

# Advance Placement US Government

## Parent Newsletter # 1

### August 2009

#### Welcome

Welcome to AP US Government. This will be an exciting & demanding semester for your student. The purpose of this course is to learn the information necessary to successfully pass the national Advance Placement Government test in May. Students must score at least a 3 (out of 5) on this test to be considered for college credit at most universities, although some universities or programs may require a score of 5 to gain credit. Students are expected to take this test.

#### Stay in Touch

There are several ways that you can keep track of what we are doing in class.

1. **Parent Newsletter:** If you want a quick overview, I will add a Parent Newsletter to my website at the start of each month. The newsletter will have important events such as test dates, project assignments & due dates, and other major activities.
2. **Student Calendar:** Each month I will add a student calendar to my website that lists what we will be doing on each day of the month.
3. **Email Me:** Feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns. Email is the best and usually prevents a couple of days of "phone tag".
4. **Gradespeed:** This is the District's online grade book system. Once parents & students register & set up a password, a student's grades & attendance can be checked at any time. Please check this website often.

#### What It's All About

This course is a great opportunity for students to potentially earn college credit while completing a course required for high school. It is taught at a much higher level than the regular high school course. AP courses are most appropriate for those students who plan to go to either a private or out-of-state university. I am also certified to teach Government at St Philips College, so you can be sure that the class will be taught at a college level. AP is not, however, a college course. Since this is high school, I cannot use rules and procedures that your student will find in college. In addition, I have no way to know what is on the national test, so students will need to learn everything on a lengthy list of potential test topics. It's impossible to teach everything possibly on the test in one semester, so students will need to do a lot of self-learning. In addition, the time between the end of this course in January and the test in May allows a lot of time to forget information. Student self-review prior to the test is an absolute necessity. This means that much of the responsibility for success on the national test lies with the student.

## **Top 10 Things to Know**

1. College-level courses are often reading & writing intensive. This course is the same.
2. Access to a computer and the Internet are required for this course. If these are not available at home, then students should plan to use computers on their own time in our library, our computer labs, or at the public library.
3. The pass-rate for my students on the national AP Test varies between 40-80%. Almost without exception, the students who pass the national test are those who self-study prior to the test in the spring and who attend my review sessions prior to the test.
4. Students must score at least a 3 (out of 5) on the National AP Test in order to potentially gain college credit for this course. Some colleges require a higher score.
5. Most colleges who grant AP credit do not waive tuition for the course. This means that you may be required to pay the tuition for the class in order to receive college credit, just like they had taken it in college.
6. Since some universities do not take AP credit or require a higher score, it is important for each student to contact their prospective universities to find out the rules for AP credit.
7. The purpose of this course is to learn the information for the national test. Students in this course are expected to take the national test. Anyone in the class who does not sign up to take the national test will be required to take a final test for the course that is equivalent in difficulty to the national test. This is not the same final taken by the students who sign up to take the AP Test.
8. I rarely have students fail this course. Students who have trouble do so because they either don't pay attention in class or they don't do the reading.
9. As we move through the course, I will teach skills necessary for success in college, including note-taking, use of planners, and study skills.
10. We will discuss controversial political issues that face our nation in this course. I will always attempt to present both sides of the issue in an unbiased manner. I believe it is important to provide both sides of an issue and then let students decide their own position.

## **Events in August**

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| 24 Aug | 1 <sup>st</sup> Day of Class. Assign Parent letter.       |
| 25 Aug | -Pickup textbooks   |
| 28 Aug | -Parent Letter Due<br>-Begin first project (computer lab) |
| 31 Aug | Project due at end of period                              |

## **Supply List**

In addition to the normal supplies needed in class, students will also need a supply of 2" x 2" Post-It Notes for notetaking. If students do not wish to save computer projects on the school I-Drive, they will need a flashdrive for this purpose.

## **See You Next Month!**

Starting next month, each monthly newsletter will be located in the "Classroom News" Section of my school website.