CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Every member of this class will have an opportunity to learn in an atmosphere which is both comfortable and conducive to classroom success.

Every member of this class will have the right to ask questions and to express opinions as they apply to the course materials.

To these ends, all class members shall conduct themselves in a civil and reasonable manner. Every member of this class has a responsibility to come to class prepared and on time. Students should bring the required materials to class every day. Late work will not be accepted without prior approval.

GOALS:

The major goal of this course is to raise the political awareness of each student and to make each one an active and eager participant in the political process. To that end, this course will introduce students to the structure and function of the American political system and to the major influences that bear on governmental decision making. Topics include colonial political organization, the successes and failures of the Articles of Confederation, the birth of the Constitution, federalism, the legislative process, the evolution of the presidency, the impact of the courts and judicial review, the struggle between states’ rights and national authority, the rise and development of political parties, the electoral process, the media and public opinion, and interest groups. All of these topics will be examined within the context of the three branches of government as they check and balance one another on the national, state, and local levels.

Fall Semester
How did the American political system originate?
Chapter 1 – Principles of Government
Chapter 2 – Origins of American Government
Chapter 3 – The Constitution
Chapter 4 – Federalism

Quarter 2: Political parties, voters and elections
Chapter 5 – Political parties
Chapter 6 – Voters and Voter Behavior
Chapter 7 – The Electoral Process
Chapter 8 – Mass Media and Public Opinion
Chapter 9 – Interest Groups

Spring Semester
Quarter 3: Interest Groups, Congress and the Executive Branch
Chapter 10 – Congress
Chapter 11 – Powers of Congress
Chapter 12 – Congress in Action
Chapter 13 – The Presidency

Quarter 4: Executive Branch and Courts
Chapter 14 – The Presidency in Action
Chapter 15 – Government at Work: The Bureaucracy
Chapter 18 – The Federal Court System
Chapter 19 – Civil Liberties: First Amendment Freedoms
Chapter 20 – Civil Liberties: Individual Freedoms
Chapter 21 – Civil Rights

Other topics will be incorporated within this general framework (e.g. the federal bureaucracy, financing government, foreign policy and comparative economic systems) especially as they relate to current events.

REQUIRED:

Text book: Magruder’s American Government, William McClenaghan
Newsweek
Spiral notebook (with pockets)
Composition book for journal entries
GRADES:

20 % -- Projects – Each student should complete two projects per quarter. The use of projects is designed to encourage students to use their own interests and powers of observation to support and compliment the materials in this class. Although my aim is to allow students the greatest possible latitude in determining the topics, the honors section will have specific assignments for at least one project a quarter. Projects should be instructional in nature; hence, students should bring in outside information (not from the textbook or class instruction) and present it to the group in a manner that will enhance student appreciation of the material.

Projects may include:
1. - formal research
2. - computer/multi-media presentations (e.g. Presentation or Power point)
3. - guest speakers (with appropriate introductions and written synopsis of topic)
4. - videos presentations (by students)
5. - formal lessons (by students)
6. - artwork (e.g. sculptures, poetry, comic strips)
7. - interviews
8. - surveys

Students with additional suggestions should discuss them with me as soon as possible. I encourage group work on projects, but the effort and quality of the project must be multiplied by the number of people in the group. Keep in mind that projects are not just assignments, they are opportunities for students to express themselves and their ideas. Students should find something that interests them and then find an acceptable manner to both express that interest and enhance the class. During the last quarter a research paper will be required. The paper will substitute for one of the quarter projects.

20 % – Homework, Participation and Journals – I expect students to participate in class discussions. Because familiarity with the subject matter is necessary for intelligent discussion, students must keep up with their reading assignments. I will use oral or written quizzes, journal assignments and classroom observation to determine the participation grade of individual students. In addition to topic familiarity, I expect students to participate in all discussions in a reasonable manner. This includes, but is not limited to having respect for the teacher and other students (e.g. not interrupting others, and not making inappropriate remarks about or to anyone in the class). I also expect students to remain on task and work on individual, group or class assignments when made.

60 % -- Chapter Tests – Students should expect to be tested on every chapter formally covered in this course. The test material will be based on the text book, lecture notes and class discussion.

Acrobat Reader 3.0 is required for students to access my web pages for downloads. The program is available for FREE download at www.adobe.com. If you have any trouble downloading the program please let me know and I will supply a cd version.

If you have questions or about these or any classroom policies or activities please contact me at Oak Hall.

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