

AP/KAP American Government/Kenyon College Pol 200
2006-2007
Room 204
Mr. Wait
jwait@laca.org

Course Description: This course is designed to accomplish the following general goals:

- Provide you with the framework, the details, and the history of American democratic principles and practice.
- Explore how the government works and exists in your everyday life, as well as focussing on current, controversial issues in politics and society.
- Present a clear picture of the political process by stressing critical thinking and problem-solving skills which you will need to participate responsibly in our democratic system of government.

This college level-course will be split up into four 9-week sections. The following syllabus of dates will give you a good idea of the topics we will be covering and the approximate time we will be discussing them during this school year. The major assignment of each of the nine week sections will be a 4-6 page paper which will consist of 40% of your quarter grade. The other 60% of your grades will consist of individual/group projects, quizzes over reading assignments, and occasional tests.

Expectations: You are expected to act like an adult. This entails being in class by the time the bell rings, with all of the materials needed for class. There will be absolutely no food or drink in class, with water (in a clear container) being the only exception. Do not ask me to go to the bathroom unless it is an absolute emergency. You will not be able to go to your locker after class has started.

This class is unique in the way in which it allows the discussion of many current and controversial issues—issues that will undoubtedly cause underlying values and moral positions of you and your classmates to be brought to the forefront of debate. Because many of us have different views and opinions on these issues, you will have to constantly remind yourself that no matter how much you disagree with your classmates, you must respect their opinions and try to understand other perspectives if you expect to learn and grow as students of our government and democratic society. This is not the Jerry Springer Show—I have high expectations for the way we will conduct discussion and debate, and demand a mature/open-minded approach to this aspect of the course.

Materials: We will use two textbooks, Holt American Government, and Wilson American Government. These are required everyday (unless specifically noted) along with your AP Government Course Reader, which will be purchased with your package of supplemental books. There will be “book checks,” which will be worth as much as quizzes, to enforce this rule. Make it a habit to always have what you need in class.

Grades: We will be on a point system which corresponds to what many of your other teachers use (97-100 A+, 93-96 A, 90-92 A-, 87-89 B+, 83-86 B, 80-82 B-, 77-79 C+, 73-76 C, 70-72 C-, 67-69 D+, 63-66 D, 60-62 D-, 59 F.) Grades will consist of tests, projects, quizzes, in-class assignments, and material checks. The quizzes (textbooks/articles—typically closed book, other books/sources—typically open book) are designed to encourage and check the completion of homework assignments—if you did the homework thoroughly, the quizzes will be relatively easy to score well on. You should expect 2-3 of these quizzes every week. You will be given advance notice before tests are scheduled or large assignments are due.

Schedule: The following is a tentative order of topics to be discussed in class this year:

- 1st Quarter: Foundations of democracy [**Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America**], events leading to the Revolution, the birth and evolution of the United States Constitution [excerpts from **Jay, Hamilton, Madison, The Federalist Papers**], and Federalism. Holt Chapters 1-4, 13 and 14, Wilson Chapters 1, 2, and 18.
- 2nd Quarter: The jump from the late 1700’s to the 21st Century: Political parties and stereotypes, interest groups and campaign finance issues, the media and public opinion, voters, elections, and campaigns [**Michael Neslon, The Election of 2004 and Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media**]. Holt Chapters 16-19, Wilson Chapters 5-10.
- 3rd Quarter: The Legislative Branch [**David Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection**] (Term limits and other issues dealing with the power of incumbency and skepticism surrounding politicians) and the Executive Branch (Fundamentals of the Executive Branch, the economy, and foreign policy)[**Richard Neustadt, Presidential Power**]. Holt Chapters 7, 8, 9, 22, 10, 23. Wilson Chapters 11-12, 20-21.
- 4th Quarter: The Judicial Branch [**Agreso, The Supreme Court and Constitutional Democracy**], the justice system, the Federal Court System, and the “Create Your own Government and Society” Project. Holt Chapters 11 and 12. Wilson Chapter 14.