

Introduction to American Government

Syllabus and Policies

Teacher and Contact Information:

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- **Please note:** This is the quickest and easiest method of communication between parents/guardians, students, and the teachers.
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Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to prepare students to participate in exercising their political responsibilities as thoughtful and informed citizens. The course will focus on the origins, development, structure, and functions of government in the United States of America. Topics of study include the constitutional framework, federalism, the three branches of government and the federal bureaucracy, civil rights and liberties, political participation, and the political behavior of the American public. While the main focus of the course is on the federal government, additional attention will be paid to state and local governments in Pennsylvania.

Course Outline: This is an 18-week course of study that focuses on the following major topics:

UNIT I (A) - Classifications of Government:

- Defining Government and its Purpose
- Government Classification
- Principles of Democracy

UNIT I (B) - Historical Foundations of Government:

- The Roots of American Democracy
 - The Articles of Confederation
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UNIT II (A) – The United States’ Constitution:

- The United States Constitution: Preamble, Articles, and Amendments
- Principles of the U.S. Constitution

UNIT II (B) – American Citizenship and Immigration:

- The Naturalization Process
 - Duties of Responsible Citizenship
 - Aliens (Legal and Illegal) in the United States
 - Immigration and Related Problems
 - Ethnicity and Related Issues
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UNIT III – The Branches of Government (A,B,C):

- The Legislative Branch: U.S. House of Representatives / U.S. Senate
 - The Law Making Process
 - The Executive Branch: President / Vice President / Executive Departments
 - The Judicial Branch: U.S. Supreme Court / U.S. Courts of Appeals / U.S. District Courts
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UNIT IV – State and Local Government:

- The Concept of Federalism
 - Local Governments: Counties, Cities, Boroughs, and Townships
 - Local Issues and Finances
 - Overview of Pennsylvania State Government
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UNIT V (A) – Politics in the United States:

- **Political Parties:** History, Structure, and Functions
- **The Political Spectrum:** Liberals, Moderates, and Conservatives
- Third Parties and Their Role in the American Political System
- Types of Interest Groups and their Role in the American Political System

Public Opinion and Mass Media:

- Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion
 - **Public Opinion:** Its Role and Measurement
 - **Propaganda:** Techniques and Characteristics
 - Mass Media and its Influences **on Politics**
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UNIT VI - Voters, Voter Behavior, and the Electoral Process:

- Voter Qualifications in Pennsylvania
 - Influences on Voter Behavior
 - The Nomination and the Election Process
 - Campaign Finance
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CLASSROOM POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

Student Expectations

- Respect everyone in the classroom.
- Participate positively in class by asking questions, sharing ideas, and listening/respecting others' opinions.
- Work hard, every day!

Classroom Policies

1. Come to class on time every day

- Be in your seat and log into your computer by the sound of the last bell
- If there is a warm-up question, it should be completed before the bell rings
- For every 3 tardies without a pass, you will receive a disciplinary action.

2. Come to class prepared with the following:

- Laptop/Charger and Earbuds/Headphones
- Binder
- Homework (if assigned)
- Writing Utensil (pen/pencil)

3. Cell Phones or Other Electronics:

- Phones will not be used unless given specific permission to use them educationally
- If a phone is seen at a time not specified by a teacher, a warning will be given. The second time it needs to be addressed, the phone will be placed in a brown paper bag known as "bagging." If students still have a problem after the phone is in the bag, a detention will be given.

4. Food and Drink:

- No food will be consumed in the classroom; that is to be done in the cafeteria. Water in a clear bottle or container is acceptable.

5. Absences:

- Make-up work is **your** responsibility!!
- Upon your return to school, check with your teacher(s) for the previous day's work
- You can also access missed work & assignments by logging into Canvas
- **School policy states that all work not submitted within two (2) weeks after the due date will be counted as a zero.** This will only change when your teacher(s) is/are notified of emergency situations.

6. Bathroom:

- Be responsible and respectful when asking to go to the bathroom (not in the middle of instruction).
- Must sign out to leave the room using e-hallpass

7. Group Work:

- You will be held accountable for assignments & behavior while working in groups
- Always contribute to group work and thoroughly complete your responsibilities.

8. Substitutes:

- You are expected to be on your absolute best behavior if a substitute is here.
- If your name is left on a note by a substitute as a result of an issue, you will *at the least* have a **phone call home & after-school detention!**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Binder:

- Every student is responsible for keeping a binder, or a section of a binder, which will hold all printed documents

2. Headphones:

- You will need them on a regular basis

3. Laptop:

- You will need your laptop **EVERY DAY!!**
- Make sure it is **CHARGED**
- Your phone is not a replacement for your laptop!

GRADING

1. Exams:

- All exams will be announced in advance
- Review guides and/or class time will be provided to prepare for exams
- Test corrections and/or test retakes are available upon request after meeting with your teacher(s).
You can earn up to ½ point back per question for test corrections.

2. Projects:

- From time to time, you will be working individually or in groups to complete a project that extends your thinking by researching and creating a product that illustrates your understanding of the content.

5. Discussion Board Posts:

- Discussion posts will be assigned from time to time to reflect on an article or concept to be learned about in class or discussed during the class period.

4. Classwork/Homework:

- It is rare that homework is given other than studying. If used wisely, the allotted class time should be more than sufficient to complete any work.

5. Lateness:

- All work submitted late will be subject to late points corresponding to the number of days late; generally, it is policy that after 7 days, the assignment can only receive half credit.
- All work not received within two weeks after the due date will count as a zero.

SWSD GRADING SCALE

- 100-90 = A
- 80-89 = B
- 70-79 = C
- 60-69 = D
- Below 60 = F

CHEATING POLICY

1. **Cheating is a very serious offense.** Cheating is defined as one or more the following:

- Talking or giving answers to another student with or without his/her knowledge
- Talking for any reason during a quiz or exam
- An abundance of identical incorrect answers between two or more students on a quiz or exam
- Using another student's work as your own
- Plagiarizing from another source without proper citation/documentation

2. **Unit Exams or Quizzes.** Cheating on an exam or quiz will result in the following:

- 0% for the exam or quiz & Parental/Coach Notification – **First Offense**
- 0% for the marking period – **Second Offense**
- 0% for the course – **Third Offense**

3. **Reports, Homework Assignments & Projects**

- 0% for that particular assignment

EXPECTATIONS FOR MOBILE DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM

1. Mobile devices should **ONLY** be used in class for **academic/learning purposes** – Other than those occasions, these devices need to be put away and remain out of sight.
2. Students will use appropriate mobile device etiquette by respecting the privacy of other students and using appropriate language/behavior with their mobile devices.
3. Any activity conducted on mobile devices **cannot be published online** without the permission and approval of your teacher(s).

Expectations for District-Issued Laptops::

1. Laptops are to be brought with you every day to class, whether we use them or not in class.
2. Unless they are being used for a class activity, your laptops need to **remain in your carrying bag**.
3. Bring your charger in case you need to charge your device during class.

Sites to Bookmark on Your Browser:

1. Canvas
2. Google Drive – <http://drive.google.com> & login in using your @southwesternsd.org username
3. Kahoot – <http://kahoot.it>
4. Sapphire

