

**U.S. GOVERNMENT – COLLEGE PARK HIGH SCHOOL**  
**kropfpolis.com**

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

**SPRING SEMESTER, 2021.** 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:** American Government Today. Instructor will provide other assigned readings which we will be available on the class website.

**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 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 essay writing on research projects and journal responses 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 project. There is no planned mid-term or final exam. 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 (through Google Discussion Board)
- 10% - Text assignments (on website)
- 30% - Journal responses to articles (on website)
- 50% - Written research project (on website)

Extra credit is neither necessary nor allowed for this course.

## **COURSE OUTLINE – U.S. GOVERNMENT**

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).