

Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics

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Course Description

Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics (APGOV) is a challenging course that is structured to replicate a freshman-level college course. APGOV is intended for qualified and dedicated students who wish to complete studies in high school with a chance to earn college credit by successfully completing the national exam in May. This course is designed to provide students with the analytic skills and factual knowledge necessary to deal critically with the problems and materials in US government and politics, and therefore, places great academic demand on the student. There is an assumption made at the time the student registers for the course that he/she will accept the additional demands that this course requires and will take the APGOV exam in May.

Course Objectives

- To know important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to United States government and politics.
- To understand typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences (including the components of political behavior, the principles used to explain or justify various government structures and procedures, and the political effects of those structures and procedures).
- To be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to United States government and politics.
- To prepare for the Advanced Placement examination as prepared by the College Board.

Curriculum Calendar

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Chapters</u>	<u>Approximate Time</u>
1	American Constitutional Government	1.1-1.3, 2, 3	August – September
2	Elections and the Media	12.1-12.3, 13, 14	September – October
3	Political Parties and Interest Groups	11, 15	October – November
4	Political Beliefs and Behaviors	1.4-1.7, 10, 12.4-12.6	November – December
	MIDTERM EXAM	(Units 1-4)	December
5	Congress and the Courts	6, 9	January – February
6	Presidency and the Bureaucracy	7, 8	February – March
7	Civil Liberties and Civil Rights	4, 5	March – April
8	Public Policy	16, 17, 18	April – May
	FINAL EXAM	(Units 1-8)	late April
	COLLEGE BOARD EXAM		early May

Behavioral Expectations

- The student will actively and constructively participate in each class. In addition to lecture, this is a discussion course, and therefore, it is imperative that each student contribute to the discussion. Likewise, each student should ask questions when material is not fully understood.
- The student will respect the teacher's right to teach and the right of all students to learn, and will do nothing to purposely disrupt this process.
- The student will assume primary responsibility for his/her educational success. This includes keeping up with readings and other assignments; preparing for quizzes, tests, and exams; and seeking assistance from the teacher at the first signs of academic difficulty.

Note well: All school rules can and will be enforced in this classroom. Of course, I do not expect behavioral infractions in an Advanced Placement course. Such behavior may be cause for dismissal from the class.

Materials

Required Text: O'Connor, Sabato and Yanus. *American Government: Roots and Reform*, AP ed. (online)

Students are also required to have the following:

- 3-ring binder with a 2" binding
- ~100 pages of loose-leaf, **college-ruled** paper
- pens and pencils

Office Hours

I am available for student conferences by appointment only before and after school most every day. I am also available during my planning periods and lunch. To make an appointment, students need to sign up for a block of time on the office-hours schedule sheet on the bulletin board near the hallway of my classroom. (Please do not “drop in” during the school day without an appointment, especially before, during, or after I have another class in session.) Students may also contact me via e-mail with questions or concerns. *Students who are struggling are encouraged and expected to conference with me as often as necessary.*

Grading

This course uses a weighted grading system, often at a ratio of 90 (achievement) to 10 (practice). Students basically earn four separate “grades” in this class with each one corresponding to a different type of assessment. Three of these assessment types (tests, quizzes, and participation & effort) are considered “achievement” grades and total 90-95% of the overall grade; the other type (assignments) is considered a “practice” grade and totals 5-10%. The weighted system is used so that students are aware of the relative importance of each assessment at the outset of each grading period and so that both teacher and student can easily identify a student’s strengths and weaknesses. Assessments are weighted as follows, although weights are subject to slight changes each grading period:

Tests – 45-55% **Quizzes – 20-25%** **Participation & Effort – 15%** **Assignments – 5-10%**

A fifth type of assessment (“Review”) is used in the fourth quarter only and is usually set at 25% of the fourth-quarter grade, reducing the weight of the other assessments accordingly.

The grading scale used in this class is the Green High School grading scale. Green High School rewards students who challenge themselves with AP courses by “enriching” their grade when calculating GPA. This one-point enrichment applies to students who earn a C or better.

Note well: Students must be aware that the expectations of an Advanced Placement course are significantly greater than any other course at Green High School. As a result, a student may experience an “adjustment period” – especially during the first quarter – in which the grade earned can be lower than that to which the student is accustomed. It is the student’s responsibility to make the necessary adjustments, or to seek help from the teacher, at the first sign of poor performance.

Students should also be aware that the fourth grading period ends shortly after the College Board exam is taken in early May. The fourth quarter is a very short grading period (late March to early May) and there may be no opportunity to raise the fourth-quarter grade after the exam is taken. All effort must be made to perform well on the many graded opportunities before the APGOV exam.

Tests

Tests will be taken twice per quarter to check a student's understanding of a larger amount of material. Tests are modeled on the College Board exam and are designed to prepare students for it. Tests will be a combination of:

- Multiple Choice Questions
- Identifications (Vocabulary)
- Free-Response Question(s)

If absent the day before a test, the student will take the test as scheduled. If absent on a test day, the student must see me immediately upon his/her return to schedule a make-up time. Make-up tests can be significantly different from the original test, so every effort should be made to be in class on test days.

Students should begin preparing for unit tests *at least* three days in advance. When studying, students should follow this three-day study plan:

- Day 1: Review all notes, readings, handouts, and read or re-read review books, including *Fast Track to a 5*.
- Day 2: Take practice tests and quizzes on-line or in other resources and make a list of those items, topics, or types of questions that you missed.
- Day 3: Study the items and topics that were missed on Day 2 to focus your study.

Studies have shown a correlation between how early one begins studying for a test and his/her success on that test. By beginning to study at least three days in advance, you will continue to think about the material *even when not studying* and will be committing the information to your long-term memory.

After a test or quiz, students should make a list of any topics or items missed, and then use those lists to organize their studying for the midterm, final, and APGOV exams. A student can increase their chances of success in APGOV by identifying what they *do not know* and then reviewing those items more thoroughly.

Quizzes

Quizzes will be given frequently to check students' understanding of the readings, terms/concepts, and course lectures. Quizzes will be one of three types: reading comprehension (RC), identification (ID), and multiple-choice (MC).

A *reading comprehension* quiz is a possibility at the start of each class period and will not be announced in advance. In an RC quiz, students will be given a broad question that allows them to demonstrate their comprehension of the previous night's reading. Each RC quiz is scored out of 6. Students will have three to five minutes to complete this quiz. If absent for a reading-comprehension quiz, students will not be able to make up the quiz. No grade will be entered, and the student's overall grade will not change.

An *identification* quiz is also a possibility at the start of each class period and will not be announced in advance. In an ID quiz, students are expected to show a solid understanding of a term/concept within a three-minute time limit. If absent for an ID quiz, students will not be able to make up the quiz. No grade will be entered, and the student's overall grade will not change.

Scoring well on RC and ID quizzes is the key to success in this class. Those students who are consistently prepared for each class by reading the textbook, instructor's notes, and other resources are always the ones who earn the highest grades in the class and the highest scores on the College Board exam.

If a student is present for all (or all but one) RC and ID quiz in a given quarter, the lowest quiz score will be dropped.

A *multiple-choice* quiz will be given near the midway point of each unit. An MC quiz will consist of approximately 10 to 15 multiple-choice questions and will be announced several days in advance. These quizzes are intended to check a student's grasp of the material before the unit test and usually focus on the main topics of the unit. If absent for an MC quiz, students must make up the quiz.

Writing Free-Response Questions (FRQs)

Fifty percent of the APGOV exam is based on the student's ability to answer four free-response questions. Therefore, proper writing skills will be taught in this class. Methods will be taught early and often to help students to improve their writing skills. Students must be patient and take advantage of every opportunity to improve these skills. FRQs will be graded using the point-system used by the College Board. These scores will then be converted into grades.

Participation & Effort

Significant class participation is an integral part of this course. Participation is defined as any constructive contribution to the overall learning of the individual student or his/her classmates. This includes answering and asking questions, arguing, debating, commenting, complimenting, sharing, teaching, cooperating, and helping others. In addition to one's own contributions, an important part of participation is listening to and engaging the contributions of others. Furthermore, participation can involve attendance at review sessions, after-school bonus-point opportunities, and contributions to course websites (wikis or blogs) and/or Twitter. As a general rule, each student must participate in class each day, by asking or answering at least one question.

Participation grades will be recorded at the end of the second, fourth, sixth, and ninth weeks of each quarter. Each participation grade is scored out of 25 points, and together comprises 20% of the overall quarterly grade. Only voluntary participation is recorded and factored into this grade. The scores are determined using the following criteria:

- 25 (A+)** Participation is exceptional and consistent. The student participates frequently in each class and in a variety of ways. Comments are always thoughtful and reflective, and demonstrate a sincere interest in and understanding of the subject matter. Moreover, the student often asks questions that pertain to the topic at hand and that enhance the overall learning of the class. Student made contributions to the course blog and/or Twitter, if applicable.
- 23-24 (A)** Participation is frequent, occurs daily. The student participates a few times in each class. Comments are often thoughtful and reflective, and demonstrate interest in and understanding of the subject matter. Moreover, the student occasionally asks questions that pertain to the topic at hand and that enhance the overall learning of the class. Student made contributions to the course blog and/or Twitter, if applicable.
- 20-22 (B)** Participation is rather frequent, occurs most every day. The student participates in positive ways, although comments may not always reflect the depth and thought of higher scores. The student occasionally asks questions, although not as frequently or effectively as above.
- 18-19 (C)** Participation is occasional, occurs a few times a week. The student's participation only occasionally reflects the depth and thought of higher scores. Student rarely asks questions.
- 15-17 (D)** Participation is infrequent and inconsistent, occurs once or twice a week. There is little thought or reflection displayed in the student's comments, although there is some. Student rarely asks questions.
- 12-14 (F)** No meaningful participation.

Extra Credit and Bonus Points

There is no extra-credit in this class; however, there will be many opportunities to earn bonus points, which are added to the "Participation & Effort" category of the student's grade. These opportunities may occur at any time and may not come with much notice. Often they will be announced spontaneously in class or via email. Students should take advantage of every bonus-point opportunity that is presented, but should not assume that they can use these to significantly improve their grade. Most importantly, students should never ask for, or "beg" for, bonus points. Bonus point opportunities may include: additional outside reading of texts or articles, after-school videos and movies, trivia, participation in projects and contests, and field trip activities. A consistent bonus-point opportunity encourages students to develop their civic engagement and political activism. (For more information, see the FAQ page on the course website.) A student cannot earn more than twenty-five (25) bonus points in a given grading period.

Midterm and Final Exams

All students will take a comprehensive midterm exam in December or January and a comprehensive final exam in late April. Both exams are modeled on the College Board exam and will be scored using the College Board's 5-point scale. The exam will include a multiple-choice and essay section. Each exam will constitute 10% of the overall course grade, and will be scored using AP scoring. More information will be provided as each exam date approaches.

Cheating

Cheating will not be tolerated. A student is considered cheating if he/she is looking at or copying another student's work inside or outside of class; using any prohibited resources; is in possession of a "cheat-sheet;" is talking at any time during a testing period; is giving aid to or receiving aid from another student when prohibited; or is failing to take all necessary measures to protect his/her own work. If a student is thought to be cheating during a test or quiz, his/her paper will be taken and a score of zero will be given. The student is expected to see the teacher immediately after class. The student's parents and administrator may be notified.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of submitting someone else's work as your own. This includes copying someone's work verbatim, changing someone's words slightly, and/or paraphrasing someone's ideas without giving the original author proper credit. Proper research and writing will be taught in this class to the extent that it is necessary. However, all Green students have been taught the skills necessary to avoid plagiarism by the time that they are enrolled in this course, therefore, each student will be held to the strictest standards. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be considered cheating.

Likewise, working on an assignment with another student – unless it is specifically stated otherwise – is strictly forbidden. A major objective of this course is to prepare each individual student for success on the APGOV exam in May. Therefore, each student must individually develop all the skills necessary to succeed.

Absences

The student is 100% responsible for making up missed work due to any type of absence. Likewise, "it is the responsibility of the student to initiate and complete all make up work in the required time" (from GHS Student-Parent Handbook). If possible, an absent student should email me as soon as possible to inform me of the absence and ask what will be missed. If not, a student can get missed notes from another student in class, and can see me upon his/her return (before school, after class, or after school) to receive handouts, assignments, or to make arrangements for making up other missed work. A student whose absence is excused will have one day more than the number of days he/she was absent to complete missed work. A student whose absence is unexcused will not be permitted to make up missed work, including missed quizzes or tests.

If absent on the day that a writing assignment is due, the student is expected to email the assignment to me before the start of his/her class period. If absent on the day that any other type of assignment is due, it is the student's responsibility to turn in the assignment on the day of his/her return to school. Absence is not an excuse for failing to submit an assignment when it is due.

If absent on a test or quiz day, the student must make it up within two days of the absence or another mutually agreed upon time. If absent the day before a test or quiz, the student will still be expected to take it at the scheduled time. Failure to take home materials is not an acceptable excuse to postpone a test or quiz.

Note: Students should be very aware that while they have every right to make up any work missed due to an excused absence, the loss of class time will almost always negatively impact their grade. For example, missing four classes in a grading period is the equivalent of missing 10% of the course, and the student should expect his/her grade to decline proportionately.

School cancellations: In the event of an unexpected school cancellation, students are **expected** to check their email for schedule revisions and other important information.

Late Assignments

Late assignments of any type will not be accepted. It is unfair to other students, who do submit their work on time, to offer an excuse for submitting your assignment late. Moreover, it is unfair to expect a teacher to evaluate the validity of a student's excuse for submitting an assignment late.

In the event of an absence or printer problem, students are expected to email typed assignments before the start of class on the day that the assignment is due. (Note well: Emailing an assignment only verifies that it was completed; students are still expected to bring a printed copy to class the next day or it will be considered late.)

In the event of a personal or family emergency, students should speak to me or email me as soon as possible and before the assignment is due. An emergency does not guarantee that an assignment will be accepted late.

Quality of Work

Students should only submit work of the highest quality. Work of poor quality will be returned ungraded and be considered late. Students will then have 24 hours to correct and resubmit the assignment at a substantial reduction in the grade.

Electronic Device Policy

Students are prohibited from using cell phones and other electronic devices in this classroom unless my express permission is granted. Phones and other devices are to be turned off and kept out of sight at all times in this classroom. Failure to do so will result in confiscation of the phone/device and an office referral.

Students are expected to bring their Chromebook to class every day CHARGED and ready to use. Students who do not meet these expectations will receive consequences as outlined in the GHS Student Handbook.

Tardiness

Tardiness to class is not tolerated. Tardy to class is defined as failure to be in your seat and ready to begin when the bell rings. The first time a student is tardy he/she will be given a warning. Each subsequent tardy will earn the student a school detention. Students are expected to become silent when the bell rings so that class can begin promptly. It is imperative that the class utilize all available time in preparation for the College Board exam.

The College Board Exam

The College Board exam is scheduled for Tuesday, May 10, 2016. Students who have the proper paperwork submitted will be excused from school for the remainder of that day. Students are required to take the College Board exam. Students who have financial concerns should speak with the principal or AP coordinator to discuss the situation.

The exam takes nearly 3 hours. Section I includes 60 multiple-choice questions that students have 45 minutes to complete. Section II is the essay section and lasts 100 minutes. Students are required to answer four mandatory essay questions.

Advanced Placement Hall of Fame

Students who score a 5 on the College Board exam will be entered into the Advanced Placement Hall of Fame. Each student earning a 5 will have his/her picture and name permanently displayed in the entry hallway of Room 242.

Miscellaneous Policies

- Students should not bring unnecessary items to this classroom. Students are not to bring items unnecessary for the study of US Government & Politics. Likewise, students' desks should remain free of unnecessary items, including but not limited to purses, bags, books and papers for another class. Unnecessary objects may be confiscated and not returned.
- Students are not to use class time for working on other class work. These items, too, may be confiscated.
- Students may drink water in class, but are not permitted to eat food. Students must make sure that their desk and surrounding area are free of trash before leaving.
- Students should refrain from marking on the desks or leaving litter or other debris on the desks and floor.
- Students should set up a conference with me immediately if they find themselves struggling or falling behind. Failure to do so shows that the student is not assuming primary responsibility for his/her educational success.