

**A.P. U.S AND COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT
SUMMER ASSIGNMENT
2009**

A.P. Government requires different thinking and writing skills than you used in U.S. History. Writing for government requires the understanding and analysis of abstract concepts and principles. You will depend less on recitation of facts than on your interpretation of the facts. The Washington area is a most exciting place to live and study government, especially in this presidential election year. Once the elections for the presidency and Congress are settled we will be watching the political battles for spending and foreign policy initiatives unfold. Throughout the year you will become aware of politics in general and specifically, have an opportunity to explore your political self and where you fit into our political world.

This summer assignment is designed to help you to transition from thinking historically to thinking and writing from a political perspective. There are two parts to this assignment and each part is described below. **Assignments will be due in the first government class. Be prepared to discuss both during the first two weeks of school.**

ASSIGNMENT # 1: Follow the News

Your first assignment is to read the newspaper, weekly news magazines, the internet news sources, and/or the nightly network news. Keep track of the major news stories that are national or international in scope. (*You may want to keep a journal with a few sentences about the stories*)

This assignment does not require that you turn in anything but, during the second week of school Government, you will have a quiz on the important big news events of the summer. This will be good practice for the regular news quizzes you will have throughout the year.

ASSIGNMENT # 2: Plunge into Politics

Your second assignment is to choose one of the following books on politics and read it. These are not "easy" books and you will not be able to read them during the week before school...so ***don't save this until the last minute!!*** The books suggested offer a variety of political perspectives. You may find that you do not agree with the author but try to absorb as much as you can about the perspective he/she brings to the subject and the aspects of the political system discussed.

**BOOK LIST: The Post American World - Fareed Zakaria
Hardball - Chris Matthews
Feeding Frenzy - Larry J. Sabato**

Attached to this sheet is a brief description of each book to help you decide which is best for you. There are a variety of topics and each covers a different topic we will be discussing during the year.

The local bookstores (Walden, Borders, Barnes & Noble) are your best source for purchasing these books. All books are available in paperback, all are under \$15 and all are available within 24 hours from any of the online book sources (*amazon, borders, barnes & noble*). If the bookstore is out of the one you are looking for, ask them to order it for you.

- I. As you are reading keep a list of concepts and ideas presented which are new to you. You may do this in a notebook. Use the following guidelines as to what areas of government to look for in the book.
- which part of the **political system** you think this book discusses (ie: the executive branch, Congress, interest groups, the media & politics, etc.)
 - what is the statement this book is making about the "**state of affairs**" of **our government or world order today?**
 - what you think is the **perspective of the author** (how does he/she seem to feel about the subject matter and do they seem to show any **bias** when

discussing the topic?) and what type of **background** do you think they have to be able to write on the topic?

- your **personal reaction** to the topic discussed and to the author's presentation, including what you learned that was new to you
- list some examples of things with which you agree or disagree or both
- think about the importance of this book – What type of impact has this book had on you?
- What type of an impact will it have in the political arena ? Who should read this book? Why?

II. On the first class day you will take a short quiz on the major features in the book you read. Then, during the first two weeks of school, we will be discussing these books and what they have to say about the American political system. After our discussions you will be *writing an essay in class* that summarizes your ideas of the book, some of the concepts we have discussed, and how they relate to the thoughts of the Founding Fathers when they wrote the Constitution as seen in some Federalist papers. *You will be able to use the notes you have taken on the book and the book so be sure to bring them to class.*

If you have any questions about this assignment, please see Mrs. Shue in B211 or Mr. Hedrick in E203.

Have a wonderful summer...read, watch the news, read the paper, discuss with your parents. Government is something that is a part of your life everyday...start to notice it!

AP GOVERNMENT Summer Reading Choices

The Post American World (2008): “This is not a book about the decline of America, but rather about the rise of everyone else.” So begins Fareed Zakaria's important new work on the era we are now entering. Zakaria describes a world in which the United States will no longer dominate the global economy, orchestrate geopolitics, or overwhelm cultures. He sees the "rise of the rest"—the growth of countries like China, India, Brazil, Russia, and many others—as the great story of our time, and one that will reshape the world. The tallest buildings, biggest dams, largest-selling movies, and most advanced cell phones are all being built outside the United States. This economic growth is producing political confidence, national pride, and potentially international problems. How should the United States understand and thrive in this rapidly changing international climate? What does it mean to live in a truly global era? *This book is a great way to sample some of the topics we will be discussing in the Comparative part of our class as well as getting a new perspective on our place in the global order.*

Hardball (1999): The author, Chris Matthews, has spent almost thirty years on the playing field of American politics – from right-hand man of the Speaker of the House to the host of a highly rated political talk show. Matthews defines the term *hardball* as the discipline of gaining and holding power as it is practiced in the world of public affairs. This book is a political classic which offers the inside rules that govern the game of politics in Washington. *This is almost a “how to be a politician” primer for anyone new to Washington or the Washington political scene.*

Feeding Frenzy (2000) This book is about “attack journalism” and American politics. It reveals the origins, underlying patterns, and consequences of the relentless attacks on politicians by the media. Sabato addresses character issues, “pack journalism”, media bias, personality and competition among journalists. He uses outstanding references that are very credible (think national newscasters) and, at times, funny. He allows you to see how the media can truly affect a political career (for better or for worse). *The author of this book is not only a nationally acclaimed political analyst but also a professor and the director of the Center for Governmental Studies at the University of Virginia.*