

Montclair High School

Course Syllabus

Department: Social Studies

Course: Government & Politics

Level: Honors/AP

Credits: 5

Course Description:

This is the capstone course of the Civics and Government Institute. It combines the Advanced Placement Government and Politics curriculum with the nationally renowned "We the People" curriculum. In so doing, it will provide students with a unique analytic perspective on the foundations and evolution of government and politics in the United States. The course, then, is concerned with the nature of the American political system, its development over the past two hundred plus years, and how it continues to function today. It examines in detail the structure and function of the Constitution, the principal processes and institutions through which the political system functions, and the creation and implementation of public policy.

In January, students will be involved in a simulated congressional hearing that will allow you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles. This hearing will lead to a statewide competition at Rutgers University, which may lead to the national annual competition in Washington D.C. The second half of the year will be devoted to the Government & Politics Curriculum as well as Constitutional Law. Here we will look deeply at historic as well as current constitutional issues. This will be done using legal research as well as critical writing.

Standards:

As seniors, you are one year from your real college experience. I will use this opportunity to remind you that I will treat you as college students. This does not refer only to academics, but to behavior and responsibility. Your success is your responsibility. Absences do not absolve you of work responsibility and one-day absences do not exempt you from tests and assignments due on the day you return. Excuses will not be tolerated. If you forgot materials at school, it is your responsibility to connect with a classmate to get things to you. If you are absent for **more than** one day, you are responsible for getting in touch with me (**prior to class**) to arrange a make-up schedule. Also, since we will be doing a ton of group work to start the year, you are responsible for not just you, but your groups' performance. Please make an effort to not miss days that you are scheduled to present.

Anchor Text(s):

Text Title	Publisher/Author	Year/Edition	ISBN	Text Distribution
<u>Government By the People</u>	Pearson/Magleby	2007/22 nd Ed.	978-0137137718	Hard Copy
<u>We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution</u>	Center for Civic Education	2009	9780898182323	Hard Copy

Supplementary Materials:

Government by the People (online) 2012

Units of Study:

I. CONSTITUTIONAL UNDERPINNINGS OF US GOVERNMENT

- a. Our Constitution: Federalism
- b. Our Constitution: Separation of powers
- c. Concerns and fears of the founding fathers (powers denied, bill of rights)
- d. Political and ideological sources the founding fathers consulted

II. POLITICAL BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS

- a. Citizens' Political Beliefs (measuring public opinion, what beliefs they have, demographics)
- b. Processes of learning about politics (how beliefs form, what shapes them)
- c. Participation in the political process (voting, protest)

III. POLITICAL PARTIES, INTEREST GROUPS, MASS MEDIA

- a. Interest groups (types of groups, money in politics, PAC's, Campaign finance laws)
- b. Political parties (function, party systems, minor parties, key party differences, and demographics)
- c. Campaigns and elections (nominations, campaigns, election laws, use of money, reform)
- d. Media (power, role, regulatory laws, ability to influence opinion, use by public officials, election role)

IV. INSTITUTIONS OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

- a. Congress (powers, roles, structure)
- b. Presidency (powers, role, structure of executive branch, and the cabinet)
- c. Judiciary (powers, role, structure, appointment process)
- d. Relationship (basically checks and balances, ties with interest groups, media, and state and local governments)
- e. Bureaucracy (powers, function, scope and structure)

V. PUBLIC POLICY

- a. Formation of policy & policy agendas (Congress, President, Courts, the bureaucracy, the role of interest groups, parties, and elections)
- b. Economic & Regulatory policy (the budget, tax policies, labor, regulation, public opinion)
- c. Social policy (role of government, history and development of social policy, health care, welfare)
- d. Foreign & Defense Policy (makers of policy, diplomacy, challenges and goals)

VI. CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

- a. First amendment freedoms (significant decisions, evolution)
- b. Rights to life, liberty & property (due process amendments, significant decisions, evolution)
- c. Equal/Civil Rights (race, women, gender, history, significant decisions, development)

Proficiencies:

By the end of this course, students will:

- Have a strong working knowledge of the American Government and Political Systems
- Have a great working understanding of the United States Constitution and Constitutional Law

Evaluation & Assessment:

Marking Period grade calculation will be based on a total point system. The approximate course work will be comprised of the following:

Tests and Presentations	= 40% approx.
Essays, Quizzes, Current Events, and Projects	= 25% approx.
Homework	= 15% approx..
Class Work	= 20% approx.