

Advanced Placement U. S. Government & Politics

Course Syllabus

Mrs. Torres

2017-2018

Room 219

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Bristol Central High School's Mission Statement



The mission of Bristol Central High School is to encourage students to achieve their maximum learning potential and to develop their self worth in a safe environment.

Bristol Central High School Expectations for Student Learning:

- * Students will read critically.
- * Students will write effectively.
- * Students will use basic logic to analyze and solve problems.
- * Students will communicate effectively in a variety of media.
- * Students will use both tangible and conceptual tools to complete work.
- * Students will acquire, organize, and utilize information.
- * Students will interact with others and work collaboratively as positive contributing members of society.
- * Students will behave responsibly in both personal and community life.
- * Students will recognize, respect, and appreciate variety in culture and the arts.

Department Philosophy

The primary objective of the social studies program is to prepare students to become thoughtful individuals whose academic background and skills will enable them to function successfully in an increasingly complex, multicultural, and changing world. The social studies program must provide students with an intellectual framework of knowledge, the skills necessary to process information, and the capacity to understand and appreciate people from backgrounds and cultures different from their own. Further, the program is intended to develop an informed, discriminating citizenship essential to effective participation in the democratic processes of governance and the fulfillment of the nation's democratic ideals.

While history forms the foundation for social studies, it is understood that concepts from other social sciences, including geography, economics, psychology, and sociology must be integrated through the department's course offerings to provide students with a firm understanding of the principles and methodologies in the social studies discipline.

We recognize that there are many differences among our students not only in intelligence and special talents, but also in their interests, goals, and objectives in life. Therefore, we are committed to the development and maintenance of a curriculum of such variety and scope that we may find and serve these widely divergent needs and interests. The desired end: to draw our students out into the world community, providing them with the capacity to live successful personal and public lives.

Connecticut State Standards

5.1 Analyze historical and contemporary conflicts through the respective roles of local, state and national governments.

5.2 Evaluate the contemporary roles of political parties, associations, media groups and public opinion in local, state and national politics.

5.3 Apply an understanding of historical and contemporary conflicts over constitutional principles.

- 5.4 Explain how the design of the U.S. Constitution is intended to balance and check the powers of the branches of government; and
- 5.5 Analyze, using historical and contemporary examples, the meaning and significance of the ideal of equal protection under the law for all persons; and
- 5.6 Analyze, using historical and contemporary examples, the meaning and significance of the ideal of equal protection under the law for all persons; and
- 6.1 Identify and explain characteristics needed for effective participation in public life; and
- 6.2 Research an issue of interest and be able to take and defend a position on that issue.
- 6.3 Monitor and influence the formation and implementation of policy through various forms of participation.
- 6.4 Evaluate whether or when their obligations as citizens require that their personal desires, beliefs, and interests be subordinated to the public good.
- 6.5 Establish, explain and apply criteria to evaluate rules and laws; and
- 6.6 Take a position on a current policy issue and attempt to influence its formation, development and implementation.
- 7.1 Evaluate the importance of developing self-government so as to restrict arbitrary power.
- 7.2 Explain how purposes served by government have implications for the individual and society.
- 7.3 Analyze and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of limited and unlimited government; and
- 7.4 Describe how constitutions may limit government in order to protect individual rights and promote the common good.
- 7.6 Compare two or more constitutions and how they promote the principles of their respective political systems and provide the basis for government.
- 7.7 Provide examples of exercise of power without authority.
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College Board Goals

Students successfully completing this course will:

- Know important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to U.S. Government and Politics.
- Understand typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences (including the components of political behavior, the principles used to explain or justify the various government structures and procedures, and the political effects of the structures and procedures).
- Be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to U.S. Government and Politics.

This course is about the American political system. We will discuss political ideology, the development of the political system and our democratic institutions. Students will be able to evaluate the role of the national government and its relationship to the concept of liberty in a pluralistic society. The discussions will emphasize the changing political culture of American society and its effect on voting patterns, trends and the processes of government. In doing so, we will examine certain critical elections in American history as well as recent political movements. Throughout the course, students will be asked to analyze and evaluate maps, graphs, and other data in order to identify patterns and trends. The main thrust of the course, however, is to be able to apply an understanding of our political system to contemporary events.

The Examination

The AP United States Government and Politics examination is 2 hours and 25 minutes long. It consists of a 45-minute multiple choice section and a free-response section consisting of four mandatory questions, and it is expected that the students will spend approximately 25 minutes on each essay. All students are required to both pay for and take the exam.

General Expectations

This is a college level class in Political Science. As such I expect students to behave as college students. I will instruct this class in a method that best exemplifies a college course, and I expect students to act accordingly. I will not accept or tolerate late or missing work and absence from class is unacceptable unless for very good reason. This is a short class. Therefore, you have the burden of your own

education. It is essential to your success to continue your learning outside of this classroom **everyday**. You constantly should be reading newspapers, news magazines, your textbook and reviewing your notes. I will provide elaboration on the material that you have read and create an opportunity for you to discuss these theories with your fellow students in an organized controlled manner. Here are some examples of acceptable newspapers and magazines:

Newspapers: *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, & *The Washington Post*

Magazines: *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *The Nation*, & *The National Review*

Writing Component

The AP exam requires students to complete four essays in 100 minutes. Therefore, students frequently will be given various AP free response essays throughout the year. Each essay will be timed (25 minutes) and completed in class. You should expect at least one essay per unit. Essays will be based on the essential questions for each unit.

Texts and Readings

The class text is *American Government* by James Q. Wilson and John J. DiIulio. Copies have been provided to you. It is expected that you will read all assigned chapters **prior** to class discussion.

UNITS OF STUDY

The Constitutional Underpinnings of American Government (Weeks 1-5)

Essential Questions

What are the advantages and disadvantages of limited government?
What influenced the formation and adoption of the Constitution?

The study of modern politics in the United States requires students to examine the kind of government established by the Constitution paying particular attention to federalism and the separation of powers. Understanding these developments involves both knowledge of the historical situation at the time of the Constitutional Convention and an awareness of the ideological and philosophical traditions on which the framers drew. Such an understanding addresses specific concerns of the framers. Familiarity with the U.S. Supreme Court's interpretation of key provisions of the Constitution will aid student understanding of theoretical and practical features of federalism and the separation of powers. Students should be familiar with a variety of theoretical perspectives relating to the Constitution.

Major readings and assignments:

- Wilson, chapters 1-3
- Chart the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation
- *Federalist Papers* 10, 39, 46, 47, 48, 51
- Quiz on Federalist Paper 51
- *McCulloch v. Maryland*

- Alexis de Tocqueville – excerpts from *Democracy in America*
- Free Response Essay(s)
- Chart the Separation of Powers
- Chart the Expressed, Inherent and Implied Powers

Political Beliefs and Behaviors (Weeks 6-9)

Essential Questions

What factors influence the development of public culture and how does it affect the political process?

What are the various forms of political participation?

Individual citizens hold a variety of beliefs about their government, its leaders, and the U.S. political system; taken together, these beliefs form the foundation of U.S. political culture. It is important to understand how these beliefs are formed, how they evolve, and the processes by which they are transmitted. Students should know why U.S. citizens hold certain beliefs about politics, and how families, schools, and the media act to perpetuate or change these beliefs. Understanding the ways in which political culture affects and informs political participation is also critical. Students should understand both why individuals engage in various forms of political participation and how that participation affects the political system. It is essential that students understand what leads citizens to differ from one another in their political beliefs and behaviors and the political consequences of these differences. We will focus on the different views that people hold of the political process, the demographic features of the American population, and the belief and behavior systems held by specific ethnic, minority, and other groups.

Major readings and assignments:

- Wilson, chapters 4-6
- Stinebrickner, “*Ever Higher Society, Ever Harder to Ascend*”; “*Party On, Dudes! Ignorance is the Curse of the Information Age*”
- Examine the voting patterns of groups within American society to derive a pattern among the political philosophies of these groups
- Free Response Essay(s)

Political Parties and Interest Groups (Weeks 10-14)

Essential Questions

What role do political parties, interest groups and the media play in contemporary politics?

What conflicts over constitutional principles have arisen due to the involvement of political parties, interest groups and the media?

Students should understand the mechanisms that allow citizens to organize and communicate their interests and concerns. Among these are political parties, elections, PACs, interest groups, and the mass media. Students should examine the historical evolution of the U.S. party system, the functions and structures of political parties, and the effects they have on the political process. Examination of issues of party reform and of campaign strategies and financing in the electronic age provides students with important perspectives. A study of elections, election laws, and election systems on the national and state levels and an analysis of election data will help students understand the nature of both party and individual voting behavior. Treatment of the development and the role of PACs in elections and the

ideological and demographic differences between the two major parties, as well as third parties, form an important segment of this material. Students must also consider the political roles played by a variety of lobbying and interest groups. We will study what interest groups do, how they do it, and how this affects both the political process and public policy.

Major readings and assignments:

- Wilson, chapters 7-10
- Project on political parties
- Research assignment on interest groups
- Primary Source, <http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us> (campaigns and commercials)
- Stinebrickner, “*Chieftains and the Church*”
- Maps, charts, and graphs of the electoral outcomes and political participation; charts showing the role of money in politics; news and Internet coverage and analysis of elections and campaigns, discussion of exit poll data
- Free Response Essay(s)

Institutions of National Government and Policy Development (Weeks 15-27)

Legislative Branch (weeks 15-18)

Executive Branch (weeks 19-21)

Judicial Branch (weeks 22-24)

Bureaucracy (weeks 25-27)

Essential Questions

What are the major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power?
How is the principle of Judicial Review reflected in our political system?

Students must become familiar with the organization and powers, both formal and informal, of the major political institutions in the U.S. – the congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the federal courts. Students should understand that these are separate institutions sharing powers and the implications of that arrangement. The functions these institutions perform and do not perform, as well as the powers that they do and do not possess, are important. It is necessary for students to understand that power balances and relationships between these institutions may evolve gradually or change dramatically as a result of crises. Students are also expected to understand ties between the various branches of national government and political parties, interest groups, the media, and state and local governments.

Major readings and assignments:

Legislative Branch

- Wilson, chapter 11
- Constitution, Article I
- Woll, p. 392-400 (*Federalist Papers* 53, 56, 57, 58, 62, 63 (Congress))
- Woll, “*Congress and the Quest for Power*” by Lawrence Dodd
- Free Response Essay(s)
- Analyze graphs – incumbency in the House & Senate; discuss recent polls

Executive Branch

- Wilson, chapter 12
- Constitution, Article II

- Woll, p. 292 (*Federalist Paper 70*)
- Stinebrickner, “George W. Bush, F.D.R., and History” by Conrad Black; “He’s Done” by Laura Rozen.
- Free Response Essay(s)
- Analyze charts/graphs/polls – approval ratings of the President; presidential elections; etc.

Bureaucracy

- Wilson, chapter 13
- Woll, p. 350 – “*Constitutional Democracy and Bureaucratic Power*”
- Woll, p. 355 – “*The Rise of the Bureaucratic State*”
- Free Response Essay(s)

Judicial Branch

- Wilson, chapter 14
- Constitution, Article III
- Marbury v. Madison
- Analyze landmark Supreme Court cases using primary sources
- Woll, p. 484 - *Federalist Paper 78*
- Woll, p. 499 – “*How the Supreme Court Arrives at a Decision*” by Justice Brennan
- Free Response Essay(s)
- Research Project – select a landmark case (see attached assignment.)

Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (Weeks 28-30)

Essential Questions

How does the debate over civil rights and liberties cause us to re-examine the principles of the Constitution?

How does society balance the common good with the rights of the individual?

An understanding of U.S. politics includes the study of the development of individual rights and liberties and their impact on citizens. Basic to this study is an analysis of the workings of the U.S Supreme Court and familiarity with its most significant decisions. Students should examine judicial interpretations of various civil rights and liberties such as freedom of speech, assembly, and expression; the rights of the accused; and the rights of minority groups and women. Students should be aware of how the 14th Amendment has been used to extend protection of rights and liberties. Finally, it is important that students be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Supreme Court decisions as tools of social change.

Major readings and assignments:

- Wilson, chapters 18-19
- Bill of Rights
- Amendment 14
- Analyze landmark Supreme Court cases using primary sources
- Research project on landmark Supreme Court case
- Woll, p. 144 – *Roe v. Wade (Privacy)*
- Woll, p. 163 – *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke (Affirmative Action)*
- Free Response Essay(s)

Public Policy (Weeks 31-32)

Essential Questions

What are the various ways policy is created and implemented?
How do the different political entities respond to a variety of policies?

Public policy is the result of interactions and dynamics among actors, interests, institutions, and processes. The formation of policy agendas, the enactment of public policies by congress and the president, and the implementation and interpretation of policies by the bureaucracy and the courts are all stages in the policy process with which students should be familiar. Students should also investigate policy networks and issue networks in the domestic and foreign policy areas. The study of these will give students a clear understanding of the impact of federalism, interest groups, parties, and elections on policy processes and policymaking in the federal context. Students should be familiar with major public policies.

Major readings and assignments:

- Wilson, chapters 15, 16, 17, 20, 21
- Free Response Essay(s)

Course Text/Ancillaries Outline

Text:

Wilson, James Q and DiIulio, John J. **American Government**. Houghton Mifflin Company. 9th Edition. 2004.

Ancillaries:

Stinebrickner, Bruce, Ed. **Annual Editions: American Government 05/06**. McGraw Hill. 35th Edition. 2006.

Stinebrickner, Bruce, Ed. **Annual Editions: American Government 05/06**. McGraw Hill. 35th Edition. 2007.

Woll, Peter. **American Government: Readings and Cases**. Addison Wesley Longman, Inc. 11th Edition. 1993.

Woll, Peter. **American Government: Readings and Cases**. Addison Wesley Longman, Inc. 13th Edition. 1999.

Class Rules and Grading

Grading Policy

1. *Exams* (40%): Exams will consist of 60 multiple choice questions and either one or two essays. Exams will be given after certain topical breaks in the curriculum as I have attempted to link certain chapters together. The exams will be announced in advance. Class presentations and activities assigned after the AP exam may be given grades in this category.
2. *Quizzes* (40%): There will be a “key terms” quiz EVERY class.
3. *Homework* (10%): The homework in this class is to complete assigned readings prior to class discussion dates. The course schedule contains dates and chapter reading assignments. Supplementary readings as assigned as well as papers and projects are also, in a fashion, considered homework. I expect

you to complete readings in a timely fashion so that you may contribute to class discussion. Students not completing the readings will be obviously lacking in knowledge and thus their class participation grade will suffer.

4. *Class Work* (10%): All work completed and collected during the 84-minute class period. Each of you will be responsible for reporting a current event to the class on a regular basis. You can do this by photocopying an article for the class and summarizing the article. This will count toward your class work average.

5. *Class Participation*: Participation in class discussions is an essential element of this class. I expect every student to come to class and to participate. Participation may be in the form of questions, responses to questions or commentary on a particular subject. I will closely monitor student participation and grade students accordingly. These grades will be assigned in letter grade format. Class presentations and activities assigned after the AP exam may be given grades in this category as well.

6. *Papers/Projects*: T.B.A. ...

Attendance

1. *Cutting*: Cutting class is not allowed and will not be tolerated. Anyone cutting class should expect a phone call home and a lowering of their grade. I will follow the school's cutting policy to the letter and a cut slip will be issued. No excuses!

2. *Tardiness*: You are expected to be in class on time, all the time. Do not enter the class late without a pass. Lateness takes away class time and learning time and is an indicator of how much you care.

3. *Absence*: You are required to complete any work assigned while you are absent.

4. *Plagiarism*: Cheating and/or plagiarism will result in a zero on that particular assignment. I will also notify your parent(s), the National Honor Society Advisor and the school administration. I will NOT write a college recommendation for any student I catch cheating or plagiarizing. I will also retract any letter of recommendation already sent to colleges.

5. *Cell Phones*: If I catch you using your cell phone in class, **I will take a point OFF your average. Show this to your parents. No discussions. No texting in class!!! NO Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Vine....get the picture? You have been warned!** I would not take my phone out during class. I expect the same courtesy from you. There is plenty of time during the day to use your phone. Let's get back into the game of life and TALK to the people around you. This is NOT a discussion I expect to have the rest of the year. I will take your phone the first time I see it and your parent can pick it up in the office. If I see a phone in your lap or on your desk during a test or quiz, I assume you are cheating and take it AND give you a zero AND report it to NHS and any other academic group. Don't tell me you are "looking something up" or "doing research." Bull.

Other Requirements

1. *Notebooks*: It is up to each individual student to determine what system works best for them. Handouts and readings made available in class should be saved throughout the year. You will also maintain your **Key Terms and Concepts Notebook** throughout the year.

2. *Behavior*: Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.

3. *Getting Help*: It is your responsibility to ask for help if you feel it is needed. Help is available before and after school but please ask me for an appointment.

*Please sign and return ASAP. By signing this you acknowledge my expectations in my classroom.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____