

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT SYLLABUS

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## Course Introduction

Welcome to American Government. The purpose of this class is to learn about the structure of the U.S. government, the democratic process, and the issues surrounding us as U.S. and global citizens. To meet this objective we will primarily be using the *Magruder's American Government* text, which explores the structure and function of American government and the Constitution.

In this semester we will focus on:

- Philosophical and Historical Foundations of the American Political System
- Branches of Government
- The Electoral Process
- Political Parties
- Separation of Powers
- The Bill of Rights
- The Roles of Citizens in American Democracy

## Materials

You will need the textbook listed above as well as a notebook with paper and a writing utensil. We will be taking notes as well as completing a lot of in class activities so you will need these materials each and every day for class.

## Daily Expectations

My expectations of students are that they come to class prepared and ready to learn. This means you will have your book, a notebook, a writing utensil and an eager mind. We will refer to the text often and you will need it to effectively participate in class.

- **Before Entering the Classroom:** Check to make sure you have the appropriate class materials. Use the bathroom before coming to class. *Leave all iPods, cell phones, and other electronic devices in your locker or at home.*
- **Upon Entering the Classroom:** Take your seat and wait for class to begin.
- **During Class:** Refrain from talking to your peers unless instructed to do so. Always stay focused on the task at hand. Whether we're taking notes or working on a project always give your full attention to the class activity of the day. Everyone in class needs to participate in some fashion. We will have a lot of class discussion and group work assignments. Always remember to RESPECT your peers and your teacher.

**\*You will also need to keep up on current events (i.e. read a newspaper and watch the news). This is critical if we are to have deep and meaningful understanding of our government in action. From time to time, we may have current events quizzes. Each day we will start class with a discussion of current events.**

## Homework Expectations

**Zeros are inexcusable.** Assignments are due on the DUE DATE. I will make exceptions for some circumstances, but you must speak to me. If assignments are not turned in you will be referred to academic detention where you will make up your work. If turning work in on time continues to be a problem we will work through the problem solving/WEBSS process.

**\*Additional Help** - If you need additional help with any class work see Mr. Mueller to set up an appointment.

## If You Miss Class

If you know you will be missing class please see Mr. Mueller before you're going to be gone to receive the assignments you will miss. If you're sick or miss class unexpectedly stop in and see Mr. Mueller before or after school to pick up the missing work. Please don't ask for missing work during class time as we will not have time to go over it.

## Grading Policies

Units will be covered in a number of ways and therefore your grade will be based on a number of factors.

These factors include: tests, quizzes, written assignments, daily work, class participation, and projects.

Generally speaking, you will have a lot of different opportunities to learn and a lot of opportunities to change your grade. **EVERYONE IN THIS CLASS IS CAPABLE OF GETTING A GOOD GRADE – but you MUST work for it.**

### Grading Scale:

A+	98-100
A	95-97
A-	93-94
B+	90-92
B	87-89
B-	85-86
C+	82-84
C	79-81
C-	77-78
D+	75-76
D	72-74
D-	70-71
F	69 or below

## Finally...

Enjoy your time in here. It is my goal for you to develop a deeper appreciation for the democratic process and understand the importance of knowing the world around you. **EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU HAS THE CAPABILITY TO LEARN AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.** The more informed you are, the better decisions you can make to move this country in a positive direction.

**I have read and understand the syllabus and the expectations for this class.**

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Weekly Topics/Assignments

The following is a general outline for the 1<sup>st</sup> semester. The instructor may make changes as necessary throughout the semester.

August 14-15

Topics: Syllabus/Introduction

**Assignments Due:** Signed Syllabus Form

August 18-22

Topics: Principles of Government

**Assignments Due:** Government and the State, Forms of Government

August 25-29

Topics: Principles of Government

**Assignments Due:** Basic Concepts of Democracy, **Principles of Government Test**

September 2-5

Topics: Origins of American Government

**Assignments Due:** Our Political Beginning, The Coming of Independence, The Critical Period

September 8-12

Topics: Origins of American Government

**Assignments Due:** Creating the Constitution, Ratifying the Constitution, **Origins of American Government Test**

September 15-19

Topics: The Constitution

**Assignments Due:** The Six Basic Principles, Formally Amending the Constitution

September 22-26

Topics: The Constitution

**Assignments Due:** Informal Amendment, Political Awareness Case Study, **Constitution Test**

September 29-October 3

Topics: Federalism

**Assignments Due:** Federalism & the Division of Power, The National Government & the 50 States

October 6-10

Topics: Federalism

**Assignments Due:** Interstate Relations, **Federalism Test**

October 13-17

Topics: Political Parties

**Assignments Due:** Parties & What they Do, The Two-Party System

October 20-24

Topics: Political Parties

**Assignments Due:** Minor Parties, **Create Your Own Political Party Project**

October 27-31

Topics: Political Parties

**Assignments Due:** The Political Spectrum, **Political Parties Test**

November 3-7

Topics: Congress

**Assignments Due:** The National Legislature, The House of Representatives

November 10-14

Topics: Congress

**Assignments Due:** The Senate, Members of Congress, **Congress Test**

November 17-21

Topics: The Presidency

**Assignments Due:** President's Job Description, Vice Presidency

November 24-26

Topics: The Presidency

**Assignments Due:** Presidential Selection: The Framers' Plan, Nominating Presidential Candidates, **The Presidency Test**

December 1-5

Topics: The Judiciary

**Assignments Due:** The National Judiciary, The Inferior Courts

December 8-12

Topics: The Judiciary

**Assignments Due:** The Supreme Court, Special Courts, **Judiciary Test**

December 15-19

Topics: Finals

**Assignments Due:** **1<sup>st</sup> Semester Final Test, Service Learning Requirement**

## Service Learning Requirement

A significant portion of this class is understanding the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. These responsibilities include voting, staying informed, paying taxes, obeying laws and understanding your rights. In addition to these responsibilities, you also have the responsibility of service – to your neighbors, to your community, and to your country. We all do as Americans. It is this spirit of service, volunteerism, and shared values that makes our country great. To emphasize this point we will be participating in service learning in this class.

*What is service learning?* This is an opportunity for you to get involved in the community doing volunteer work. You will need to contact community organizations and ask for volunteer opportunities. This includes service industries, government agencies, religious organizations, and school organizations. *Note* – this does not include doing chores at your house or working for your parents. The idea here is to get out into the community, serve others, and make our community a better place to live.

You will be required to do a total of 20 hours of community service for the year. See the form on the other side of the sheet on how to document these hours. **This is a requirement of the class – failing to complete this requirement will jeopardize your grade in this class.**

**\*20 hours are due by December 12<sup>th</sup>**

You will also write a two page learning letter reflecting on your experiences at the end of each semester. I will handout guidelines for these papers in December.

One last thing...keep in mind we're all doing this for the good of our community and our country. I think that you will find giving back to be a highly rewarding experience. Plus, Mr. Mueller will also be completing service learning hours as well so we'll have a lot to discuss in class.

Good luck – I know you'll do great!

