Course Title: American Government

Course #: 1641

Course Description: American Government increases the political knowledge and sophistication of the student who is about to vote. This course is designed for the senior student. It challenges students to inquire about the American political system. A fair and balanced view of the workings of the American government is presented. Students study the roles, recruitment, and decision-making powers of the president, Congress, and Supreme Court. Current events are emphasized. This course is a requirement of the Social Science Department and meets the California state standards.

UC/CSU Approval: “a” approved

Grade Level: 12

Estimated Homework Per Week: 1-3 hours

Prerequisite: Completion of US History

Recommended Prerequisite Skills: time management, goal-setting, persistence, self-awareness, motivation, help seeking, progress monitoring, self-efficacy

Course Grade Scale:
- Homework 40%
- Current Events/Observations 10%
- Unit Exams 30%
- Final Exam 20%

Major Assessments/Units/Topics:

Workload: On average students will be covering one segment of government studies per week, which normally means one chapter of a standard government textbook (about 10-20 pages of reading). Usually this means students will answer review questions for the chapter.
Current Event Projects: There are traditionally FOUR assignments. TWO of the projects are written reflection papers (about three typed pages) on national and international current events. TWO of the projects are observations of California state courts and a local government meeting (i.e. city council meeting).

Unit Exams: The THREE exams include multiple choice -- based on reading assignments and vocabulary; short answer questions based on process issues; and an essay based on larger philosophical matters.

Final Exam: This is a comprehensive exam on all THREE units of the course. The format is the same as the Unit Exams given during the semester.

Course Content

**Foundations of American Government**
This unit exams the philosophical and historical influences into the development of American government. First students learn about the various theories of how government comes into existence. Next students look into the colonial history of the United States and the development of the Articles of Confederation and the US Constitution. Finally we examine how federalism operates in an ideal environment.

**Structure of the United States Government**
This unit looks into the three branches of the US government. We also study how states and local governments differ in operation(s). There is specific review into how California functions (or not) within the federalism form of government. In each area we examine how a branch is structured and then how that branch operates within the separation of powers and checks and balances.

**Role of Every Citizen in American Government**
This unit discusses how each of us, as American citizens can participate in the US system. We examine the two-party structure of the current political system and voting behavior and trends in the United States. The unit also looks at the media and the role of public opinion in steering the political agenda. Students then examine the rights of citizens and the difference between negative rights (civil liberties) and positive rights (civil rights). When there is time we complete the unit with an examination of US foreign policy and the role we play as citizens of a world superpower.