

# U.S. GOVERNMENT – COLLEGE PARK HIGH SCHOOL

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**SPRING SEMESTER, 2018.** 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 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:** William A. McClenaghan. 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 June 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 – U.S. GOVERNMENT**

MAG = American Government (class text) / INWEB = Instructor notes and web readings

### **Unit One**

#### **Course Introduction – Principles and Origins of American Government:**

Readings: MAG, Chapters 1 / 2 (pp. 2 – 61) and 22 / 23 (pp. 622 – 679) and INWEB.

### **Unit Two**

#### **The Constitution:**

Readings: MAG, Chapter 3 (pp. 62 – 85) and INWEB.

### **Unit Three**

#### **Federalism and State and Local Government:**

Readings: MAG, Chapters 4 (pp. 84 – 111) and 24 / 25 (pp. 680 – 746) and INWEB.

### **Unit Four**

#### **The Legislative Branch (Congress):**

Readings: MAG, Chapters 10 / 11 / 12 (pp. 258 – 349) and INWEB.

### **Unit Five**

#### **The Executive Branch (President):**

Readings: MAG, Chapters 13 / 14 (pp. 350 – 411) and INWEB.

### **Unit Six**

#### **The Judicial Branch (Supreme Court)**

Readings: MAG, Chapter 18 (pp. 502 – 529) and INWEB.

### **Unit Seven**

#### **The Bureaucracy:**

Readings: MAG, Chapter 15 (pp. 412 – 443) and INWEB.

### **Unit Eight**

#### **Mass Media and Public Opinion:**

Readings: MAG, Chapter 8 (pp. 206 – 231) and INWEB.

### **Unit Nine**

#### **American Political Parties and the Electoral Process:**

Readings: MAG, Chapters 5 (pp. 114 – 145) and 7 (pp. 176 – 205) and INWEB.

### **Unit Ten**

#### **Voters and Voter Behavior:**

Readings: MAG, Chapter 6 (pp. 146 – 175) and INWEB.

### **Unit Eleven**

#### **Interest Groups**

Readings: MAG, Chapter 9 (pp. 234 – 256) and INWEB.

### **Unit Twelve**

#### **The Policy-Making Process:**

Readings: INWEB.

### **Unit Thirteen**

#### **Economic, Social, and Environmental Policy:**

Readings: MAG, Chapter 16 (pp. 444 – 465) and INWEB.

### **Unit Fourteen**

#### **Foreign Policy and National Defense:**

Readings: MAG, Chapter 17 (pp. 466 – 501) and INWEB.

### **Unit Fifteen**

#### **Civil Liberties and Civil Rights:**

Readings: MAG, Chapters 19 / 20 / 21 (pp. 530 – 621) and INWEB.

### **Units One Through Fifteen Wrap Up!**

#### **Final Thoughts, Course Conclusion, and Final Preparation:**

Readings: All Chapters in MAG and INWEB.