**A. Contact Information**

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**B. Course Description**

AP United States Government and Politics is an extensive study of the formal and informal structures of government and the processes of the American political system. The course will have a strong focus on policy-making and implementation and the everyday practice that directs the daily operation of our government.

This class condenses a year’s worth of content into a semester, so it is even faster paced than other AP classes. Because of this it is essential that you stay on top of your assignments. You are seniors, so this class should be viewed as a bridge from high school to university/college; therefore, the course will require a substantial amount of reading and preparation to earn a strong grade and prepare yourself for the AP exam in the spring.

**C. Course Overview**

**1. Goals**

Students will be expected to apply facts and examples in civil discussions/debates/socratic seminars etc. Students must go beyond the knowledge of vocabulary terms, and demonstrate an understanding of political principles and government procedures in context.

Beyond the content of this class, my sincere hope is students will take what they learned and apply it their whole adult lives to 1) think critically and make rational decisions as citizens living in a democratic society, and 2) respectfully and productively engage in civil dialogue with those who they disagree with.

**2. Requirements**

Required readings of 9 foundational documents & required analysis of 15 specific court rulings.

~Basic facts of the case, key meanings of the ruling, key points of dissent

~Civic participation project as part of the course requirements.

~Current events in context of course topics

**3.** [**Course Organization**](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n-9vVoJ2R-4TVNb-i5XwFE14-HVk7d1d/view?usp=sharing)

There are 5 units. This course will utilize the College Board’s unit lesson design to the greatest degree possible. However because this is an election year, we will focus on elections (units 4-5) earlier in the semester, then circle back to key principles (units 2-3) of American government. As assignments are posted, please note how they fit into the College Board’s structure.

* 1) Foundations of American Democracy
* 4) American Political Ideologies and Beliefs
* 5) Political Participation
* 2) Interactions Among the Branches
* 3) Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Each unit above contains: the *5 Big Ideas*, the *5 Disciplinary Practices*, and the 4 *Reasoning Processes*. Each unit is also organized around *“enduring understandings”*, *“learning objectives*”, and *“essential knowledge items”*. The FRQs will be organized around these frameworks, which are laid out in greater detail at the end of this syllabus.

**4. Required Textbook**

George C. Edwards, Martin P. Wattenburg, and Robert l. Linesberry. Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy16th ed. New York: Addison Wesley Education Publishers, Inc., 2014.

**5. Supplemental Readings and Current Events**

In addition to readings from the textbook, students will also be expected to keep up with the impact of government in current events, which will be part of the daily class discussions. News clips from major cable sources (CBS, CNN, C-SPAN, Fox News, etc.) will be utilized to stimulate class discussions. It is expected that students will be responsible for following the political events of the day by reading reputable news sources. This will include newspapers and magazines such as, *The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Atlantic, Washington Post, & New Yorker,* as well as others*.* Students will be expected to discuss recent current events in class discussions and cite them as examples. Supreme Court cases and summaries of decisions are provided by Law Related Education, State Bar of Texas, Oyez, etc.

**D. Teaching Strategies**

The main teaching strategies implemented in this course are simulations, lectures, class discussions, debate, speeches, and student conducted seminars. Throughout the course students will be responsible for interpreting, analyzing data, charts, graphs, and articles, then predicting outcomes based on that information from multiple points of view. Please note that as a result of required Covid-19 precautions students will need to rely heavily on their chromebooks for reading assigned materials and writing, so be sure to bring it to class fully charged.

**E. Tutorials**

During remote learning, tutorials will be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

During face to face, tutorials will be every morning from 8:15-8:45. Please note that EVHS policy has changed, so students will be required to have a written pass to go to tutorials this year, and teachers are limited to 4 students per tutorial per day.

##### F. Materials Needed Each Day:

* Chromebook (fully charged)
* Earbuds (Chromebook compatible, preferably with microphone)
* Pencil / Pen (black or blue ink)
* Folder -or- Binder

##### G. Grading Policy

**1. General**

Major Grades = 70%

Daily Work = 30%

Semester Exams count as 20% of your semester average.

**2. Major Grades (70%)**   
All tests and major projects will be announced at least one week in advance (see syllabus and google classroom announcements). Multiple Choice and FRQs will count as separate major grades. In preparation for the AP exam, tests will be timed.

**3. Daily Work (30%)**

This includes all work that is graded that is not a test or major project. Some assignments might be weighted more than others based on the depth, difficulty, and time involved.

**4. Semester Exam**

As seniors, you have the privilege to exempt semester exams, providing you have few enough absences, a high enough grade, and no disciplinary suspensions. However, if you are ineligible for an exemption of your semester exam there will be reviews provided during tutorial hours and possibly virtual reviews. It is a good idea to keep all of your assignments to review for the semester exam as well as the AP test in the spring.

**5. Late Work**

Based on GISD guidelines, the following penalties apply to late daily work assignments: -10 on the 1st day; -20 on the 2nd day; -30 on the 3rd day. No credit can be earned after 3 days, but students will still be expected to grasp the concepts/terms for tests, semester exams, and AP exams regardless of whether they earn credit for those overdue assignments.

**6. Make-Up Work**

Students are expected to complete daily work and major grades within 2 calendar days per absence. For multiple absences, students are expected to contact the teacher for due dates on make-up work. Students shall receive a zero for any assignment or test not made up within the allotted time. Within this framework, the maximum time allowed shall be determined at the discretion of the teacher according to the individual circumstances.

Whenever you are absent from class for any reason it is your responsibility to complete assignments you missed on Google Classroom and make arrangements with me for quizzes and tests you missed. If you know in advance you will be out of class, you are encourage to make arrangements ahead of time.

**Please Note:**Any assignments and/or tests missed as a result of truancy will be unable to be made-up. Truancy is defined as being absent from class without the parent’s permission -or- absent from school without the principal’s permission.

**7. Failed Test Policy**

**a. Retest Eligibility:** Students are allowed to retake 1 test or quiz (not the final exam) per 9-weeks. Retesting is available to students that score a grade lower than 70 on a test. Retesting will NOT be available for semester exams or projects. The two grades will be averaged together and a minimum score of a 70 and a maximum score of a 99 will be given. Students have 3 days to complete the retake the original score is given. Retakes may ONLY be completed during tutorials. Due to grade submission deadlines, this opportunity is not extended to those failing beyond the nine week mark. A student’s grade can only be improved through this process.

**b. Disqualifications:**Students who receive a zero grade resulting from a violation of the guidelines on academic integrity and/or truancy shall NOT be eligible for a retest.

**H. Daily Work (30%)**

**1. Quizzes**

There will be vocab and reading quizzes to make sure you grasp the material. This is a service for you. Please make sure you are doing the required readings and vocab. You may also have quizzes over what has been covered in class.   
  
**2. Discussion and Seminars (in person and/or virtual)**  
Students will participate in collaborative, intellectual dialogue facilitated with open-ended questions about texts. Seminars will be conducted over the given content via an assigned reading.Students will demonstrate their mastery of major concepts by applying facts and examples during civil dialogues. One of the objectives we will be working on is civil discussion of controversial topics.  
  
**3. In-Class & Homework Assignments**Inquiring about the content – the rationale behind it, the implications on American politics and its effects on our lives – is a great way to learn the required material in this course. Thus, you will be given assignments toprocess the content that is being covered and help you gain mastery of it.

**I. Extra Credit**

Although there may be a few extra credit opportunities given during the semester, they will not be plentiful and cannot fully compensate for poor study habits that lead to a failing grade. Extra credit will NOT be given near the end of grading periods, so take advantage when it is offered. NO late credit will be given for late extra credit.

**J. Tardy Policy**

On time, every time. No tardy pass = unexcused. You are an adult.

**K. Electronic Devices:**

Personal electronic devices (i.e. smartphones) are only allowed to be used when permission is given. There are numerous research articles about the detriments of electronic device use in class and how the brain actually works. Likewise, students are expected to focus on their assigned AP Government classwork on their chromebooks, rather than work for other courses or non-school related websites. Students are expected to be fully engaged in AP Government for the 50/90 minutes we are together in class. If this guideline is not followed, it will result in disciplinary action, including a disciplinary referral to the office.

**L. Your Class is a Diverse Learning Community**

Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and beliefs, so every student needs to feel secure in expressing their opinion in class, especially on controversial issues. The goal of this class is NOT indoctrination into any political viewpoint, but rather, to explore multiple political philosophies and critically analyze the strengths and limitations of each. To foster that spirit in our class and country, students are expected to share their views civilly, so that no one feels insulted or threatened. While students should freely express their ideas, students will also practice the skill of communicating tactfully; mean spiritedness and personal attacks will NOT be tolerated.

**M. Behavioral Expectations**

* Be civil (mean spiritedness/personal attacks of those with differing views will NOT be tolerated).
* Be considerate of peers and instructors.
* Inquire and work hard.
* Act mature.

**N. AP Exam**

The AP Government and Politics Exam will be on Monday, May 3rd @ 8:00am. The cost is $94, though you may be eligible for a discounted price. Students must register for the exam by November 1st.

The College Board is currently planning to administer their traditional 3 hour AP exam with two parts in the spring, but depending on how well controlled Covid-19 their plans could shift. Part 1: 55 multiple choice questions to be answered in 1 hour, 20 minutes. Part II: 4 Free Response Questions to be answered in 1 hour, 40 minutes. Each part of the exam is 50% of the score. I strongly encourage you to work hard this semester and take the AP exam. For more information concerning the AP Exam for this course, please visit the official AP Central United States Government & Politics Exam Page.

**O.** **Miscellaneous**

Due to the unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 pandemic and upheaval that has brought schools, I reserve the right to update the syllabus as required by GISD policies and/or to respond to changing circumstances. Announcements will be made if any changes are made to the syllabus.

**Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy**

**Essential Questions**• How did the founders of the U.S. Constitution attempt to protect individual liberty, while also promoting public order and safety?   
• How have theory, debate, and compromise influenced the U.S. constitutional system?   
• How does development and interpretation of the Constitution influence policies that impact U.S. citizens?

**Readings**

• The Declaration of Independence

• *Federalist No. 10*

• *Brutus No. 1*

• *Federalist No. 51*

• The Articles of Confederation

• The Constitution of the United States (Articles I-VII, 10th and 14th Amendments)

• McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)

• Lopez v. United States (1995)

• Rauch, Jonathan. “How American Politics Went Insane.” *The Atlantic*, July/August 2016.

• Toobin, Jeffrey. "Our Broken Constitution." *The New Yorker*, December 9, 2013.

**Primary Unit Focus [CR1]**

• The philosophical foundations and documents of American democracy, including the Declaration of Independence, social contract theory, republicanism, types of democracy, and the tension between individual liberty and order/safety. (EU LOR-1)

• How the Articles of Confederation failed to adequately balance individual liberty and public order/safety, and how the framers wrestled with these questions in drafting the Constitution. (EU LOR-1)

• The compromises reached at the Constitutional Convention and the debate between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists during the ratification debate. (EU CON-1)

• The evolving relationship between the national and state governments, including the grant process, policy issues (ADA, Medicaid, marijuana), and the idea of devolution. (EU CON-1)

**[CR1]** —The course includes the Foundations of American Democracy Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

**Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs**

**Essential Questions**

• How are American political beliefs formed and how do they evolve over time?

• How do political ideology and core values influence government policy making?

**Readings**

• The Monkey Cage series on political polarization in America found at *The Washington Post*.

• "Political Polarization in the American Public." *Pew Research Center*, June 12, 2014.

• Abramowitz, Alan I., and Morris P. Fiorina. "Polarized or Sorted? Just What’s Wrong with Our Politics, Anyway?" *The American Interest*, March 11, 2013.

• Fiorina, Morris P. "America's Missing Moderates: Hiding in Plain Sight." *The American Interest* 8, no. 4, February 12, 2013.

**Primary Unit Focus [CR4]**

• Elements of a scientific poll, the different types of polls, and how they are used in U.S. government and politics. (EU MPA-2, PRD-3)

• The basic tenets of American political culture, the conservative and liberal political ideologies, and how these are acquired (political socialization). (EU MPA-1)

**[CR4**] —The course includes the American Political Ideologies and Beliefs Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

**Unit 5: Political Participation**

**Essential Questions**

• How have changes in technology influenced political communication and behavior?

• Why do levels of participation and influence in politics vary?

• How effective are the various methods of political participation in shaping public policies?

**Readings**

• *Federalist No. 10*

• Desilver, Drew. "U.S. trails most developed countries in voter turnout." *Pew Research Center*, May 15, 2017.

• Citizens United v. FEC (2010)

• Gaslowitz, Lea. “How to Spot a Misleading Graph - Lea Gaslowitz.” TED-Ed video, 4:09.

• Barthel, Michael, and Amy Mitchell. “Americans' Attitudes About the News Media Deeply Divided Along Partisan Lines.” *Pew Research Center*, May 10, 2017.

• Kiely, Eugene, and Lori Robertson. "How to Spot Fake News." FactCheck.org, November 18, 2016.

• Neale, Thomas H. "The Electoral College: How It Works in Contemporary Presidential Elections." *The Congressional Research Service,* May 15, 2017.

**Primary Unit Focus [CR5]**

• The evolution of voting rights and the current state of voter turnout. (EU MPA-3, PMI-3, PMI-5)

• Factors that influence voter choice in elections. (EU MPA-3, MPA-1)

• The functions of political parties in the United States and third parties in United States government and politics. (EU PMI-5)

• The development of candidate-centered campaigns. (EU PMI-5, PRD-3)

• The theory of critical elections. (EU PMI-5)

• Interest groups in United States government and politics. (EU PMI-5)

• Nominations, campaigns, and elections in United States government and politics. (EU PRD-2)

• The media as a linkage institution, including changes in media, such as the growth of social media and partisan media sources. (EU PRD-3)

**[CR5]** —The course includes the Political Participation Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

**Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of Government**

**Essential Questions**

• How do the branches of the national government compete and cooperate in order to govern?

• To what extent have changes in the powers of each branch affected how responsive and accountable the national government is in the 21st century?

**Readings**

• The Constitution of the United States (Articles I-III)

• Baker v. Carr (1962)

• Shaw v. Reno (1993)

• *Federalist No. 70*

• *Federalist No. 78*

• Marbury v. Madison

• Moe, Terry M., and William G. Howell. "Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (December 1999): 850-73.

**Primary Unit Focus [CR2]**

• Structure of Congress, including significant differences between the chambers regarding organization, leadership, incumbency, and powers. (EU CON-3)

• Congressional representation and gerrymandering. (EU CON-3)

• The president’s formal and informal powers. (EU CON-4)

• Judicial independence, *Federalist No. 78*, Marbury v. Madison, & judicial decision-making. (EU CON-5)

• How the bureaucracy operates and its place in the checks and balances system. (EU PMI-1, PMI-2)

• The future of entitlement spending in the United States. (EU CON-3)

**[CR2]** —The course includes the Interactions Among Branches of Government Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

**Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights**

**Essential Questions**

• To what extent do the U.S. Constitution and its amendments protect against undue government infringement on essential liberties and from invidious discrimination?

• How have U.S. Supreme Court rulings defined civil liberties and civil rights?

**Readings**

• The Bill of Rights

• The 14th Amendment’s due process and equal protection clauses

• Engel v. Vitale (1962)

• Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972)

• Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969)

• Schenck v. United States (1919)

• New York Times Co. v. United States (1971)

• McDonald v. Chicago (2010)

• Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)

• Roe v. Wade (1973)

• Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka Kansas (1954)

• “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

• Bentele, Keith G., and Erin E. O’Brien. “Jim Crow 2.0? Why States Consider and Adopt Restrictive Voter Access Policies.” *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 4 (December 2013): 1088-1116.

**Primary Unit Focus [CR3]**

• The role of the courts, and the due process and equal protection clauses in the expansion of civil liberties and civil rights, including the idea of selective incorporation. (EU LOR-2, CON-5)

• The expansion of the liberties protected by the 1st and 2nd Amendments. (EU LOR-2, CON-5)

• The development of the right to privacy and its implications for reproductive rights and 4th Amendment protections. (EU LOR-3)

• A history of civil rights issues and how historically disadvantaged groups in American society have achieved greater equality and equitable treatment in society. (EU PRD-1, PMI-3)

**[CR3] —**The course includes the Civil Liberties and Civil Rights Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).