

Democratic Citizenship/KAP Kenyon College Political Science 200
2010-11
Mr. Gibson

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 operates and exists in your everyday life, as well as focusing on current, controversial issues in politics and society.
- Present a clear picture of the political process by stressing critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed to participate responsibly in our democratic system of government.

This college level class will be divided into four 9-week sections. The following syllabus of dates will give you a general 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 nine week section will be a 4-6 page paper which will be counted as 1/3 of your nine weeks grade. Tests and quiz grades will comprise approximately 1/3 of your grade and daily assignments and projects will make up the remaining 1/3 of your grade.

Expectations: You are expected to be in class on time with your book and all other materials with you. You will also be expected to complete all reading and class assignments on time. In addition, this class will involve many discussions and you will be expected to participate and to respect all of your classmates' opinions. We will take turns speaking and will listen and value every student's input.

Materials: In this course, we will be using James Q. Wilson's *American Government* as well as other supplemental readings listed below. Please 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 (100-90 A, 89-80 B, 79-70 C, 69-60 D, 59 and below F. Grades for this class are weighted-nine weeks and final grades of A, B, and C will count as one letter grade higher for purposes of calculating grade point averages. **Assignments, particularly term papers, are due on the due date even if you are absent. Please make arrangements to turn them in when they are due. Points will be deducted for late assignments and no assignments will be accepted after four days late.** You will be given advanced notice before tests are scheduled or large assignments are due.

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

1st Nine Weeks: Foundation of Democracy, the birth and evolution of the United States Constitution, and Federalism. Excerpts from Jay, Hamilton, Madison's' *The Federalist Papers* and Wilson's *American Government* Ch. 1-4.

2nd Nine Weeks: The jump from the late 1700s to the 21st Century: Political parties, interest groups and campaign finance issues, the media and public opinion, voters, elections, and campaigns. Abramson, Aldrich, & Rondes' *Change and Continuity in the 1996 and 1998 Elections* and Wilson's *American Government* Ch. 5-9.

3rd Nine Weeks: The Legislative Branch, term limits and the power of incumbency, and fundamentals of the Executive Branch. Mayhew's *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Neustadt's *Presidential Power*, and Wilson's *American Government* Ch. 10-12 and 13-17.

4th Nine Weeks: The Judicial Branch, the justice system, the Federal Court System, and state and local government. Agresto's *The Supreme Court and Constitutional Democracy* and Wilson's *American Government* Ch. 18-21.