

## Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics Pomperaug High School 2014-2015

Welcome to Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics. The AP program in US Government and Politics is designed to provide students with the analytical skills, factual knowledge, and enduring understandings necessary to deal critically with the problems and issues in United States government. It also develops familiarity with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute U.S. government and politics as well as acquaint the student with the variety of theoretical perspectives and explanations for various behaviors and outcomes.

By the end of the year, students successfully completing this course will:

- know important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to U.S. government and politics
- understand typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences (including the components of political behavior, the principles used to explain or justify various government structures and procedures, and the political effects of these structures and procedures)
- be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to U.S. government and politics (including data presented in charts, tables, and other formats)

The program prepares students for intermediate and advanced college courses by making demands upon them equivalent to those made by semester-long introductory college courses. These demands include, but are not limited to, the amount of reading, the complexity of material, and the degree of engagement with the class and subject matter

Because of the amount of material we have to cover it is important that we get a good start before the school year begins. These assignments are intended to provide you with some background regarding various aspects of government and politics so that we can begin the year with both focus and knowledge. I hope you find them interesting!

### 1. Summer Reading Assignments

A. For the summer, there are three books that you will need to read. The first two are available from the Humanities office.

- *Hardball* (1988) Chris Matthews
- *In Our Defense: the Bill of Rights in Action* (1991) Ellen Alderman & Caroline Kennedy
- *The Thirteen American Arguments* (2008) Howard Fineman

The third book that you will need to purchase is **The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates that Define and Inspire our Country** by **Howard Fineman** sells new from Barnes & Noble for \$16.00 (I am sure you can find it cheaper through an on-line source)

B. As you are reading **Hardball**,

Pay attention to the lessons learned and how they were acquired. Are they relevant outside of politics?

Make note of the maxims. Be prepared to define and discuss/argue them the first week

<i>What've ya done for me lately?</i>	<i>All politics is local</i>	<i>Leave no shot unanswered.</i>
<i>Triangulation</i>	<i>It's better to receive than to give</i>	<i>Dance with the one that brung ya.</i>
<i>Keep your enemies in front of you</i>	<i>Hang a Lantern on Your Problem</i>	<i>The Press is the Enemy</i>
<i>Politics = Power</i>	<i>Only talk when it improves the silence</i>	<i>Retail politics</i>
<i>Don't Get Mad; Don't Get Even; Get Ahead</i>		

As you are reading **13 American Arguments**,

Pay attention to the discussions about the Constitution. Make notes on what arguments took place among those who drafted it and what continue to be contentious issues today?

Note the major political figures discussed (mainly our presidents). How do people like Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, the Roosevelts, Kennedy, Johnson, Reagan, G.W. Bush, etc., fit into the thirteen arguments?

Know what the chapter titles mean. What are the basic issues raised? Be able to discuss at least one important issue that is mentioned in each chapter. What are the arguments on both sides of the issue?

Can you apply any of the arguments to today's political arena? Consider this at not only the National level, but consider also State and Local issues.

C. There is a written assignment for **Hardball** that is due on the first day of class and counts as an essay score for 1<sup>st</sup> quarter.

D. We will be discussing **Hardball and 13 Amer. Arguments** for the first couple of weeks of the semester – the theses, validity, and issues associated with American Government. **Be ready to discuss both on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of class!** There will be a written essay assigned for **In Our Defense** that will be distributed the first week we return.

## 2. View a Movie Relating to Government & Politics

A. Various movies over the years have dealt with political and governmental issues. Some are old and others new. Some attempt to cover real events/people in history while others are largely fictional. Some are more serious docudramas, a few are “made for TV” movies and still others are lighter and more focused on entertainment. What follows is a brief list of movies that relate to American politics and government.

*All the President's Men* (1976)  
*Absolute Power* (1997)  
*The Good Shepard* (2006)  
*The Candidate* (1972)  
*Charlie Wilson's War* (2007)  
*Frost/Nixon* (2008)  
*Bulworth* (1998)  
*Bob Roberts* (1992)  
*Thirteen Days* (2000)  
*Good Night & Good Luck* (2005)  
*The War Room* (1993)  
*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939)

*The American President* (1995)  
*Wag the Dog* (1998)  
*Nixon* (1995)  
*Truman* (1995)  
*All the Kings Men* (1949)  
*JFK* (1991)  
*Casino Jack* (2010)  
*Swing State* (2008)  
*The Inside Job* (2010)  
*The Ides of March* (2011)  
*J Edgar* (2011)

There certainly are other movies relating to government that you may want to choose. If you have any doubts about whether a particular movie qualifies, just send me an email at [etkimble@region15.org](mailto:etkimble@region15.org)

B. Your job is to watch the movie (with parental approval) and decide how it relates to government. I suggest you make notes while watching or shortly after. Reflect on the following questions: (a) Does the movie have a message? (b) Is it instructional about a branch of government or a government agency? Why? (c) What does the film say about our legal and electoral systems, the legislative process or executive leadership? (d) Is it pro-government or anti-government or neutral? (e) How does it treat *linkage institutions* such as elections, political parties, the media or interest groups than link people to our government? (f) What sort of feeling about government & politics does the movie leave you with – positive, negative, concerned, angry, ambivalent, hopeful etc.?

C. It is fine with me if you view the movie with other AP Govt. students (that might even be fun). BUT there is a short assignment. You will need to turn in your notes (hand written legibly or typed) about the movie and either answer an essay question on the first exam or make a short oral presentation to the class during the first week of school (I'm still thinking about this).

## 3. Follow the news!!

A. I know you will have busy summers but along with all our activities (& service commitments) please try to keep up with major political/governmental developments in the news (e.g. sequestration, national security, important Supreme Court rulings, significant legislation, etc.). ***On the first day of class***, please bring a note card with you listing what you considered the four most important/intriguing political or governmental events of the summer.

B. I am pleased you signed up for this course and I look forward to many, engaging discussions during the year. (This is not an enforceable warranty but we should have some fun!)

## Further Reading

You are strongly encouraged to read at least two “newspapers” on a daily basis for government related news – local, state, and national. These can be accessed by computer rather than traditional newspaper. Suggested papers/news sources include the Washington Post, New York Times, USA Today, Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor, and other nationally oriented papers.

**\*\* If you have questions about any of the assignments during the summer, please send me an email [etkimble@region15.org](mailto:etkimble@region15.org)**

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**Please sign and return this slip to an AP US GOVT & POL Teacher / Social Studies Department by Tuesday, 17 JUN 2014.**

I understand that expectations of the AP United States Government & Politics course and the summer reading assignment. I accept the responsibilities of this course. I also understand that if I do poorly on either of my first two examinations, it is possible that my teacher, my parents/guardians, and I will revisit my decision to remain in AP US GOPO.

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Student Signature

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Printed Name

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Date

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Parent/Guardian Signature

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Printed Name

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Date

**Books Issued**

Book	Book Number
Hardball	
In Our Defense	