

U.S. GOVERNMENT – COLLEGE PARK HIGH SCHOOL
kropfpolisici.com

INSTRUCTOR: MR. KROPF / (925) 682-7670 EXT. # 2229 / kropfj@mdusd.org

FALL SEMESTER, 2016. 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 of your questions.

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: 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. Analyze the principles of federalism, and identify how state and local governments differ from those at the federal level.
6. Understand the fundamental differences between other forms of government and/or economic systems, such as socialism, fascism, and communism.
7. Analyze and *critically* evaluate some of the important and contemporary issues in the United States today, based on 1-6 above.

COURSE TEXT: Magruder’s American Government. Instructor will provide other assigned readings which we will read in class and on the web.

COURSE METHODOLOGY: Class will consist primarily of class lectures and discussions, which will amplify, clarify, and critically analyze the textbook. Students will be expected to read assigned material prior to lectures/discussions. Student progress will be evaluated through written essays, class work from the text and notes, and a final exam.

EXAMINATION/EVALUATION: Students should be prepared to do a significant amount of essay writing on research projects as I am not particularly fond of multiple “guess” or true/false type assessments. Homework will consist mostly of reading and preparing your written research projects. You should plan on the final exam in January to be *cumulative*. There will be no mid-term. Class participation 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 normal “letter grade” percentage scale (i.e. 100-90% = “A”, 89-80% = “B”, etc...). Assignment weights will be the following:

- 10% - Documentary video participation
- 10% - Text work
- 25% - Final exam
- 55% - Written research projects

Extra credit is neither necessary nor allowed for this course.

COURSE OUTLINE
MAG = Magruder's American Government (class text)

Unit One: *Principles and Origins of American Government*

Readings: MAG, 1.1 – 1.4; 2.1 – 2.4 (pp. 2 – 72).

Unit Two: *The Constitution*

Readings: MAG, 3.1 – 3.2 (pp. 76 – 98).

Unit Three: *Federalism*

Readings: MAG, 3.3 – 3.4 (pp. 99 – 121).

Unit Four: *The Legislative Branch (Congress)*

Readings: MAG, 4.1 – 4.6 (pp. 126 - 195).

Unit Five: *The Executive Branch (President)*

Readings: MAG, 5.1 – 5.4 (pp. 198 – 230); 6.2 (pp. 242 – 250).

Unit Six: *The Judicial Branch (Supreme Court)*

Readings: MAG, 7.1 – 7.3 (pp. 296 - 320).

Unit Seven: *The Bureaucracy*

Readings: MAG, 6.1, 6.3 (pp. 234 – 241 and 251 - 260).

Unit Eight: *Public Opinion and the Mass Media*

Readings: MAG, 10.5 – 10.6 (pp. 458 - 479).

Unit Nine: *American Political Parties*

Readings: MAG, 11.1 (pp. 502 – 517).

Unit Ten: *Voting, Voter Behavior, and Elections*

Readings: MAG, 10.1 – 10.4 (pp 422 – 457); 11.2 – 11.4 (pp. 518 – 555).

Unit Eleven: *Interest Groups*

Readings: MAG, 10.7 (pp. 480 – 496).

Unit Twelve: *The Policy-Making Process*

Readings: Instructor notes and web readings.

Unit Thirteen: *Economic Policy*

Readings: MAG, 12.1 – 12.5 (pp. 560 – 607).

Unit Fourteen: *Foreign Policy and National Security Policy*

Readings: MAG, 6.4 – 6.6 (pp. 261 – 291).

Unit Fifteen: *Civil Liberties and Civil Rights*

Readings: MAG, 8.1 – 8.7 (pp. 324 – 385); 9.1 – 9.4 (pp. 388 – 418).