

HONORS GOVERNMENT COURSE SYLLABUS

This is an honors course in United States Government. The purpose of this class is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and ideas needed to protect their freedom and keep democracy alive in the United States. During the course students will obtain information that will help them understand how representative government works and why it sometimes does not work. Students will develop skills for making sound judgements about public policy and for participating in politics. They will understand the key principles of democracy such as majority rule and minority rights, free elections, and individual liberty.

BIG IDEAS

The course focuses on five big ideas which allow students to create meaningful connections among concepts across the units. Connecting these big ideas across the different course units will help students develop a deeper conceptual understanding of the course content. Big ideas are spiraled throughout the curriculum through the topics. Below are the big ideas of the course and a brief description of each.

BIG IDEA 1: CONSTITUTIONALISM

The U.S. Constitution establishes a system of checks and balances among branches of government and allocates power between federal and state governments. This system is based on the rule of law and the balance between majority rule and minority rights.

BIG IDEA 2: LIBERTY AND ORDER

Governmental laws and policies balancing order and liberty are based on the U.S. Constitution and have been interpreted differently over time.

BIG IDEA 3: CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN A REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Popular sovereignty, individualism, and republicanism are important considerations of U.S. laws and policymaking and assume citizens will engage and participate.

BIG IDEA 4: COMPETING POLICYMAKING INTERESTS

Multiple actors and institutions interact to produce and implement possible policies.

BIG IDEA 5: METHODS OF POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Using various types of analyses, political scientists measure how U.S. political behavior, attitudes, ideologies, and institutions are shaped by a number of factors over time.

Your semester grade will reflect your level of competency vis-à-vis several objectives. These objectives will be the basis of each unit test. Prior to each test, there will be a variety of assignments, projects, and open notes quizzes used to build understanding of the test objectives. The emphasis in this course will be reading, comprehension, note taking, writing skills, critical analysis, and presentation of materials. All assignments can be submitted for full credit up to the day of the unit test; thereafter late work will be accepted for a maximum of half credit. The chart below outlines how your semester grade is determined, and a more detailed explanation of each grade category follows the chart.

Unit Tests	30%
Assignments	30%
Current Events	10%
Public Service	10%
Public Meeting	10%
Attendance & Participation	10%

Unit Tests

Each unit will conclude with a unit test. Students who wish to demonstrate a higher level of competency on any test objective may do so by following this procedure:

1. Complete all assignments for the unit at a “D” level or better.
2. Sign up for my AFT. You will need to sign up. If you show up at the beginning of AFT and ask, “can you pull me?” I will say “no”. Do it on Sunday night or in homeroom on Monday. Note that some of my AFT’s are set aside for reviews or presentations; I generally only have two “open” flex times per week, so plan ahead.
3. Students can make test corrections during Academic Flex Time up to the dates listed below. Students will receive an additional half credit for all corrections.
4. Students have until 3:30 pm on Friday, January 3rd first semester, and Friday May 30th second semester, to finish corrections.

Assignments

Each unit will have multiple assignments of varying types. The several of these can be finished in class, assuming you make effective use of your time, while some will require work outside of class. The final day to turn in assignments for full credit is the last day of the unit (Test day. See above.). After that, assignments will be accepted late for half credit until 3:30 pm on Friday, January 3rd first semester, and Friday May 30th second semester. No assignments will be accepted after these dates.

Current Events

Because current events are a major part of the study of government, we will devote at least two days of each unit to the exploration and discussion of current events. Students will be responsible for researching, discussing, and sharing current event stories.

Public Service

Each student will need to complete four hours of public service. A public service is something that provides a **public** good, and for which you are **not** paid. Each community public service activity must be observed and verified by an adult in charge or responsible for supervising the activity. (Public Service Forms can be found on the class webpage in the General Items folder) **Public service can be completed any time before 3:30 pm on Friday, January 3rd first semester, and Friday May 30th second semester for full credit, but the grades for this assignment will be entered into PowerSchool on the first day of second and fourth quarter respectively.**

Public Meeting

Each student will need to attend one public meeting for forty five minutes, or the entire length of the meeting, whichever is less. Each community meeting must be observed and verified by an adult in charge or responsible for the meeting. (Public Meetings Forms can be found on the class webpage in the General Items folder) **Public meeting attendance can be completed any time before 3:30 pm on Friday, January 3rd first semester, and Friday May 30th second semester for full credit, but the grades for this assignment will be entered into PowerSchool on the first day of second and fourth quarter respectively.**

Attendance & Participation

This portion of your grade will be awarded for showing up on time, participating in class, and staying in your seat until the bell rings. Simply put, show up on time, put your phone in the sleeve, and work from bell to bell, and you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade. Failure to do this will result in a one percent deduction for each occurrence.

A Final Note on Grading

Unlike a history class in which units are taught chronologically, government courses are arranged thematically starting with basic concepts of governance and then applying those concepts to more concrete situations. This course will be no different. The semester will be divided into five units of study:

1. Foundations of American Democracy
2. Interactions Among Branches of Government
3. Civil Liberties & Civil Rights
4. American Political Ideologies & Beliefs
5. Political Participation

Each unit will include a variety of assessments and activities. Because each unit builds on the concepts of the previous ones, as the semester goes on, the weight of each units' components will increase in value. Specifically, all graded work in the second unit is weighted two times the work of the first. Work in the third unit is weighted three times that of the first unit, and so on.

If you have questions or need help at any point of the semester, I will be available in my room before school by 7:15, during the Academic Flex Time, and after school until 3:30. Students are encouraged to self-advocate: In other words, seek support and ask questions when needed. As all pertinent class information will be on the class webpage, students are expected to check it regularly. You need to bring your assigned work, a writing instrument, a notebook, and your school Chromebook to class every day.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at the High School, either by phone (563-7811x2026) or e-mail (schwedrskyd@fortschools.org).