

U.S. GOVERNMENT – COLLEGE PARK HIGH SCHOOL

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FALL SEMESTER, 2009. 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, or you can stop by at lunch if necessary.

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: Attendance is mandatory and will be formally taken at each session. 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 essay examinations

Extra credit is neither necessary nor allowed for this course.

COURSE OUTLINE – U.S. GOVERNMENT

MAG = Magruder's American Government (class text)

Unit One

Course Introduction – Principles and Origins of American Government:

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

Unit Two

The Constitution:

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

Unit Three

Federalism and State and Local Government:

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

Unit Four

The Legislative Branch (Congress):

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

Unit Five

The Executive Branch (President):

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

Unit Six

The Judicial Branch (Supreme Court)

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

Unit Seven

The Bureaucracy:

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

Unit Eight

Mass Media and Public Opinion:

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

Unit Nine

American Political Parties and the Electoral Process:

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

Unit Ten

Voters and Voter Behavior:

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

Unit Eleven

Interest Groups

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

Unit Twelve

The Policy-Making Process:

Readings: Instructor notes and web readings.

Unit Thirteen

Economic, Social, and Environmental Policy:

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

Unit Fourteen

Civil Liberties and Civil Rights:

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

Unit Fifteen

Foreign Policy and National Defense:

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

Units One Through Fifteen Wrap Up!

Final Thoughts, Course Conclusion, and Final Preparation:

Readings: All Chapters in MAG