

## **The Course**

### **AP United States Government & Politics**

#### **Mr. O'Connor**

#### **Course Overview and Summer Assignment**

*If men were angels, no government would be necessary.*  
*-James Madison*

Politics occurs all the time. This could be in a relationship, a family, a nation. We all have our own ideals, our visions, and our utopia. Some people would like to be the almighty emperor and others want to be told what to do. Which are you? Politics happens all the time, and people are deciding who gets what, why not be part of the debate? If we sit to the side of the action and abdicate our power to enter into the discussion, we are likely to wake up in someone else's perfect world, which may not be so perfect to us. This academic year we are not going to just learn about politics, we are going to do politics. So sit back, relax and get political. It's not just a class, its reality.

#### **Questions**

We are going to learn about politics by asking BIG questions. We may not answer all of them but I know that our discussions will be informative, enlightening and fun. Here are some examples:

- What is justice?
- How democratic is the US?
- Does our government have too much power?
- How much liberty do we really have?
- Which is more important liberty or equality?
- Is the US an empire?
- Which is more important, the group or the individual?
- Are the framers of the republic spinning in their graves?

#### **Goals**

If you want to leave this class with a keen insight into how politics really works. I also want you to learn how to turn your knowledge into action. My greatest hope is that this course will empower you to think about your political beliefs, and know how to act on them to make this a better world.

#### **Skills**

After you've completed this course I'd like you to be able to:

- Carry on a cogent conversation about current politics.
- Understand important political trends.
- Read and comprehend media.
- Know how to contact your elected officials with clear policy concerns.

- Be an active citizen.
- Understand the powers of the different branches of US government.
- Understand the political process in the US.
- Know your legal rights and responsibilities.

## Themes

Six themes will run throughout the course.

- I. Constitutional Underpinnings.
- II. Political Beliefs and Behaviors.
- III. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media.
- IV. Institutions of National Government.
- V. Public Policy.
- VI. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.

## Logistics

Welcome to US Politics. In this class you will be responsible for mastering a great volume of material presented at a sophisticated level. During the year you will survey a very, very large amount of material in an extremely short time. To do well you must participate in group discussions, complete individual assignments, and work on team projects.

## Constitution Notebook

Assignment 1: A Guided Tour of the United States Constitution. One point for each correct response:

Using a U.S Constitution, dictionaries, and any other hard resources necessary, answer the following questions in your own words. You must note the citations (Article, Section, Clause) designating where the information is found.

For example the question “Where do bills revenue begin?” would be answered as “Revenue bills must originate in the House of Representatives; Article I, Section 7, Clause 1.”

1. What are the purposes of the government created by the United States Constitution?
2. List the seven articles and basic purpose of each.
3. How is representation in the United States House of Representatives determined? In the senate?
4. What happens in the event of a vacancy in the House? In the Senate?
5. How is the Speaker of the House chosen? Must the Speaker be a member?
6. What officers of the Senate are required by the Constitution?
7. What are the required rules of operation in both houses of Congress?
8. List and briefly explain the 18 expressed powers of congress.
9. What must happen if a Senator is appointed and confirmed as a justice of the Supreme Court?

10. Explain in your own words the importance of Article I, Section 8, Clause 18.
11. List and explain the three powers expressly denied congress.
12. List and explain three powers denied the states.
13. What are the qualifications for becoming president?
14. List and explain the powers of the President.
15. How can the Senate check the President?
16. How are lower courts created?
17. How many justices are required on the Supreme Court?
18. What is impeachment? Who has the power to impeach? Who tries an impeachment?
19. What is the relationship between the States concerning their laws?
20. How are States created? Knowing this, which state might be considered and unconstitutional state?
21. What are the methods to amend the Constitution?
22. What freedoms of expression are protected by the Constitution?
23. List and explain the rights of an accused person.
24. Where are the “due process of law” clauses found in the Constitution? Explain how they work.
25. When is a search warrant required?
26. List the four times that suffrage has been expanded.
27. What happens in the event of a vacancy in the presidency?
28. Which amendment was repealed?
29. What did the 17<sup>th</sup> amendment do? What part of the original constitution was altered?
30. What happens in the event of a disability to the President?
31. What was the most recent amendment to the Constitution?

### **Important Court Case Notebook**

The following Supreme Court decisions have played a major role in our nation’s history and have had a great influence on the evolutionary development of American government. The prescribed process is to be followed exactly for each case you research. We will use this research throughout the school year. Each case is valued at 5 points. You must answer the court cases that are in bold print. You will be required to finish the case list as we progress through the school year. We will also add to the caseload as the year progresses.

The procedure is as follows:

- Name of the case
- Brief summary of the facts of the case
- The issues of the case
- The Court’s decision
- Reasoning for the decision
- Dissenting reasoning for the case if there was a dissenting vote

Example study:

*Mapp v. Ohio*

Summary of the facts:

One day in May 1957, several Cleveland police officers came to the home of Ms. Dollree Mapp. The police were looking for a fugitive who they believed was hiding out in Ms. Mapp's home. After she refused a second time, the police broke into the apartment and handcuffed her when she grabbed a piece of paper that they told her was a valid search warrant. The police officers searched the entire house and discovered some obscene materials. These materials were used to convict Ms. Mapp under Ohio law for possession of books and photographs. The "search warrant" was never produced in court by the prosecution. Ms. Mapp was found guilty. The Ohio Supreme Courts affirmed the conviction and she appealed the United States Supreme Court.

Issue:

Was the evidence obtained in the Mapp case admissible in a state court?

Decision:

No. The United States Supreme Court rules (6-3) that the evidence in the Mapp case had been obtained illegally and thus was inadmissible in court.

Reasoning:

At one time common law seizure of evidence by "illegal means" was not viewed as affecting the quality of the materials obtained. As a consequence of this thinking that evidence was evidence however it was obtained, courts did not refuse to admit materials into evidence merely because they were not obtained according to the rules. This view prevailed until 1914 when the Supreme Court ruled, in *Weeks v. United States*, that evidence seized in disregard of the Fourth Amendment to be known as the "exclusionary rule" and was intended to provide a deterrent to illegal conduct by law enforcement personnel.

In the Mapp decision, the Supreme Court made the exclusionary rule applicable to state courts. The majority in Mapp indicated that the exclusionary rule was incorporated because other means by which illegal police behavior might be controlled had failed.

Research the following cases using the example provided. You should be able to access these cases at [www.findlaw.com/casecode/supreme.html](http://www.findlaw.com/casecode/supreme.html) or [www.oyez.org](http://www.oyez.org)

1. *Cantwell v. State of Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296 (1940)
2. ***Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. 137 (1803)**
3. ***Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)**
4. *New State Ice co. v. Liebmann*, 285 U.S. 262 (1932)
5. ***McCulloch v. Maryland*, 4 Wheaton 316 (1819)**
6. ***Gibbons v. Ogden*, 9 Wheaton 1 (1824)**
7. *Hammer v. Dagenhart*, 244 U.S. 251 (1918)
8. *United States v. Darby*, 312 U.S. 100 (1940)
9. *United States v. Lopez*, 514 U.S. 549 (1995)
10. *United States v. Morrison*, 529 U.S. 589 (2000)
11. *Alden v. Maine*, 527 U.S. 706 (1999)
12. *Kimel v. Florida Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947)
13. *New York v. United States*, 505 U.S. 144 (1992)
14. *Printz v. United States*, 521 U.S. 898 (1997)
15. ***Barron v. Baltimore*, 7 Peters 243 (1833)**

16. *Gitlow v. New York*, 268 U.S. 652 (1925)
17. *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947)
18. *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971)
19. *Mitchell v. Helms*, 530 U.S. 793 (2000)
20. *Aguilar v. Felton*, 473 U.S. 402 (1985)
21. *Agostoni v. Felton*, 521 U.S. 203 (1997)
22. *Simmons-Harris v. Zelman*, 234 F.3d 945 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2000)
23. *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962)