

Mr. Wysokowski

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Classroom: A203

Meeting Times: Days 1,3,4,6 7:45-8:55

Course Description:

An analysis of the political and governmental system of the United States, the principles upon which it is founded, and the institutions and systems which comprise it. An examination of selected social issues and political problems relevant to the American experience is also conducted.

ISLOs: This course supports student development of Written and Oral Communications, Critical Thinking, and Social Responsibility. Required prerequisite: Eligible for ENG101

Introduction:

Congratulations on *electing* to take American Government. I am looking forward to a great year. My objective is to present content which is both motivating and challenging. In the process, I want all of you to feel comfortable to contribute your skills, talents, interests, and knowledge to the class. Through sharing different experiences and views, we will utilize our most valuable resource - each other. In this way, we will all learn the most and it will be more interesting, because you will be in control of much of the learning.

Student Objective: Upon completion of this course, students will have achieved a thorough understanding of the history, function and purpose of American government. Studies will emphasize the ideas and government framework established by the U.S. Constitution as well as the political process within a representative democracy. The ultimate goal is for students to become informed and active participants in society by developing an awareness of their rights and responsibilities as American citizens and to exercise these rights and responsibilities in local, state, and national government. Students will demonstrate their mastery of content through a variety of written and performance-based products.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Analyze the organization, powers and operations of the three branches of government.
- Identify the historical and philosophical origins of the American government.
- Recognize and analyze the evolution of the American government.
- Identify the origins and changing relationship between the federal government and the states.
- Describe and appraise the relationship between the federal government and the American people in regard to their civil liberties and civil rights, as well as their access to public benefits and services.

Teaching Procedures:

Instruction will include a variety of teaching procedures, including close-reading activities, note-taking, presentations, case studies, class discussions, lectures, exploration of federal and state online government sources, research, argument mapping, writing assignments, current event assignments, podcasts, documentaries and videos, quizzes and tests.

Course Topics of Study:

FALL

Unit 1: Foundations of American Political Thought

Unit 2: The Constitution

Unit 3: Campaigns & Elections

Unit 4: The Judicial Branch

SPRING

Unit 5: The Legislative Branch

Unit 6: The Executive Branch

Unit 7: State & Local Government

Unit 8: Political Parties & Interest Groups

Tentative Test Schedule/Major Assignment(s) Schedule:

Assessment of content knowledge will take place in the form of unit tests or project-based assessments.

Such project or performance based assessments will include:

- November: 30-Second Campaign Spot
- January: Supreme Court and Bill of Rights Research Project
- March: Lawmaking Process Board Game
- May: Civics Project Proposal

Course Essential Question: *What are the rights, responsibilities, and roles of citizens in the participatory democracy established under the American system of government?*

General Expectations:

- Be respectful of your peers, your teacher, the classroom, and yourself.
- Actively participate, take notes on readings and presentations, ask questions.
- **Be active in your learning** – come to class prepared everyday and give your best effort.
- Think critically, asserting opinions as well as listening respectfully to others.
- Stay informed on current events and complete bi-weekly current event assignments.

Grading for the Quarters

Grading is done on a point system. Therefore, the more points an assignment is worth, the more heavily it will be weighed in the calculation of a class grade. Assignments in this course include tests, projects, quizzes, written responses, and homework. Grading categories, however, have been set up based on the learning objectives of the class. Therefore, assessment consists of the following categories:

- **Effort/Grit** (30%) – A fundamental key to success is effort. Grading in this category is primarily about work completion but not exclusively. It also includes the extent to which the student tries to persevere through difficult work and the student's willingness to challenge him/herself by taking risks.
- **Critical & Creative Skills** (25%) – Critical and creative skills are central to functioning productively in our society. In general, these are the skills associated with thinking for yourself and expressing yourself clearly. More specifically these include historical research, evaluation of evidence, analysis and evaluation of historical reasoning, thesis and topic sentence construction, argument organization, and clear commentary.
- **Citizenship** (25%) – Horace Mann argued that for a republic to endure, its citizenry must be educated. Mann's argument became a cornerstone of the American Public School system and remains so to this day. Stated differently, a major goal, perhaps the primary goal, of our public

school system is to prepare young people to become contributing members of society. This applies to this course in the sense that this course is a community. Each student's citizenship will be graded according to how much s/he contributes to the community. Be an asset to the class.

- **Historical Content** (20%) – A healthy republic also depends upon a citizenry that has some knowledge of its past and of its government. Content knowledge is essential in order to skillfully interpret and to make meaning of the past and help shape the future.

Grading on Individual Assignments

To help connect specific pieces of work (assignments) to learning goals (categories), for each assignment, students will be provided with instructions that explicitly indicate the objectives and, when appropriate, a rubric. Because assignments may deal with multiple learning goals that fall into more than one category, assignments may receive more than one grade. For example, an essay may receive an “effort” grade for being done, a “skill” grade for the articulateness of expression and thoroughness of historical analysis and a “knowledge” grade for the amount and complexity of historical knowledge demonstrated. On the other hand, a homework assignment that is only spot-checked would receive only an “effort” grade for completion.

Tests and Assignments

Each unit will include formative assessments throughout in the form of reading quizzes, class discussions, thinkwrite assignments, case studies and arguments. In addition, each unit will include a summative assessment in the form of unit tests and alternate forms of assessment such as: campaign advertisement video, Constitutional issue research paper, board game for how a bill becomes a law,

Absences

Please make every effort to attend class. Students who miss class with an excused absence have one extra class to make up work. Due dates for long-term assignments, projects and tests will not be altered. A missed test or quiz must be made up within one week of the absence or the score will be a zero. In the case of an anticipated absence, I expect that students will inform me ahead of time. Of course, please speak with me regarding extenuating circumstances.

Extra Help

Any student who would like extra help should see me to schedule a time to meet.

Required Text

Government Alive!: Power, Politics, and You. Teachers' Curriculum Institute, 2014.

Disability Support Services:

The collegiate experience at Middlesex, on the campus and in the classroom, is open to students of varying abilities and levels of adaptive skills. Supportive faculty and staff as well as fellow students encourage all students to participate in extracurricular and class activities. The DSS office provides services and resources to empower each student to attain his/her highest level of academic success and learning independence.

On our Bedford campus:

Visit us in the Enrollment Center Building, 2nd Floor. - 781-280-3630

On our Lowell campus:

Visit us in the Cowan Center Building, 3rd Floor, Room 314. - 978-656-3258