



American Government - Fall 2022

Teacher: David Plescia
Room: Room 282
Email: dplescia@tamdistrict.org
Help Time: SMART Period, before school on Mondays/Fridays or at lunch.
LMS: Canvas - Access via TUHSD Portal

Course Description

The American Government course is designed to help students learn to become informed, participating citizens of the U.S. Students are introduced to the study of law and government through direct and simulated experiences in decisions-making. Students are asked and encouraged to explore their own political positions. Our classroom will be a place to express individual opinions, develop a personal philosophy, and learn to work in a cooperative environment. Academic and social excellence is expected of all students.

Units of Study

Unit I

The Constitution, Federalism, and the Executive Branch

- Driving Question: Who has the power? How do decision-makers use their power to serve the people? *An investigation of how the U.S. Constitution empowers leaders to make decisions at the state and federal level.*
 - Roughly 6 weeks

Unit II

Judicial Branch

- Driving Question: Is it possible to separate constitutional philosophy and political beliefs? *A simulation that challenges you to take on the role of a political legislator and develop then defend a solution to a current problem.*
 - Roughly 3 weeks

Unit III

Mock Senate - The Legislative Branch

- Driving Question: How do politics influence problem solving? *A simulation that challenges you to take on the role of a political legislator and develop then defend a solution to a current problem.*
 - Roughly 3 weeks

Unit IV

The Campaign

- Driving Question: Do elections showcase the best campaigner rather than the best leader? *An exploration of voter groups and the psychology and selling of candidates.*
 - Roughly 3 weeks

Learning/Study Expectations

- Technology can be a distraction for you and your peers, so please put your cellphone in your specific number each day of class.
- Please ask questions! Group discussion is encouraged. I will seek for you to question the reasoning and answer the WHY behind statements.
- Behavior is crucial to maintaining a positive learning environment. Following an initial reminder to a student to correct a behavior that is diminishing the learning environment the student will receive disciplinary action from the teacher and parents will be notified.
 - o Note: Not all behaviors have the same consequences and the teacher reserves the right to determine the best consequences for each individual behavior.
- The expectation is for students to use the restroom before or after class.
- Keep the lines of communication open all semester! Technology can be a great help to both of us, however assignments and concepts are discussed IN CLASS and this course is not designed as a correspondence course so your attendance matters.

What to Bring to class

- Keeping track of your work is necessary and having a notebook/binder with pockets/folders is helpful. Bring your own pen or pencil to class.
- Laptops will be used regularly so feel free to bring your own or borrow one from the classroom Chromebook cart.
- Textbooks will not be checked out but we will occasionally use our class set for various classroom activities and references.

Make Up and Late Work

- Work is due at the start of the class period on the day it is due
- Late work will be accepted for no loss of credit **within 2 weeks** of when it was assigned
 - o Work turned in after 2 weeks, will earn at most a 70%
- It is the **student's** responsibility to make-up missed work for excused absences by contacting me, using the website, and speaking with peers in the class regarding information missed.

Revisions and Retakes

The course is designed to provide students multiple opportunities to demonstrate a grasp of the information using different assignments, a variety of projects, and some traditional assessments. If a student does not score up his/her expectations on an assessment the student has the opportunity to retake the assessment within one week of receiving the original grade by speaking with me and scheduling a time during SMART Period. The final exam cannot be retaken or revised.

Grading

- The content of the course is structured around the 4 units and the corresponding projects and exams. Each unit builds on the knowledge and skills gained from the previous unit.
 - o At Standards - Students are able to make connections between the material and examples provided in class to answer questions.
 - o Above Standards - Students are able to make connections between the material, class examples, AND pull in outside information, connections, and examples. Students' responses will include synthesis and analysis beyond what was discussed in class.