

# **Government - Syllabus**

**Following is the philosophy and outline for 2009/10 school year.**

The principles that shape our Constitution are as solid as they were when the Founding Fathers met in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. The ideals that they sought to instill at the core of our nation, while often manipulated today by the politicians as well as outside influences, have allowed the United States to survive and flourish for over 230 years. Students, all Americans, have a responsibility to know this government of ours, to participate in this government, and to make this country and world a better place to live. One of the greatest assets of our Constitution is that the Bill of Rights begs citizens to participate. Freedoms of press and assembly and speech have driven involvement from the beginning. The Civil Rights movement in the sixties flowered from the vine of the Constitution. Those rights are just as available today. Students need to learn but also to use their rights. We have a responsibility in this nation to hold our government accountable to its charter. Most Americans pass on that opportunity. In this class we will celebrate it. If a student merely reads the newspaper with an eye on how current events are shaping this world, they have done more than the average American. I will encourage my students to grab for more than does the average American, so that when they do turn 18 and gain the full benefits of the Constitution, they will not take that privilege for granted.

## **HOMEWORK - 25%**

Focus Questions will account for a large majority of your homework grade. Focus Questions are a series of four or five questions and accompanying reading assignments (10 to 12 pages) usually two chapters. Focus Questions will be assigned prior to class discussion, so that when discuss a concept, a chapter, our discussion will be active. I expect that you will answer these questions in detail and in your own words. Assignments are worth 40 points.

## **QUIZZES & TESTS - 25%**

Most quizzes will follow directly from class discussion and focus questions. Once we finish a chapter, we will quiz it and then move on to the next. The quizzes are 40 points and usually consist of four or five essays questions. They are semi open notes - which means you'll get the question and your notes together for a period of five minutes...once you start, the notes go away. So, take good notes. You will definitely see your quiz grades go up. We will periodically take quizzes that deal with specific government issues (like the Bill of Rights) however most quiz grades will be of the above variety. We will have few tests other than common assessments.

## **PROJECTS - 25% ACT (ACTION COUNTS TODAY)**

My number one goal for the study of United States Government is that students get involved. ACT gets students involved. Students will create their own PAC (Political Action Committee) of two to four, preferably three students. They will work for the semester in this group. They will find an issue which affects this world, which is important to them, and they will become advocates for that cause. In Marking Period #1 students will choose their issue and research it. They will create their own special interest group and follow their issue in the press. They will research both pro and con for their specific issue. Marking Period #2 will see ACT groups contacting similar interest groups and writing political representatives concerning their viewpoint. Marking Period #3 will be all about ACTION. Your ACT group will be required to perform two of five tasks promoting your special interest. You may choose to assemble and picket for your cause, or you may petition to inform the public. You may choose to volunteer for a similar organization. You may set up an information table in the cafeteria and inform fellow students of your cause. Or you may attend a political rally. At the end of the course it is my hope that you will recognize the potential benefits of being highly involved in your own government.

## **COMMON ASSESSMENTS - 25%**

Five common assessment exams will concentrate on the basic terminology and fundamental concepts of Government. These common assessments will not be Open Notes. See course breakdown on following page for CA topics.

## **Proficiency Policy for the study of Government**

- 1 - You must pass the class according to the OHS student handbook, passing two out of the three marking periods.
- 2 - You must earn a 60% average on common assessments.
- 3 - You must satisfy the high school attendance policy.

The traditional exam period will be utilized for common assessments, tests and/or presentations.

## **Units of Instruction for Semester Study**

Unit 1:	Foundations of American Government	six weeks
Unit 2:	Political Behavior; Government by the People	six weeks
Unit 3. 4. 5:	Legislative Branch, Executive Branch, Judicial Branch	six weeks

Citizenship and Citizenship in Action will be addressed throughout the semester with A.C.T! - Action Counts Today

## **Primary Materials Provided: Textbook**

McClenaghan, William A., American Government, (Department of Political Science, Oregon State University. 2002

## **Common Assessment Topics / Text Chapters / Topics**

#1 - Conceptual Foundations of Civic and Political Life	Chapters 1
#2 - Origins and Foundations of American Government	Chapters 2, 3
#3 - Structure and Function of American Government	Chapters 4, 10, 11, 13, 14, 18
#4 - The United States of America and World Affairs	Chapters throughout the semester
#5 - Citizenship in the United States of America	ACT - Chapters 19, 20, 21
#6 - Citizenship in Action	ACT - Chapters 19, 20, 21