**AP UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT & POLITICS**

**Mrs. Gilley**

**Room C207**

dgilley@natomasunified.org

**Course Overview:** AP United States Government & Politics is a course focusing on the American political system. We are living in a time of great political change as various groups clamor for their voice to be heard through the complexities of our government. There is absolutely no better time to inform ourselves of the foundations of our government and its purpose and educate ourselves about the ever-changing political climate and our role in it. *The heart of this course is to provide you with the tools to apply your understanding of our political system to current events in order to become a more critically thinking, informed, and engaged member of society.* You are expected to master a great volume of material at a college level. In order to succeed, you must attend class daily, work diligently, read thoroughly, listen carefully, think deeply, and participate regularly.

**Course Goals:** A student who successfully completes AP Government & Politics will be able to…

* Identify important facts, concepts, and theories relating to U.S. government and politics
* Understand patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences. This includes the components of political behavior, the principles used to explain or justify various political structures and procedures, and the effects of these structures and procedures.
* Analyze and interpret data relevant to U.S. government and politics, including charts, tables, graphs, and various other formats
* Critically analyze relevant theories and concepts, apply them, and develop their connections across the curriculum.

This course will prepare students to take the AP Government and Politics exam in Spring 2018 (exact date TBD). Students who earn a score of 3 or higher on the exam are eligible to earn college course credit, depending on the specific college or university.

**Course Methodology:** This is an inquiry-based course in which *you* will discover knowledge about the American political system and make your own meaning about your role within our government. As your teacher, it is my job to act as a facilitator and guide you through the learning process by teaching relevant thinking, reading, and writing skills. You will read high-level texts, participate in class discussions, and complete various class activities. I expect you to take responsibility for your learning by completing all readings and activities and coming to class prepared every day. Both formal and informal assessments will be used regularly to evaluate your performance in this class. Informal assessments include daily assignment checks and an evaluation of your participation during class. Formal assessments include quizzes, unit exams, written essays, a midterm, and a final exam.

**Grading:** The following grading scale is used for this course:

A+ =101%; A=94%; A- =90%; B+ =87%; B=84%; B- =80%; C+ =77%; C=74%; C- =70%;

D+ =67%; D=64%; D- =60%; F=59% and below

Grades are weighted into the following categories:

Performance Tasks (i.e. essays, projects) = 30%

Assessments (i.e. unit tests, quizzes) = 25%

Classwork = 20%

Participation = 15%

Homework = 10%

Homework will be assigned regularly, and assessments will be given on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. *It is absolutely critical that you do not fall behind on any of your assignments!* If you are absent, it is your responsibility to make up the reading and notes. If you are absent on a test/quiz day, please do your best to communicate with the teacher ahead of time in order to schedule a make up day *before the actual date of the test!* If a prior appointment has not been scheduled, students are expected to make up the test/quiz the day after their absence during lunch or after school. Students who do not complete a make up will automatically receive a 0.

Late work is not acceptable. It is your responsibility to prioritize, manage your time, and submit all assignments on time.

Grades will be updated regularly on Infinite Campus. Also, please sign up to receive notifications & reminders about upcoming assignments via Remind. Visit remind.com/join and enter the code gilleygov.

Homework will be checked daily for completion, but not every assignment will be collected & graded. It is your responsibility to keep all notes/handouts to review for unit tests, finals, and the AP exam.

**Attendance:** Strong attendance is essential to succeeding in this class! Please do your best to schedule appointments outside of school hours. Additionally, it is important students arrive to class *on time*. Students who are habitually late will lose participation points and additional consequences if the behavior continues.

**Course Readings:** Students in AP Government & Politics will use the following texts:

* Wilson, James Q., et al. *American Government: Institutions and Policies*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2011.
* Supplemental Readings will be provided through Google Classroom and/or on the teacher’s Inderkum website.

**Current Events:** A major component of this course is connecting our knowledge of the US government and political system to contemporary events. Therefore, students will regularly discuss current events in academic conversations. In addition to contributing to class discussions, a strong understanding of current events will help students cite examples in their written work and ultimately on the AP exam. Students are expected to follow the news regularly. I strongly urge students to follow a variety of news sources in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of current events.

**Suggested Materials:** Organization and preparedness are the most important skills you need to succeed in this course and beyond. I strongly suggest you bring the following materials to class daily:

* 3-ring binder with the following sections: Notes, Homework Assignments, In-Class Assignments, Current Events
* Binder Paper
* Pen/pencil
* 2 Highlighters

There will be a supply check on Monday, August 14th. Please be prepared to show me your supplies and organization system.

**Class Expectations:** This is a college-level class. Therefore, I hope to treat you as an adult. These are the norms I will hold you (and myself) to every day:

* Be Polite
* Be Prepared
* Be Productive
* Be Positive

Although I do not expect to have to do so, students who continuously disrupt the learning environment and fail to meet these norms will receive disciplinary action. You and every single one of your peers has the right to learn, and it is my utmost priority to maintain a safe, welcoming, and productive learning environment in our classroom. Students who choose to violate our class norms will receive the following consequences:

1. Verbal warning
2. One-on-one meeting with the teacher
3. After-school classroom community service
4. Parent phone call home
5. Office referral

**Technology:** Cell phones and other personal technology are not to be used during instructional time. Occasionally, devices may be used for specific classroom activities, *but only when the teacher explicitly gives permission to do so*. Because of safety & liability concerns, cell phones may not be charged in the classroom.

**Contact Information:**

**Email:** dgilley@natomasunified.org - This is the BEST way to contact me, as I check my email several times a day. I will respond within 24 hours.

**Phone:** (916) 567-5640 x6651

**Office Hours**: 8:00-8:45am 3:00-3:45pm. Students, if you have any questions or need extra help, my door is always open after school for you! Parents, if you would like to meet in person, please contact me ahead of time to schedule an appointment.

**Remind:** Sign up for Remind to receive notifications and announcements. Visit remind.com/join and enter the code: gilleygov

I look forward to an exciting and engaging year together!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Gilley

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Please review the syllabus with a parent/guardian. Sign below, and return this portion to Mrs. Gilley by August 14th.

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Student Name Student Signature Date

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Parent/Guardian Name Parent/Guardian Signature Date

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Best Contact Phone #

**COURSE PLAN\***

*\*Note: This plan is tentative and is subject to change. This is an overview of the various topics we will discuss throughout the course.*

**Class activities will vary depending on the topic, but be prepared for daily readings, weekly vocabulary & reading quizzes, weekly writing tasks, and unit exams.**

**Unit 1: Introduction to American Government (Chapter 1)**

**1 week**

*What is political power and how is it distributed?*

*What is democracy?*

*What explains the nature of politics and political change?*

**Unit 2: Constitutional Underpinnings of American Democracy (Chapters 2-3)**

**3 weeks**

The American Revolution and The Declaration of Independence

The Articles of Confederation and its weaknesses

Constitutional Convention

Separation of Powers

Checks and Balances

Federalism

Theories of Democratic Government

**Unit 3: Political Beliefs and Behaviors (Chapter 4, 7, 8)**

**3 weeks**

Political Culture

Public Opinion

Political Participation

Voting Patterns

Voter Registration

**Unit 4: Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media (Chapter 9-12)**

**6 weeks**

Rise of Political Parties

State and Local Parties

Two-Party System

Campaigns & Elections

Interest groups & lobbying

Role of the media

Media bias

**Unit 5, Part 1: Institutions of Government—Congress (Chapter 13)**

**3 weeks**

Congressional Organization & Leadership

Balance of Power

**Final Exam Review (1 Week)**

**Semester 1 Final Exam**

**Unit 5, Part 2: Institutions of Government—Executive Branch, Bureaucracy, Judiciary (Chapter 14-16)**

**8 weeks**

Congressional Representation

Presidential roles

Presidential powers

Expansion of Executive Power

Budget process

Organization and function of federal bureaucracy

Judiciary power and activism

Landmark supreme court cases

**Unit 6: Public Policy (Chapter 17)**

**2 weeks**

Policy making process

**Unit 7: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (Chapter 5-6)**

**4 weeks**

Bill of Rights

Fourteenth Amendment

Due Process

Historic court cases

Civil Rights Movement

Expansion of equality

**AP Review & Final Exam (2 weeks)**