

# Advanced Placement Government

2019-2020

Mr. Van Ermen

It is important that all A.P. students understand what is expected of them. An Advanced Placement class is a college level class taught in high school using a required college textbook, which, at the same time, fulfills the state and district government requirement. A.P. Government is an elective, not a required class. Regular government fulfills the state and district government requirement. Students electing A.P. government are not required to take the A.P. test in the spring. This class, however, is taught as if everyone is taking the test. This class is only for those who are willing to work up to A.P. standards. A grade of A or B is not guaranteed, nor does a high grade insure you will pass the A.P. examination. Extra preparation prior to the exam and serious focus on the material is necessary to increase your chances of earning a passing grade on the A.P. examination in the spring. I do not curve grades and I do not lower standards in the class. At the same time, I BELIEVE THAT NEARLY EVERYONE WHO IS WILLING TO PUT IN A GOOD ACADEMIC EFFORT WILL BOTH ENJOY THE CLASS AND MEET YOUR OWN EXPECTATIONS. If you decide this class is not for you, it is time to discuss a course change with your parents and contact your counselor.

## **Behavior Expectations**

Anyone electing an Advanced Placement course is expected to live up to the highest level of maturity and scholarship. By choosing this class you are implicitly agreeing to the serious attitude and study necessary in any college course. This does not mean you leave your sense of humor at the door. It does mean, however, during class 100% of our time is in some way spent on covering the course material.

## **What is A.P. Government?**

Advanced Placement Government is actually a political science class designed to help you gain a basic understanding of the American political system. We will study the following topic areas during two trimesters.<sup>1</sup>

### *A.P. Government A:*

- I. Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government
- II. Institutions of the National Government: Congress, The Presidency, The Bureaucracy, and the Federal Courts

### *A.P. Government B:*

- IV. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
- V. Political Beliefs and Behaviors
- VI. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media

## **Additional A.P. Expectations**

The College Board, the organization which runs the A.P. program also stresses the following in any of its A.P. courses:

- Development of listening skills
- Development of analytical skills
- Development of good expository writing skills

---

<sup>1</sup> Subject to minor changes. See Polar Vortex; cit: 2014 & 2019.  
2019-2020

We will focus on these skills throughout the course. We will do much of our quantitative analysis during the second trimester of the course.

### **Class Procedures and Rules:**

1. We will use one book, the text titled Government In America, by Edwards, Wattenberg, and Howell. . You are **required** to bring the Edwards book with you to class each day. There will be unannounced book checks. Each book check is worth five points. If you do not have your books on the day of a book check, you will not earn the five points. (These are NOT extra credit points. They are part of the total possible points for the marking period.)

2. You will need a notebook for this course. Most students choose a ring binder for this. KEEP ALL STUDY GUIDES, CLASS NOTES, HAND OUTS, AND RETURNED HOMEWORK IN YOUR RING BINDER.

We will discuss, take notes, view videos, listen to podcasts, and read articles. You are responsible for all the material presented in class. Take complete notes. I will usually use the white board or the Clevertouch Board !?@#! during discussions. You should write down the main ideas of the class discussion even if I do not write notes about it on the board. I am promoting the use of Cornell Notes for this class. (A comment from you such as . . . "You didn't say that was important," is not an excuse for getting a test question incorrect.) If the class presentations become conversational, it does not mean you should stop taking notes. You should expect any information covered in class to appear on a test or quiz.

3. Please complete reading assignments by the due date. If you have questions over the reading, bring them up in class. There will be test questions over material in the reading that may not have been discussed in class. If it is in the reading, you should know it.

4. All assignments must be turned in on time. Please have them ready to turn in at the beginning of the class. As a general rule, I DO NOT accept late assignments. You will be given study guides for some of the reading.

If you have an excused absence you will have make-up time as explained in the student handbook.

5. You should keep up with current political events. For instance, you should be aware of major domestic political issues (that is, what is happening in the U.S.), important economic events, and the major international events. You should also know who the important people in our government are. There are many ways to do this. You should consult websites of the New York Times, Washington Post, or the BBC (for world issues.) The Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News are o.k. for local and state events but usually give very only superficial coverage to national and international issues. MOST Cable programs are more commentary than news. PBS is a good source of television news. NPR is a good source of news on the radio.

6. **No food in class.** If you have a water bottle, fill it BEFORE class begins. Do not use it as an excuse to be late or leave class.

7. Put all electronic devices away during class unless specified by me. Do not ask to use lap tops to take notes in class. Use a pen or pencil and write them in your notebook. You can later review your notes and type them into a file if you wish. **Do not** play games on your calculator or cell phone during class. Cell phones must be turned OFF and not be displayed in plain sight. They must be in your purse, backpack, etc. **DO NOT listen to I-pods, etc. in class even during the rare quiet study times.**

**Put them away when you come into my classroom.** Do not attempt to take photos in class and do not make audio or video recordings of the class session unless you have special permission. If you violate any technology rules, I will take your cell phone and send it to the front office. Even now in 2019, students end up violating the policy. Two or three (or more) usually have difficulties; keep it from being YOU !

8. I will have a seating chart. Please sit in your assigned seat each class period. If you need to sit near the front, let me know. Sometimes after a few days, a student believes he/she can change seats to sit closer to a friend. Please do not change your seat.

9. Do not ask to use the restroom unless you are in an “I can’t wait” situation. Please do not ask to go to the bathroom as a pretense to use your cell phone or meet a friend. Shocking Observation, just shocking. If there is some issue you need to take care of do it after class. Do not ask to go to the bathroom immediately following the completion of a test. I will limit the number of bathroom passes. If you have a medical problem that requires frequent bathroom visits discuss this with me after class; otherwise expect me to say “please wait until class is over.”

10. School rules will be enforced, including the tardy policy and dress code.

11. Rudeness or objectionable behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Questions should be appropriate and not be disruptive to the progress of the lesson. DO NOT interrupt me or one another and do not talk while another person is talking. Patience and focus, young grasshoppers.

12. If you do not understand or if you need clarification on something being discussed in class, I encourage you to ask questions. However, wait until I am done explaining the idea or concept before asking a question.

13. In the interest of good hygiene and politeness, please cover all coughs and sneezes. My wife teaches middle school, and Great Balls of Fire, do they get her sick every year.

14. You may be instructed to check my A.P. Government Web Page on the BPS server. This was a New Web platform from last year, and I will be working through it with a labor of love. Yalza.

### **Class Pacing and Homework**

Expect to have a major Unit test about every 3 weeks, or so. These are like Mid-Term Tests at the University level. See point #2 above concerning your homework requirements.

### **Test taking/make-Up Tests**

It is important that you do not fall behind in your work. Make up tests will be given during the scheduled make up times in the test make up center before or after school-**extremely rarely** at lunch or during X block.

### **Grading of Homework**

Homework that is collected will be graded on the following criteria:

- Completeness and correctness of answer—not rushed or incomplete.
- Neatness (LEGIBILITY!!)—what I can’t read, I can’t assess.
- Answers must be in complete sentences.

## **Class grading**

This sentence is probably the most important thing you can learn in high school-- **You are responsible for your own learning and grade.**

In order to earn a high grade in this course you must give attention to every assignment and test/quiz. A few points could make a difference in your grade. Every point counts.

Most assignments will have a point value. Your course grade will be based on homework, quizzes, tests, and classroom participation. At least 70% of your grade will be based on quizzes and tests. As a general rule, tests will be worth 65 points, quizzes—depending on length—10-30 points, homework—depending on length—5-20 points.

The grading scale is as follows: (in percents)

A's=100-90    B's=89-80                    C's=79-70    D's=69-60    E's=59 and below

Your term grade will be calculated as the total point percentage for the entire trimester. It is extremely important to start strong in the class and maintain your grade. This means missing no homework, doing well on quizzes and tests, and being prepared for class each day. The further into the term, the more difficult it is to raise your composite grade. I WILL NOT drop your lowest test or quiz grade. All grades will be calculated into your grade. If you do badly on one test, for whatever reason, work harder for the next test(s) in order to bring up your grade.

The final examination is worth 20% of your total grade.

## **Access to grades and parent contact**

Groves uses an attendance/grading website—PowerSchool, [and our new version, installed last year for us teachers as 'PowerSchool Pro'] which allows you and your parents to access grades through the Internet. You know the drill. Teach them well, young jedi masters.

If your parents need to contact me, they are absolutely best served by using email. (Ha - get it!?!?) ☺  
If this is not possible, see me.

## **The Vocabulary of Political Science**

Like any specialized field of study, political science has its own “language”—terms that have meaning specific to the study of politics. (Sociologists have a term for this—it is *argot*.) Just as in physics, law, and medicine, it is important to be able to understand such a language. (For instance, the term litigation, is not the same as legislation! A mid-term election is not the same as a presidential election. To be partisan means something special in politics, etc.) To that end, it is necessary for you to learn a new way of talking about politics. You will be given a vocabulary list for each chapter. It is **your** responsibility to learn the meaning and be able to apply the new vocabulary. I also advise that you try to improve your overall English vocabulary. You might want to get an SAT/ACT type of phone app to help you do this.

## **The A.P. Test**

In Spring 2020 the College Board will administer the United States Government and Politics test. A great opportunity and challenge, and I emphasize BOTH! Time to show them what you've got. You do not have to take the test. Students who do the best on this test are those who are serious about their academic studies, have a commitment to learning, can understand the underlying concepts of our political system, and have an interest in current events and politics. They also usually have a humble attitude about what they do not know and are willing to learn. They don't fool themselves into thinking they know more than they do. If you are considering taking the A.P. test in Spring 2020 I am convinced that you can begin to develop the above traits now, if you do not already possess them.

## **AP US Government Class Student Rules & Outline Signature Response**

Please read the stapled pages, then print and sign your name below if you consent. Also get your parent/guardian to sign and return this section of the sheet to me.

**I have read, understand, and agree to comply with all points and rules made on all pages of this course expectations sheet for Advanced Placement Government**

Print your name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sign your name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **AP US Government Class Student Rules & Outline Signature Response**

Please read the stapled pages, then print and sign your name below if you consent. Also get your parent/guardian to sign and return this section of the sheet to me.

**I have read, understand, and agree to comply with all points and rules made on all pages of this course expectations sheet for Advanced Placement Government**

Print your name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sign your name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **AP US Government Class Student Rules & Outline Signature Response**

Please read the stapled pages, then print and sign your name below if you consent. Also get your parent/guardian to sign and return this section of the sheet to me.

**I have read, understand, and agree to comply with all points and rules made on all pages of this course expectations sheet for Advanced Placement Government**

Print your name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sign your name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_