

Advanced Placement Government

Spring 2010 Syllabus

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) once said: "Government is not reason; it is not eloquence; it is force! It is a dangerous servant and a terrible master."

Instructor Information:

Instructor: George Blair

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AP Government Course Description: Government is an 18-week course that is required for graduation. The AP Program allows you to complete a college-level class while in high school and then attempt to receive college credit by successfully completing the national AP Exam in May. Not all colleges accept AP credits, and not all accept a test score of 3 as passing, so be sure to check with the college(s) you plan to attend.

The purpose of this course is to learn the information required to pass the national AP test. It is impossible to cover all of the information required in class, so each student must take responsibility for reading the text and completing all assignments. Students who do not sign up to take the national AP Test will be given a released AP Test instead of the normal final test. (This is school policy.)

Specific Course Objectives: This course meets the requirements of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for high school government. You can see specific course objectives at: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter113/ch113d.html#113.70>

Grade Categories & Weighting

-All semester grades count 80% of the final grade and fall into the following categories:

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|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| -Test Category | (50% of semester grade) | Includes all tests & most projects |
| -Quiz Category | (40% of semester grade) | Includes all quizzes |
| -Daily Category | (10% of semester grade) | Includes daily work, & homework |

-The Final Test is in a separate category and counts 20% of the final grade.

-Absence, Tardy, and Grading Procedure:

-Tardies: Habitual tardiness is discourteous & disrespectful to both the class & the teacher. All unexcused tardies will be handled in accordance with District and Clemens policies. Additional information can be found in the Student Handbook.

-Absence & the Role of the Attendance Office: Only the attendance office can determine if an absence is marked "excused" or not. I have no input into this decision. The attendance office is the final authority on all things that have to do with attendance.

-Here is how I work missed work from absences and late work:

Turned in On-time	Graded to 100% maximum
In Class, Not Turned in When Due	Work not turned in when due is considered late. All late work will be graded to a maximum of 50%. Work more than 1 week late will not be accepted.
Excused Absence on Due Date	Missed work is due no later than 3 days following return to class, unless absence exceeds 3 days. After 3 days, missing work is treated like late work.

-For long term projects, you don't get extra days due to periodic absences during the assignment. For example, if I assign a week-long project, you don't get an extra day because you were absent the 3rd day after it was assigned. If you miss the review for a major test, but are in class for the test, I will give you the option of delaying your test one additional day. The delayed test is generally different than the test taken by the class.

-To determine what was missed, please go to the calendar for this class on my website & download any missed work. Contact me immediately if you are not sure what to make up. An alternate assignment may be necessary for missed videos or classwork.

-Electronic Gradebook:

-I update grades in Gradespeed (the District's online electronic gradebook) at least once weekly.

-Grades may be checked anytime on Gradespeed. Use the following link to check grades:

<https://gsnet.scuc.txed.net/gs/>

-I encourage parents to check Gradespeed at least one weekly.

Computer Access Requirements: In today's world, computer literacy is necessary for college and most jobs. Many of the written homework assignments and projects require the use of a computer with Internet access. If you do not have a computer at home that can be used, you will need to use the computer labs at school. They are usually available before school, after school, and at lunch.

Extra Help: Let me know if you need extra help so that we can set up an appointment.

Group Work: Working as part of a group is a requirement of the Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS) for this course. In addition, employers list the ability to work as part of a team as one of the essential skills for the 21st century workforce. We will complete a number of group projects during this class and working solo is not an option. I am aware of the dynamics of many groups, so it is essential that you let me know immediately if members in your group are not pulling their weight.

The Basic 8 Classroom Rules:

-You are here to learn. Behavior that distracts from teaching and learning will not be tolerated.

-Treat everyone in my room with courtesy & respect at all times.

-Be in your assigned seat throughout the class unless given permission to be up.

-Please follow all rules. If you break the rules, be willing to accept the consequences.

-I expect students to clean up after themselves. Nobody leaves until the room is clean.

-Take care of school property. Willful damage is considered vandalism.

-As in life, minimum effort will usually result in a minimum reward (or grade). Always do your best.

-Class ends when the teacher dismisses the class. Stay in your seats until class is dismissed.

Removal from Course

Student will be recommended to the Principal for removal from the class if they are failing at the 9-week progress check

Dishonesty & Cheating: Dishonesty & cheating of any kind is not tolerated. The most obvious forms of cheating are copying answers during a test or plagiarizing someone else's written work on a project. Cutting and pasting directly off the Internet is also a common form of plagiarism. Copying answers directly from a classmate's homework in order to complete your own homework is also considered cheating. Unless the assignment is specifically a group assignment, then I expect you to complete your own work. If you are caught cheating you will receive a zero for the assignment, a referral will be written, and your parents will be notified. If the cheating involves sharing homework answers, then the grade of both people involved will be reduced.

George Blair

Social Studies Department Chairman

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