

2015 A.P. U.S. Government & Politics Syllabus

Instructor: Ms. Ramos

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Course Description

The AP course in United States Government and Politics will give students an analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States. This course includes both the study of general concepts used to interpret US government and politics and the analysis of specific examples. It also requires familiarity with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute US government and politics. While there is no single approach that an AP United States Government and Politics course must follow, students should become acquainted with the variety of theoretical perspectives and explanations for various behaviors and outcomes.

Goals -Students successfully completing this course will:

- know important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to US government and politics
- 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 these structures and procedures)
- be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to US government and politics (including data presented in charts, tables, and other formats)
- be able to critically analyze relevant theories and concepts, apply them appropriately, and develop their connections across the curriculum

However, that same level of rigor makes A.P. courses significantly harder than non-A.P. courses and arguably harder than even most freshman courses in college. The reason for this is that the A.P. Exam is harder than most final exams in college. It has to be. Otherwise, colleges would not accept the scores for credit. Another challenge is the pace... We must finish a college textbook and an AP course most high schools complete in a semester.

Even though good attendance and completing homework are essential to success, they are not enough. Students will have to demonstrate their mastery of essential skills and content on college-level exams and essays. This will require a level of hard work and study that is new to many “honors” students. Many students may struggle at first as they adjust to the work load, expectations, and pace. Students involved in extracurricular activities, taking multiple A.P. classes, and/or who are employed need to make sure they have enough time and discipline to manage all of their commitments successfully.

Student Behavior

Punctuality and excellent attendance are required and necessary to succeed in this class. Specifically, students are allowed only the number of days they were absent (truancies not included) to make-up any work missed.

All students are expected to behave in a manner appropriate to a college setting. Those who do not can expect fair, consistent, and natural disciplinary consequences for their inappropriate actions or attitudes. Typical consequences include but are not limited to warnings, detentions, referrals, parent phone calls, parent conferences, behavior contracts, and even expulsion from the class. No food or drink, except water, may be consumed in the classroom without permission.

Grading

Per district policy, report card letter grades signify the following: A=Advance Understanding, B=Proficient Understanding, C=Basic Understanding D=Below Basic Understanding, and F= Far Below Basic Understanding/Has not met standards.

There are several major categories for grades given in this class. Grades are calculated by the relative weight given to each category, not simply by adding up a student's points for the class and dividing by the number possible. As a result only some students earn A's. Most students earn B's or C's. A few may even earn D's, or F's.

Grading Scale

Grading Categories

90%–100%	A	Unit Exams	60%
80%–89%	B	Portfolio	15%
70%–79%	C	CW/WH	10%
60%–69%	D	Debate/Project(s)	10%
0%–59%	F	Final Exam	5%

Unit Exams—Unit exams will vary over the concepts and chapters covered. Each exam will cover the readings, lectures, discussions, activities, etc. Students who are absent on the day of an exam must make arrangements with the instructor to arrange an alternate time *after school* to take the test. Students are to make-up the exam within a week, which may be in an alternate form (ie short answer, completion, modified true/false, etc).

Portfolio—Students will create and maintain an electronic portfolio of their studies. Components will include blogging, article curation and analysis, concept maps, another items to be forthcoming and located on the class Weebly website. These will all reinforce their student mastery development of content knowledge and historical thinking skills needed for the AP exam. Students will use Weebly- this is the platform used by History Day at the middle and high school levels and is free and very student friendly- programming and code skills are *not* required.

Classwork/Homework— Students will receive various assignments, such as secondary readings, maps, primary source materials, etc. All in class assignments are due at the end of the class period and all take home assignments are due at the beginning of the next class unless otherwise stated. Besides the textbook and handouts, you will be assigned reading materials and videos available on the Internet and given a minimum of two days to complete the assignment. If you do not have internet access, you must arrange to use a library, the tutoring center, or borrow copies of the supplementary materials and complete the questions/discussion boards and submit your work on the class website/School Loop. ***You are expected to read the material in the textbook and the supplementary readings and you will be held strictly accountable.***

No late assignments will be accepted, except as allowed under the school's attendance policy. Students are expected to complete a note taking assignment each chapter that will force them into the details of the text. More details will be provided, as they will vary from a reading guide, outline, study guide, lecture screencasts, or some other format in addition to terms to be identified. In addition, students will generally complete reading quiz based on the due reading(s) assigned and will randomly be issued pop quizzes. Students are only allowed to retake a quiz for an excused absence and it may be in an alternative format.

Keeping informed of current events is critical in AP Government. Students are encouraged to watch the news which focuses on Washington politics such as CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, and PBS. Additionally, they need to

be reading articles covering national politics from organizations such as the New York Times or Wall Street Journal. Subscribing to a news feed through Flipboard or News Map is highly encouraged. Watching or reading “news” from organizations/outlets such as the Daily Show, Colbert Report, Red Eye, The Onion, or Cracked will not suffice for this course. I also repost/Tweet out articles that are related to government and pertain to the class. For those students who do not have Twitter, they also appear in my Twitter feed linked on the home page of the class Weebly- where you do not need a Twitter account to view the articles. The articles are curated by a variety of AP Government teachers, including myself.

We will utilize a variety of social/multi media formats in this class. Included in this category are Twitter and video clips hosted on You Tube. Government officials and agencies are using social media (Twitter) to disseminate information more and more. We will from time to time utilize this medium in class and to carry on the discussion outside of the class and with other AP Government students. This meets the publishing and collaboration strand of the California Common Core Standards. More and more classes are utilizing this medium, even in elementary grades. The White House hosts their videos on You Tube. We will view these in class, as well as students be required to view some for homework. Saturday Night Live and the late night talk shows have a variety of skits and interviews related to government in the news. These clips often serve as an engaging means to hook students into a discussion and are relevant to media and politics today- President Obama was just on Jay Leno discussing the National Security Agency. Also, shows such as West Wing and Newsroom provide examples of various topics and current events to engage class discussions. Students whose parents elect their student not to utilize Twitter or multimedia video will be provided alternative reading and critical thinking questions to cover the same content in a hand written format.

Debate/Projects—One or more debate/project(s) will be assigned. These may consist of a formal debate, a student-led lecture or review activity, a counterfactual activity, etc. Projects will require a significant amount of research and preparation outside of class. Rubrics and detailed instructions will be forthcoming.

Final Exam—All students will take a cumulative exam.

Miscellaneous:

Health Disclaimer—I/Ms. Ramos have crazy allergies and asthma. **Absolutely NO CornNut products are allowed in class!** Just opening the product sends me into an asthma attack. Also, no spraying of perfume or other scented products- they may contain some floral substances which I am allergic to, as well as other students. Please let me know if you have any allergy concerns which we need to address in the classroom as well.

Cheating—While students are encouraged to help each other and work together, cheating will not be tolerated. Cheating occurs whenever a student attempts to take credit for someone else’s effort. Cheating can take place in or out of the classroom on anything that has a point value attached to it. Any student found cheating will be given a 0 (which will not be dropped or allowed to be retaken) on whatever was cheated on and have a written Notice of Unsatisfactory Performance completed and placed in the student’s permanent academic file. He/she may also be suspended from class pending a parent conference. A second offense will result in another parent conference and a 0 on whatever was cheated on. Any further offenses will result in even more serious negative consequences which may include additional grade reductions and even expulsion from the class with a transfer grade of “F.”

Class participation— Students will be required to participate actively in class discussions and group activities. Class participation should demonstrate you are actively listening, willing to offer thoughtful questions, comments, or answers to the relevant class discussion or group activity. Regular class attendance is the first important step to meaningful class participation and is necessary in maintaining quality work. Class

participation is graded. Tardies, no book, or disruptive behavior will affect your CW/HW grade. Be on time to class and bring your book!

Tardy and Cell Phone Policy—Class begins when the tardy bell rings. If you are not in your seat when the tardy bell rings, an unexcused tardy will be recorded. Students will receive two water closet passes. Use beyond the two will be marked as a tardy- exceptions will be made for medical reasons per a doctor's notice. Cell phones, music devices, and other electronic devices are not to be used in class, unless under the guidance and direction of Ms. Ramos for instructional use- ***I WILL BE VERY CLEAR WHEN IT IS PERMISSABLE TO USE THEM AND WHEN TO PUT THEM BACK AWAY!*** This IS your warning. All backpacks, book bags, totes, and purses must be kept on the back of desks or underneath the desk, excluding the student's lap. Book bags, purses, etc. are not pillows, cheating aids, or hiding places for secret texting!

Work Passes—All students will be given the opportunity to extend the due date of a chapter homework or in-class assignment by one additional school day each semester. This does not apply to exams, timed writes, projects, or other long term assignments.

Disclaimer—The teacher reserves the sole and complete right to modify this syllabus to meet the instructional needs of the class and adjust to possible calendar issues. Minor syllabus modifications often happen during the school year (ie rally, assembly, STAR testing)- last year we moved two exam dates in AP US History. However, any changes will be made for the good of the class and announced as soon as possible. The teacher, I, does NOT seek to indoctrinate students regarding their political perspective. We will engage in a variety of discussions, especially regarding items in the news. I will work to bring alternative viewpoints and play devil's advocate at times to foster critical thinking. When President Bush was in office, class discussions tended to be critical of him and Republicans as we discussed and analyzed current events. With the current administration, class discussions may tend to be critical of President Obama and Democrats. Students are encouraged to take a position and defend it with facts/evidence, regardless of where I stand. I am looking for the development of the argument- NOT do I agree with the student.

Web Sites: School Loop will host student grades and a link to class Schoology and Weebly sites. Schoology will serve as the class discussion board and electronic turn in spot, excluding the website portfolio--- refer to the class period code given to you in class for signup. Due to the collaborative nature of Google Doc and Voice Thread assignments, links to Google Docs and Voice Threads will be posted in Schoology to prevent others outside of our class from adding to class assignments. Weebly will host course units, student websites, and class current event blogs. We will use this blog when collaborating with students in other high schools to extend discussions and perspectives outside of our classroom. This meets the Common Core standards of students collaborating, publishing their work, and acquisition of 21st century skills. These additional sites are utilized to meet class needs, California Common Core Standards, and student suggestions which School Loop does not meet.

Email Address: Elizabeth_ramos@cjuhsd.net , ramosclass@gmail.com , or School Loop

Student Support: I am generally available before school at 7:30am and after school Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays until 4pm. I am also generally available Tuesdays and Thursdays until at least 3:30pm. In the event of a workshop, school site meeting, district meeting, or other event- I let the students know when I am not available, excluding unplanned illness/asthma flare ups. Generally, I do a rundown of the week's topics and let the students know if I am not available that week on Mondays. **Scheduled meeting/conf dates that I will NOT be available: Jan 12 & 20, February 17, March 2, 5-6, 17, 19-20, April 21, and May 4 & 12.

Chapter Reading & Exam Schedule

(Students will receive additional readings & assignments)

Unit	Chapter Reading(s)	Exam Date
1- Constitutional Underpinnings	Ch 1 Ch 2 Ch 3 Ch 4	Jan 22
2- Political Beliefs	Ch 5 Ch 7 Ch 9	Feb 5
3- Political Parties, Interest Groups, Mass Media	Ch 6 Ch 8 Ch 10	Feb 23
4- Legislative Branch	Ch 11	March 9
5- Executive Branch & Bureaucracy	Ch 12 Ch 13	April 1
6- Judicial Branch	Ch 14	April 13
7- Public Policy	Chs 17-18 Chs 19-20	April 24
8- Civil Rights & Liberties	Ch 15 Ch 16	May 8
Final Exam	Cumulative	TBA

I have read the above syllabus for Ms. Ramos' AP Government & Politics course and agree to the terms set forth.

Student Name (Print) _____ Period _____

Student Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

I do give permission to view multimedia video in class. _____

I do not give permission to view multimedia video in class. _____