

Parent Information for Advanced Placement Government

Welcome to AP Government

This letter will give you the “big picture” information for my class. More in-depth information about this class can be found on my website (www.georgeblair.net).

Here is the “big picture” information for my class:

-AP American Government is an intensive senior-level 18-week course for advanced students who want to try to earn college credit by taking the national AP Government & Politics Test given in May. The purpose of this class is to prepare for the national test. The large amount of information covered places a great deal of the responsibility for learning the information on the student. It is impossible to cover all of the required information in class, so a large portion of the knowledge for the test is acquired through reading the textbook. Limited late work, with a grade penalty is allowed.

The National AP Test

- The National AP Test is given in May. Government tests on the morning of May 3rd.
- In accordance with school policy, students who do not sign up to take the National AP Test will receive a “released” AP Test instead of the normal final.
- The national tests consists of 60 multiple choice questions, plus 4 essay questions. It is timed.

Preparing for the Test

- In the Spring 2010 Semester, we have 63 school days from the start of class until the AP Test in May. Eight of those days are unusable due to TAKS & Benchmark testing. That leaves 55 school days to cover almost 700 pages of text.
- Students who successfully complete the national test are those who take notes in class, read & study every page of their text, obtain & use a study guide for the test, and come to the review sessions I offer before the test.
- The passing the national test rests solely on the student’s commitment to learning & studying the required information. Students who do not actively prepare for the exam have very little chance of passing the test.
- The passing rate on the national test for my classes varies between 25% & 60%, depending on the year and class commitment.

Gaining College Credit for the Course

- Most colleges will grant 3 hours of college credit upon successful completion of this test. Most colleges use a score of 3 (out of 5) points as the minimum score required to obtain college credit.
- Variations to the general rule:
 - Some colleges require a score higher than 3 to receive credit (some as high as 5).
 - Some colleges will allow AP Credit only for non-core courses (outside of the student’s major).
 - Some colleges do not allow AP Credit.
- Some colleges require students to pay tuition for the college hours credited from AP Courses before they will be added to the college transcript.
- In all cases, it is best to contact the student’s prospective university to determine their policies concerning AP credit.

My Basic Class Rules

- This is a college class and I expect my students to act like responsible adults & college students.
- I expect my students to be self-learners who take responsibility for their own education.
- I expect my students to complete all reading and outside assignments. Students who do not complete their required reading have a difficult time passing the course.
- Students are expected to be in class. You can't learn if you aren't in class.
- Late work, make up, & missed work:
 - I expect all work to be turned in on time. Work that is late (not due to excused absence) will be graded no higher than a 50.
 - Work missed due to excused absence should be completed in a timely manner, but in no case later than 3 days after return to class. (except for extended absences longer than 3 days).
 - Work missed due to an excused absence, but not turned in within the time limit, will be graded no higher than a 50.
 - Missed work more than a week late will not be accepted.
- Students must have access to a computer and the Internet. Computers are available in the Clemens Computer Lab or Library for those without computer access at home.
- I expect students to monitor their own grades on Gradespeed. In addition, I suggest parents check Gradespeed weekly.

Technology

Many assignments in this class require the use of computers and the internet. Students will be using weblogs (blogs), wikis, & other online learning tools to complete some assignments. This collaborative, online technology allows students to contribute and share ideas with other members of the class. I have set up our blogs & wikis to insure student online safety. Please email me if you would like more information concerning the use of technology in the classroom.

Teacher Website

- My websites:
 - School Website: www.scuc.txed.net
 - Personal Website: www.georgeblair.net (This is where I keep most of the class info, including calendars, links to assignments, links to study websites, & links to reference material.)
- Students who are absent should access the website to obtain missed work.

Contact Information

-Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. The best way to contact me is by email (gblair@scuc.txed.net). Using email prevents delays due to phone tag. You can also contact me by phone 945-6501. This is the Clemens Office phone number, so it will probably take at least a day before I get the message and then get back to you.

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