This course in American Government and Politics has multiple purposes. Students should acquire knowledge that will increase their cultural literacy; they ought to develop skills that will improve their qualities of citizenship; they will learn concepts that will prepare them for and benefit them in college; they can begin to define their own political beliefs within (or even outside of) the scope of the most common American ideologies; they will, ultimately, prepare to take the appropriate Advanced Placement Exam in May of the school year.

We will pursue these goals along several main lines of study. We will learn about the various strains of political thought that led to our country's establishment and that serve as our "Constitutional Underpinnings"; about our "Institutions of National Government"--the three branches of government and our federal bureaucracy; about "Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media," and how they, informed and fueled by the "Political Beliefs and Behaviors" of the citizenry, make "Public Policy"; and, finally, about how the "Civil Rights and Civil Liberties" of individuals are retained, protected, and defined in 21st century America by the machinery we study over the course of the semester. By keeping track of current political events—ongoing wars, the tenuous state of the national economy, national partisan division—and weaving them into our daily discussions, we will see how the theoretical foundations and the government itself play out in everyday life.

Summary of Essential Learnings for the Course:

Students should be able to:

* acquire knowledge that will increase their cultural literacy
* assess American political institutions, elections, and political parties in a way that improves their qualities of citizenship
* write essays that enable them to critique American political institutions
* participate in debates and/or simulate American political institutions in order to think critically about issues
* define and defend their own political beliefs based on the most common American ideologies
* become sensitive to the political interests of various classes, religions, and racial or ethnic groups
* be prepared for informed civic participation
* evaluate the consequences of the choices that current political leaders make
* evaluate the importance of political decisions on their lives
* be able to engage in community service activities and to compare what they encounter to their course content
* compare the political institutions and beliefs that they study with those of the mission pursued by their schools
We will compile grades with the following assignments:

*up to five in-term tests, each worth 100 points, in which you will answer multiple-choice and analyze and interpret free-response questions
*several short essays of the format you will encounter on the Advanced Placement exam in U.S. Government and Politics; they will typically be assigned over a weekend and will offer some choice with regard to topic
*various quizzes and timed writings that will require you to answer multiple-choice questions and interpret free-response questions
*a cumulative final exam worth 15% of your total grade

I will also give you a participation score worth up to 10% of your grade; your class discussion, attendance, and degree of engagement with the readings will earn you a score of 100, 90, 80, or 70 points. Participating in discussions can be vital for college courses and, of course, for your employment beyond the university.

As your student handbook specifies, you are to be in class on time, and if you miss more than six class meetings you could receive a lowered—and possibly failing—grade.

CJA Grading Scale:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Quality Points (4.0)</th>
<th>Quality Points (Honors/ACC/AP)(4.5)</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98 – 100</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
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<td>90-92</td>
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<td>I</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>Below 70%</td>
<td>Conditional Failure</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Late Work / Make-Up Tests Policy:

It is the student’s responsibility to find out what work was missed during an absence (preferably by asking another responsible student or checking the class website). All missed work is due upon the absent student’s return. There is a 10% deduction each school day any assignment is missing. Students will receive a zero for assignments not submitted within a cycle of the due date. The deadline for all work is the last scheduled day of classes for the semester.

In case of an absence during a test, a student can make up one test for full credit (within the cycle). 10% will be taken off the grade of a second test missed during an absence. A third test missed during an absence will have 20% deducted. A fourth test missed will have 30% deducted. All missed quizzes must be made up within one cycle of the absence, or else the grade will be a zero. The department, typically, will not allow the re-taking of a failed test.
The class (and Social Studies department) will adhere to the student handbook policy toward plagiarism.

Students are responsible for properly submitting electronic work.

I reserve the right to make alterations to the syllabus and the schedule that follows at any time.

Assignments:

1. Intro and considerations influencing formulation and adoption of the Constitution ... Assigned: "The Constitutional Convention of 1787" and "To Adopt or Not to Adopt?"

2. Considerations, continued; on separation of powers ... Assigned: "Checking Power With Power" and "Defining Federalism"

3. Checks and balances and federalism ... Assigned: "The C. Structure of American Federalism"

4. Federalism and theories of democratic government ... Assigned: The Constitution

5. The Constitution ... Assigned: The Amendments

6. The Amendments and unit one review... Assigned: REVIEW UNIT ONE VOCABULARY

7. Test one ... Assigned: "Forming Political Opinions and Values"

8. Beliefs citizens hold about gov’t and leaders; processes by which citizens learn about politics ... Assigned: "Participation: Translating Opinions Into Action"


10. Ways in which citizens vote and participate in public life ... Assigned: "Political Ideology and the American People"

11. Factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behavior ... Assigned: REVIEW UNIT TWO VOCABULARY

12. Review unit two (and one)

13. Test two ... Assigned: "What Parties Do For Democracy"

15. Political parties: effects on the political process, electoral laws and systems ... Assigned: "Types of Interest Groups"

16. Interest groups: range of interests represented, activities of interest groups ... Assigned: "Characteristics and Power of Interest Groups"

17. Interest groups: effects on the political process, unique characteristics of PACs ... Assigned: "The Influence of the Media on Politics"


19. Mass Media: news industry and its consequences; Review

20. Test three ... Assigned: "The Structure and Powers of Congress"

21. Major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power: Congress ... Assigned: "Congressional Leadership and Committees" and "How a Bill Becomes a Law"

22. Congress ... Assigned: "The Job of the Legislator" and current event readings

23. Congress ... Assigned: "The Structure and Power of the Presidency" and "Managing the Presidency"

24. The Presidency ... Assigned: "The Job of the President" and Presidential rankings

25. The Presidency ... Assigned: "Understanding the Federal Bureaucracy" and "The Job of the Federal Bureaucracy"

26. The Bureaucracy ... Assigned: "Understanding the Federal Judiciary" and "How the Supreme Court Decides"

27. The Federal Court System ... Assigned: REVIEW UNIT FOUR VOCABULARY

28. Test four ... Assigned: "Defining Public Policy" and "The Eight Steps in Making Public Policy"

29. Linkages: public opinion, voters, interest groups ... Assigned: terms from "State and Local Politics"

30. Linkages: political parties, the media, state and local governments ... Assigned: terms from "Making State and Local Policy"

31. Public Policy: policymaking in a federal system, formation of policy agendas, institutions in enacting policies ... Assigned: terms from "Controlling the Federal Bureaucracy"

32. Public Policy: bureaucracy and the courts in enacting policy; linkages between political institutions and federalism ... Assigned: terms from "Parties and Elections in the States"
33. Public Policy: parties, interest groups, public opinion, elections, and policy networks ... Assigned: REVIEW UNIT FIVE VOCABULARY

34. Test five

35. Civil rights and civil liberties through judicial interpretation ... LAST SEVERAL ASSIGNMENTS FROM CHAPTERS ON CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

36. Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties

37. The Fourteenth Amendment on constitutional development and liberties

38. REVIEW