

American Government

Mrs. VanAlstine

Room 215

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Once the student and parents/guardians have read this syllabus, please sign and date below.

Student Signature

Parent Signature

Date

Course Description

This course explores the structure and dynamics of American national government, providing a broad-based introduction to the ideas and institutions that shape politics in the contemporary United States. We will focus our analysis on the Constitution and the debates of the founding era, the institutions of modern American government, the political behavior of the American mass public and the workings of the three branches of government. Our analysis will draw heavily on documents from America's founding and insights from modern political science, allowing us to examine important events from a variety of perspectives.

Attendance

1. Be on time, otherwise, bring a note.
2. Check the board for instructions or prompts.
3. At the end of class, the bell is a suggestion. I will write notes if I hold you over.
4. When absent, you are ALWAYS responsible for getting their work directly from me!
 - a. You must be responsible for getting work that you miss, if you have an EXCUSED absence.
 - b. If unexcused, it will be in your best interest to make up the assignments for 50% credit and are expected to get notes/materials from me.

What will be graded?

Students will be graded solely on the work that they produce which should be a demonstration of what they have learned. There will be no separate grade for areas such as effort, attendance, and participation as these attributes will be directly reflected by the work each student produces.

Note: I may assign participation points to a day's lesson if I feel that the work ethic in the class has been less than acceptable.

Grades will be recorded as promptly as possible; please do not expect instant gratification. If you feel that I have made a grading mistake, please ask about it in a **private** and **respectful** place and manner.

Types of Assessments.

Student assessments will come in a variety of forms such as the standard tests, quizzes, and essays along with various projects, in-class exercises and government studies. In addition, assessments will be created to gauge student progress and comprehension.

Give me your own work!

I expect that students will hand in their own work. Students who attempt to pass off another's work as their own will be given a **ZERO** on the assignment with no chance to make up the work. Other disciplinary actions may be taken as well.

Grading Scale

A – 90-100

B – 80 – 89

C – 70 – 79

D – 60 - 69

F – Below 60

I'm Late, I'm Late!

Simply Late or Unexcused –

1. A student has not missed class but fails to turn in their work or has missed class for an unexcused reason will be given no credit for missing or late assignments.
 - a. These students are highly encouraged to do their work, though, as it will always be pertinent to their learning and success in class.
2. Missing a **test/presentation/project** for an unexcused reason – the student will take the test or turn in the assessment **the day that they return**. No extra time will be given.

Excused –

1. Students will be granted as many days as they missed to make up their work or take a missed assessment.

Digital Age Problems

Student laptops

You will be using your laptops on a daily basis. Please get into the habit of charging your laptops at night so that they are useable at school! Laptops will be used a mature, productive manner and will be put away when instruction, discussion, and presentations take place. If laptops become an issue, they will be taken away for the remainder of class.

Cell Phones, Apple Watched, Headphones, etc...

In accordance with Shelby High School's cell phone policy, phones will be in student lockers or put away and silent. On some occasions (assessment days when I see otherwise fit), students will be asked to place their cell phones in individual pockets of the cell phone holder inside of the classroom. A cell phone out during a test or quiz (any assessment) will receive a zero. Phone calls to parents, places of work, etc will be made in the office, not in the classroom or hallway.

In terms of other personal electronics, they will not be used in the classroom unless permission has been specifically given. This includes, but is not limited to, headphones.

Helpful Hints

When in the classroom:

1. Use common sense!
2. Negative attitudes and comments are not tolerated. If you are having a bad day, give me every ounce of the best you that you can and I will do the same for you!
3. When given a task, complete it to the best of your ability.
4. Come prepared to be engaged and with the proper tools.
5. I have to gain your respect just as you must gain mine. It is not freely given.
6. Ask questions, PLEASE!
7. I do not repeat myself for those who are not paying attention.
8. Learn to have an opinion backed up by reason. You will need this to survive in this class.
9. Take responsibility for your own work, education, and actions.
10. Have fun!!!

Parent Communication

1. Initial contact should be an email or phone call presenting the issue or requesting a meeting.
2. A meeting can be set up when it is convenient for both parties.
3. Comments will be made in ProgressBook when necessary, good and bad.

Course Content

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Current news and events via the magazine <i>The Week</i>2. Foundations of Government3. The Beginnings of American Government4. The Constitution5. The Legislative Branch6. The Executive Branch - The Presidency and Vice Presidency7. The Executive Branch at Work	<ol style="list-style-type: none">8. The Judicial Branch9. Protecting Civil Liberties10. Citizenship and Civil Rights11. Government by the People12. Elections13. Government and the Economy14. State and Local Government15. Comparative Political Systems
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Course Information

Remind

All students must sign up for the Government Remind text alerts. This is a system that I will be able to use to communicate with all students (and parents that may want to join) about class work, events, or simple reminders. To sign up for this system, follow these instructions:

1. Open a new text message on your phone.
2. Enter this number as the recipient: **81010**
3. In the body of the text, enter: **@vangov**
4. You should receive a type of confirmation message.
5. If you are asked to send your name, please send your First and Last name.

The Flipped Classroom

This course is taught using a Flipped Classroom style. Notes will be taken using teacher-created chapter briefs and our new online textbook and resources outside of class as homework. This will allow the teacher and students to use class time for discussion, focused lessons, hands-on activities, and other meaningful items.

Class Materials

Binders

In this course, all students are **required** to keep all materials in an organized binder dedicated to Government class **ONLY**. For each unit I will have a running list of binder contents posted in the classroom for student to reference as they receive materials. At the end of each unit, students will turn in their binders to be graded on organization, neatness, completion and required materials. Examples of content include, but are not limited to:

1. Notes
2. Chapters in Brief
3. Worksheets
4. Homework
5. Tests and quizzes
6. Essays

Notebook

Each student **MUST** have a small notebook (70 pages should be sufficient) with their name clearly written on the front cover. These will be kept in the classroom for writing purposes.

Chapters in Brief

These overviews of each chapter will focus our study of the given topic on the most important themes of the chapter and require students to fill in the holes through hands on assignments and activities. These briefs will also be aligned with our new online textbook and wealth of resources. Uniformity in the structure of notes will attempt to maximize student success in the classroom.

Community Service Hours

Students are required to complete **10 hours** of community service throughout the duration of this course. Regardless of their final letter grade in the course, if they do not complete the hours, they do not pass. Please see the attached letter for further details. Instructions on how to complete, submit and count hours are in the letter.

Writing Wednesday

Some Wednesdays, we will begin class with 15-30 minutes of reading and writing. In an effort to increase literacy and critical thinking, not only in my classroom but throughout the school, I will provide students with prompts or literature to read and respond to each week. Some weeks the information may relate to what we are studying while others may be very random.

Students are required to have a small notebook (70 sheets should be sufficient) in which they will keep all of their Writing Wednesday responses. These notebooks will be kept in the classroom and only the student and I will see what is written in the notebooks. This will also be a place where students can ask me questions about class content. Weekly grades will be given.