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 the historical evolution of our government, the legislative process, the growth of the presidency, the impact of the courts and judicial review, and the struggle between states’ rights and national authority. This year, we will pay special attention to 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: Legislative Branch and Executive Branch
   Chapter 10 – Congress
   Chapter 11 – Powers of Congress
   Chapter 12 – Congress in Action
   Chapter 13 – The Presidency
   Chapter 14 – The Presidency in Action

Quarter 4:
   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 McClanaghan

Newsweek

Notebook or three ring binder
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.

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 (students who want to work in groups must see me before they begin their research). 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. All projects are expected to be completed by the due date. Late projects (except the research paper) will be penalized 20% of the possible points per day.

20 % – Reaction Grade (includes 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 and/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.

Reactions are weekly current events assignments. As they involve current events reported in Newsweek magazine, there is no purpose in getting the information when it is no longer current. As a result, articles will be assigned late each week; reactions to one of the assigned articles will be due the following Monday (or the first day of school each week) and NO LATE REACTIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED (students absent on Monday may turn reactions in on their first day back at school). To accommodate emergencies, students are allowed one drop each quarter. Beyond that drop, the assigned articles will always include the cover article; students who, for any reasons, are not in class when the magazines are handed out may access Newsweek on-line or purchase a news stand copy to complete their reaction.

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 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.