

U.S. Government and Politics 2011-2012

Mr. Edwards

Course Description

This semester-long course is designed to deepen your understanding of our structures of government and the processes of the American political system. It will be challenging, requiring that you put forth your best effort on a daily basis. Throughout, there will be ample opportunities for you to demonstrate that they you are a competent learner, an effective thinker and a willing and able communicator.

Materials

- James Q. Wilson and John J. DiLulio Jr. American Government, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 7th Edition.

Course of Study

- A. Constitutional Underpinnings
- B. Political Beliefs/Political Behaviors
- C. Interest Groups, Parties and Media
- D. Institutions: Congress, the Presidency,
- E. Public Policy
- F. Civil Liberties/Civil Rights

Keep all your materials in a binder. Separate your notes, readings, charts and graphs for these units by tab dividers so that you will be organized to prepare for a final exam. This is very important.

Benchmarks & Performance Standards

Students completing the U.S. Government and Politics course will:

- Explain the political origins and evolution of the fundamental principles and values of American liberal democracy. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12)
- Evaluate and take positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured. (Standards: 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12)

- Analyze the roles and responsibilities of the three branches of the national government and how conflicts between the branches are resolved. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12)
- Describe and evaluate the expansion of federal civil rights legislation and federal protection of civil liberties. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12)
- Describe and evaluate the major political groups and the impact they have on American political culture and behavior. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10)
- Analyze the ways in which citizens interact with and participate in government and its related political groups. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10)
- Describe and evaluate the expansion of federal civil rights legislation and federal protection of civil liberties. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12)
- Describe and evaluate the major political groups and the impact they have on American political culture and behavior. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10)
- Analyze the ways in which citizens interact with and participate in government and its related political groups. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10)
- Identify and describe current political, social, and economic issues facing American society. (Standards: 1, 2, 5, 8)
- Identify and evaluate the means by which public policy is created at the national level. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 8, 12)
- Identify and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a federal system of government. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 12)
- Improve ability to analyze and synthesize visual stimuli, especially graphs, tables and political cartoons. (Standards: 1, 8)
- Identify and utilize ways in which technology enables citizens to be better informed about the political process. (Standards: 5, 8)
- Improve oral communication ability through asking and answering analytic questions, participating in thoughtful discussion and giving informal presentations. (Standards: 2, 5)
- Improve test-taking ability in preparation for standardized testing and introductory college classes. (Standards: 1)

Attendance

Regular attendance is absolutely essential in this class. The school attendance policy and tardy policies will be followed.

Homework

Expect frequent assignments, often reading assignments. Take these seriously. Lectures, discussions, Socratic seminars and other activities will be directly related to the homework, as will the quizzes and tests.

Building a strong vocabulary in the areas of government and politics is critical to success in this course. To that end, you will engage in a variety of vocabulary building activities. .

Grading

Your semester grade will be based on the following factors:

- 1) Homework related quizzes
- 2) Chapter vocabulary quizzes
- 3) Unit tests which will be a combination of multiple choice and free response questions.
- 4) Vocabulary assignments, class presentations, reading analysis, graph and cartoon analysis, Socratic seminar participation and other assignments as they arise.
- 5) Cumulative final exam

Be Aware

The general expectations laid out in this syllabus will stay the same. However, I might make a few small changes as time goes on. Be assured, any change will be made in clearly and with ample time for you to adjust

Some Final Thoughts

We are all born with the unalienable rights of life, liberty and property. The extent to which these rights are honored is directly related to the government under which we live. For that reason, more than any other, I find that studying government and politics is personal and compelling. I feel fortunate to be exploring these topics with you and I'm excited to be involved as you develop and share your thinking in these areas. With that in mind, I wish you (and myself!) a great semester!

