identify the principles of federalism and how state and local governments differ from those at the federal level.
6. Analyze and *critically* evaluate some of the important and contemporary issues in the world today, based on 1 – 5 above.
7. Demonstrate the necessary test-taking skills and strategies for success on the AP Government exam given in May of 2021.

COURSE TEXT: [American Politics Today](#). Instructor will provide other assigned readings which will be available on the class website.

COURSE METHODOLOGY: Class will consist primarily of lectures and class discussions, which will serve to amplify and clarify text materials. Students will also be expected to do a significant amount of reading and drills in preparation for the AP Government exam in May. Student progress will be evaluated through text assignments, journal responses to articles, a written research project and discussion board responses to videos.

EXAMINATION/EVALUATION: Students should be prepared to do a significant amount of writing through journal responses to articles and a college level research project. Purchase of an AP exam guide (Barron’s, ARCO, or Kaplan) is not required but is *strongly* recommended. Homework will consist of reading and preparing your written research project. There is no planned mid-term or final exam. Class participation in discussions is encouraged. Student participation in class is an indicator of interest and shows that the student is keeping up with the assigned readings. Grades will break out over a normal letter grade percentage scale (100-90% = “A”, 89-80% = “B”, etc...) Assignment weights will be the following:

- 10% - Documentary Video Participation (through Google Discussion Boards)
- 15% - Text Assignments (on class website)
- 15% - Journal Responses to Articles (on class website)
- 60% - Research Project (on class website)

Extra credit projects are neither necessary nor allowed in this course.

COURSE OUTLINE – U.S. GOVERNMENT AP

APT = American Politics Today (class text)

Lecture One: *Understanding American Politics*

Readings: APT, Chapter 1 (pp. 1 – 25).

Lecture Two: *Political Ideologies and Parties*

Readings: APT, Chapter 8 (pp. 252 – 287).

Lecture Three: *The Constitution and the Founding*

Readings: APT, Chapter 2 (pp. 26 – 63).

Lecture Four: *Federalism*

Readings: APT, Chapter 3 (pp. 64 – 97).

Lecture Five: *The Legislative Branch (Congress)*

Readings: APT, Chapter 11 (pp. 362 – 405).

Lecture Six: *The Executive Branch (President)*

Readings: APT, Chapter 12 (pp. 406 – 439).

Lecture Seven: *The Judicial Branch (The Courts)*

Readings: APT, Chapter 14 (pp. 474 – 515).

Lecture Eight: *The Bureaucracy*

Readings: APT, Chapter 13 (pp. 440 – 473).

Lecture Nine: *Public Opinion and the Mass Media*

Readings: APT, Chapters 6 and 7 (pp. 190 – 251)

Lecture Ten: *Elections*

Readings: APT, Chapter 9 (pp. 286 – 329).

Lecture Eleven: *Interest Groups*

Readings: APT, Chapter 10 (pp. 330 – 361).

Lecture Twelve: *Social Policy*

Readings: APT, Chapter 16 (pp. 556 – 597).

Lecture Thirteen: *Economic Policy*

Readings: APT, Chapter 15 (pp. 516 – 555).

Lecture Fourteen: *Foreign Policy*

Readings: APT, Chapter 17 (pp. 598 – 637).

Lecture Fifteen: *Civil Liberties and Civil Rights*

Readings: APT, Chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 98 – 189).