Honors American Government and Civics

Course Syllabus & Outline

Teacher: Mr. Sutton

**Course Description**:

The Honors Government and Civics course is intended for academically motivated students who are ready to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of our nation’s political structure and civic life. This survey course focuses on the purpose, organization, development, and structure of our governmental system. The civics aspect of this course concentrates on the role of the individual citizen in our government with specific focus on issues such as: rights, duties, and responsibilities of citizenship. More broadly, the study of this valuable course material will be used to strengthen key student skills in reading, writing, critical thinking and analysis, research, organization and preparation, and academic integrity. Students will learn to assess historical materials, their relevance to a given interpretive problem, their reliability, and their importance, and to weigh the evidence and interpretations presented in historical scholarship. Furthermore, it is always a personal goal to help students develop a deeper appreciation for our shared American heritage and the civic duties and responsibilities entrusted to and expected of each of us in preservation of our democracy and liberty.

**Main Course Objectives:**

At the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the circumstances and ideas that led to the creation of the American system of government identifying the causal pressures and forces surrounding their creation and/or purpose/s. (translation: how and why our government came into existence)
2. Compare the American political and economic systems to other world systems.

(translation: how we organize society and get the things we need compared to how other countries do those things)

1. Discuss the significance, purpose, and content of key documents that define the American philosophy of governance; particularly the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. (translation: what these documents say, what they do, and why they’re so important)
2. Examine the political behavior of the American public including: the creation and nature of political parties, interest groups, the electoral process, mass media and political opinion. (translation: how we Americans “play the game” of politics)
3. Identify the powers of each of the three main branches of the federal government.
4. Describe the relationship between federal, state, and local levels of government.
5. Explain how American foreign policy is developed and the role of foreign policy in national defense and international trade relationships. (translation: how our country negotiates with our friends and enemies in order to either improve our safety or sell and buy more stuff)
6. Discuss issues concerning taxation, public spending and debt, and the purpose and limitations of fiscal policy. (translation: where the money for government comes from, how we spend it, and how the government tries to keep the money system stable)

**Key Skills:**

1. Organizing, grouping, and interpreting facts
2. Identifying trends and making predictions
3. Constructing a solid thesis, developing evidence in support of that thesis, and backing it up with specific detail
4. Key skills in reading and writing for comprehension (summarization, main idea, evidence, purpose, audience, structure and organization, etc…)
5. Note taking and test taking strategies

**Course Materials:**

**Class Website:**

[**mrsuttonsclass.weebly.com**](file:///C:\Users\Jesse\Desktop\US%20History%20Syllabus%20&%20Outline\Honors%20US%20History%20(Edison)%20(Autosaved).docx)

The class website is really important! There, you will find this syllabus, weekly outlines and assignments, links to a digital version of your textbook, and a whole lot more. Make sure you make good use of it often!

**Primary Text**

McClenaghan, William A. *Magruder’s American Government.* Boston: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2013

**Supplemental Texts**

*UpFront Magazine:* Scholastic. The New York Times.

**Supplies Needed:**

* Writing supplies: pen/pencil
* Three-ring binder
* Notebook paper
* 2-3 hole-punched folders (for the binder)
* Flash drive (if you don’t already have one)
* Positive attitude
* Willingness to learn and discover
* Curiosity
* Work ethic

**Policies:**

**Homework:**

Because this course contains a large amount of material covered in a comparatively short amount of time, it would be a disadvantage to any student who fell behind in the homework assignments. The typical homework assignment consists of reading about 5 pages of text and writing a short response or completing an activity associated with that reading. Those daily assignments are expected to have been READ and completed for the following day’s class. NOT DOING SO WILL PUT YOU, THE STUDENT, AT A DISADVANTAGE. You need that prior information in your head to fully take advantage of the lessons and activities that take place in the classroom. Projects, research assignments, and special activities will have varying timeframes applied depending on the range of difficulty and time necessary for you to successfully complete the requirements of that particular learning experience. However, a deadline is a DEADLINE… no late work will be accepted after that date (obviously, verifiable emergencies are an exception).

**Tests and Quizzes:**

Typically, you can expect to have a quiz (10-50 points) every week and a test (75-150 points) every two weeks. This is a generalization. There are a few instances where you may have tests closer together or farther apart in the schedule depending on what we’re covering or if we are engaged in a project of some kind. Pay attention to the class calendar and your weekly outlines and you’ll be well informed and prepared.

**Class Expectations:**

* **Be on time**... no excuses. (In your seat at the bell.)
* Be prepared and ready to learn **EVERY DAY**: Have everything you need for class, including homework, ready to go when the bell rings.
* Listen to directions and instructions carefully, **THEN** raise your hand if you have questions or comments.
* Respect other students’ right to learn. (Stay in your seat, focused and on-task. Make no distractions to others. Ex: talking out of turn)
* Respect our learning environment. (If it isn’t yours, don’t touch it. If it’s a mess, clean it up)
* Personal electronics are to be turned OFF and put away. There will be the occasional activity where your device may be useful to our learning at which point; I will notify you of your permission to use it. (I KNOW this will be a difficulty for some of you, but we, as a class, cannot afford the distraction.)
* Food, candy, and gum are not permitted, however, drinks in a screw-top container are allowed (subject to revocation).
* Do your very best EVERY day. Your destiny is in your hands.