

# Honors American Government Syllabus

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## Course Introduction

Welcome to Honors American Government. You are in this class because you care about the democratic process and the events that shape our nation and our world. The purpose of this class is two-fold: 1.) to prepare you for the Close Up trip in the spring 2.) to learn about the structure of the U.S. government and the issues surrounding us as U.S. and global citizens. To meet both of these objectives we will primarily be using two texts, one in each semester. The first text is the book published by Close Up called *Current Issues*. The second is *Magruder's American Government*, which explores the structure and function of American government and the Constitution.

## Materials

You will need both texts listed above as well as a notebook with paper and your iPad. 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, your iPad 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.
- **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.

## Technology Expectations

With our school now a 1:1 iPad institution, it is important that this technology be used appropriately. Therefore, during class time students should use their iPad only for classroom activities including: note-taking, specific apps, projects, and other appropriate online material related to the activity during the day. iPads should be stored away and not used, unless instructed to do so by the 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

**Zeroes 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 the after school work room until 5:00 p.m. where you will make up your work. This time will be used to complete and remediate missing work.

**\*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 GUIDELINES** – *This is a general outline about how your grade will be calculated.*

80% Summative-Demonstrate Skill/Understanding	10% Formative-Checking for Understanding	10% Final
EXAMPLES: Quizzes, Quarter and Semester Tests, Large Projects-Summative; Final Essays; Lab Reports; Summative Presentations; Summative Portfolios; etc.	EXAMPLES: Informal Quizzes; Entrance/Exit Tickets; Practice Tests; Small Projects-Formative; Draft Re-writes; Re-do assignments; Homework; Practice; Class-work; Student Involvement; Class Activities; etc.	High School
	Utilize Proficiency Scales	

## 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.

# Essential Learnings

By the end of this course you will have learned the following skills and knowledge.

1. Students will compare historical forms of democratic governments that influenced the U.S. Constitution.
2. Students will identify examples of fundamental United States political principles contained in the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Federalist Papers, Common Sense, and the United States Constitution.
3. Students will analyze the significance of amendments to the United States Constitution.
4. Students will evaluate and summarize landmark Supreme Court cases and interpretations of the U.S. Constitution.
5. Students will analyze the fundamental concepts and challenges to democracy.
6. Students will explain the necessity of compromise, analyze individual vs. public interests, and explore the concept of equality in the United States.
7. Students will analyze the structure, and function of the United States government in relationship to state governments (i.e. federalism).
8. Students will analyze and compare the relationship between the three branches of government.
9. Students will analyze the structure and function of Nebraska state and local governments.
10. Students will describe and explain the election process in national, state, and local governments.
11. Students will explain the rights freedoms, responsibilities, and benefits of citizenship in the United States.
12. Students will examine a range of current issues topics and how they relate to the current political debates in our country and our overall national and state laws.
13. Students will identify how political parties, interest groups, the media, individuals, and government institutions influence public policy.

***\*Contact your child's building principal if you are seeking more information about curriculum at Wahoo Public Schools.***

## 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.**

Honors Government students:

**10 hours are due by December 11<sup>th</sup>**

**10 hours are due by May 14<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!

## **Service Learning Documentation**

Each time you complete service hours you will need to document them below. List what the activity was, who you completed it with, the date, the number of hours, and a parent/guardian signature.

[illegible]