

## Advanced Placement Government

*Welcome to A.P. United States Government!* It should prove to be a very exciting year. We begin the year with an examination of the foundations of our constitutional system of government. We then kick off the Supreme Court's term beginning the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in October and follow throughout the year. We then follow and participate in the Virginia General Assembly and Governor elections. We continue following the 111<sup>th</sup> term of Congress' 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> sessions. We also watch as our local Fairfax County Government wrestles with the continuing budget and services crisis. And throughout the year, we will follow President Obama as his administration deals with the continuing economic, financial and foreign policy crisis' facing the nation. There has not been a better time to understand the foundations on which this great country was built.

A.P. U.S. Government is taught at the college level and is a difficult and demanding course for many high school students. The main objective is to improve student comprehension and writing skills. FCPS recognizes the significantly higher expectations placed on students in an A.P. course by awarding an additional one point to the grade at the end of the year if the student has taken the A.P. exam. Students will be expected to analyze and evaluate significant political data and trends. Students who successfully complete the course will have a good chance of passing the Advanced Placement U.S. test in May and thus may receive college credit for the course.

**There are two options for students to sign up for A.P. Government:**

**Option One** – AP United States Government only (no comparative component) – you are required to take the AP United States Government Exam (morning test) in May in order to receive one point added to your GPA and do not take the AP Comparative Government Exam (afternoon test the same day as the AP United States Government Exam) in May.

**Option Two** – AP United States and Comparative Government (combo) – you are **required** to take the AP United States Government Exam (morning test) in May in order to receive one point added to your GPA and **required** to take the AP Comparative Government Exam (afternoon test the same day as the AP United States Government Exam) in May.

**For your summer assignment for A.P. Government (both options), you are required to do the following:**

**Purchase a copy of *American Government: Readings and Cases* - Peter Woll - Pearson Longman (17<sup>TH</sup> edition) and prepare for an assessment on the articles in Chapters 1 and 2. The assessment will be given during the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of school in September.**

If you have any questions about the assignment during the summer, please contact any of the AP instructors at: [Walt.Addie@fcps.edu](mailto:Walt.Addie@fcps.edu) [Linus.Downes@fcps.edu](mailto:Linus.Downes@fcps.edu) [Charles.Gibbs@fcps.edu](mailto:Charles.Gibbs@fcps.edu) [Mark.Mackmin@fcps.edu](mailto:Mark.Mackmin@fcps.edu)

***Who should take A.P. Government?***

1. Students who have succeeded in A.P. U.S. History and A.P. American Civilization are strongly urged to take this course. These students will find themselves well prepared and well aware of the stringent course dictates of an A.P. course.
2. Students who have excelled in U.S. History should be able to succeed in A.P. Government and these students should discuss their placement into A.P. with their History teachers.
3. Students need good study and work habits and good attendance to succeed in A.P. Government.

***If you have questions about the appropriateness of this course for you, please see Mr. Addie, Mr. Downes, Mr. Gibbs or, Mr. Mackmin to discuss and preview books & materials.***

***Why should I take A.P. Government?***

1. It's fun! Politics and government can be topics of great interest as you prepare to enter the adult world. Discussion and debate are lively and interesting in A.P. because your fellow students share your interest & your level of preparedness.
2. This class will prepare you to take the A.P. exam that could qualify you for a semester of college credit.

## *Course requirements*

1. Students will read college level textbooks plus the purchase of the Woll Reader in A.P. Government. Please feel free to come to our classrooms to peruse the texts. Generally, students read 20 – 40 pages per week and complete one project per quarter.
2. Students can earn credit for involvement in the upcoming campaigns.
3. Students will prepare analytical research projects in A.P. Government.
4. Advanced reading and writing skills are basic to success in A.P. Government. AP caliber essays, analytical writing quizzes and homework assignments along with AP caliber Unit and practice tests and research projects are the norm for the course.

### **1. Is A.P. Government really hard?**

Answer: Yes & no. (That's the way so much of government & politics is - there is no clear, black & white answer!) It will depend on the previous courses you have taken, your skill level and your determination. Comprehension levels are necessarily high in Advanced Placement Government. Check out these textbooks and get a good idea of what you will be expected to understand. The Advanced Placement program requires that these courses reflect college level understanding. Assure yourself & your parents that you WILL be taking a course that is similar to the one most universities REQUIRE. We use college-level textbooks. Outside readings and assignments are designed to enhance very advanced comprehension.

The good news is that you are accomplishing these tasks in the context of a high school. Teachers are here to help you. In college, professors will expect you to know how to do all these things already. On the other hand, we expect to teach you these skills and we will work with you as much as necessary to make that happen. Analytical skills are also key in A.P. Government. We need not only to understand what we read but to analyze it. You don't want to simply absorb information or opinions, you need to tear it apart, look for flaws & strengths, and use that basis to form your own educated views.

### **2. Is it do-able if I put in the time?**

Answer: Yes! What you will contribute is the hard work and attendance required to succeed. Make no mistake about it - it will be much more difficult and time consuming than a high school course in American Government. **Frequent absences (excused or unexcused) will seriously jeopardize your chances for success.** However, the rewards are the college credit and the skills that you will be comfortable with by the time you do reach college. Most importantly, you will find that this is a FUN course - yes, fun! - because you and classmates have the interest and the drive that brought you into the class in the first place. Class discussions and debate are fun, lively and meaningful. We are all about the issues that adults care about, discuss, and determine their votes.

### **3) What kind of time are we talking?**

Answer: It depends on your skill level. Most students can succeed with 1-2 hours per night. Again, check out the textbooks! How long do you think it will take you to read the chapters and do written papers, projects, etc.

### **4) What are the rewards for all of this work?**

- Answer: A) Most of you will earn a credit for a semester's work in American Government & Politics.  
B) You will earn an additional one point on your grade point in this class.  
C) You will learn skills necessary for success in college.  
D) You will have fun! We do a wide variety of activities concerning interest groups, parties, elections, Congress, the Executive branch, state and local government and the Courts throughout the year.

**We debate, we create, we agitate, we legislate, we communicate, we extrapolate, we invigorate, we emancipate, and we fill your plate!**

We look forward to working with you!

The AP Government Team