Mrs. Stafstrom

Classroom E204

Office N131

**AP United States Government and Politics**

**Syllabus**

**2011 – 2012**

<http://stafstromdhs.weebly.com/>

This semester-long, college-level course prepares students to take the AP United States Government and Politics exam on Tuesday, May 15, 2012. The course seeks to expose students to significant content and provide opportunities for robust and thoughtful critical thinking.

I am **always** available to help you and answer questions. My e-mail is [judy.stafstrom@dist428.org](mailto:judy.stafstrom@dist428.org) and my work phone is 815-754-2100 where you can reach my voice mail. My home phone number is 815- 748-3435. I am available hours 1, 4 and 7/8, FLEX, as well as before and after school.

Course description and Student Objectives

This course addresses major institutions and themes of contemporary American government and politics. As an AP course, the content and expectations are those of a college-level class. The class is designed to prepare the students to be successful on the AP United States Government and Politics Exam and to encourage the development of critical thinking in the area of American government and politics. Significant areas of study include:

# Introduction, Constitution and Federalism

* Political Culture and Public Opinion
* Political Participation
* Parties and Elections

# Interest Groups

# Media

* Congress and the Legislative Process
* Presidency and Bureaucracy

# Supreme Court and Judicial Review

# Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

* Public Policymaking

At the end of the course, students should be able to understand and critically analyze:

* the origins and characteristics of Federalism
* the process of Constitutional change
* philosophical origins and foundations of the U.S. Constitution
* the role of public opinion in shaping governmental action
* the role of special interest groups, lobbyists, political action committees, the media, and political parties in the political process.
* the formation and function of political parties
* the strengths and weaknesses of the electoral process
* the structure, function and operation of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the federal government.
* the principles of separation of powers and checks and balances.
* the evolving function of personal liberties and civil rights within American democracy
* the formulation and expression of public policy

# Textbooks and Materials

# Textbook: Wilson, James Q. and Dilulio, John, J. American Government 10th ed., Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

In addition to reading current articles from news sources such as the *New York Times*, *The Economist,* the *Atlantic Monthly,* and the *Washington Post* throughout the course, on a regular basis, students will read selections from the following supplementary reader:

*Serow, Ann G. and Ladd, Everett C., The Lanahan Readings in American Polity. 4th ed.,* Lanahan Publishers, Inc. 2007.

# Student Expectations

This is a rigorous and fast-paced college level course designed in significant part to prepare students to take the United States Government AP exam and hopefully earn college credit. In order to achieve this goal, we must cover the material that will be on the exam and thus must closely follow the course schedule*.* Between the textbook and outside readings, there will be reading assignments every night and each weekend. The class will be conducted as a seminar with extensive classroom discussions over readings, current events, and Mrs. Stafstrom’s favorite clips from c-span. In addition, significant time will be devoted to learning the format of the AP Government exams. The bottom line is that to be successful in this class you must commit to a sustained and intense level of study. As a college-level course, I will not accept any late work unless you make arrangements with me before the work is due.

Assignments, due dates and other important material will be posted on the class website: <http://stafstromdhs.weebly.com/>

Specific student expectations follow:

1. Respect yourself, others and your surroundings.

2. Be on time for class.

3. Be prepared for class. **Every day** you should bring your materials.

4. Check your grades on Skyward on a regular basis.

5. Use your passing periods effectively.

6. Achieve to the best of your abilities – see me when you have questions. Use FLEX!

7. Be a DHS Barb.

**B**e Responsible

**A**chieve Academically

**R**espect self and others

**B**e Proud

8. Follow all other school rules per student agenda (i.e. dress code, food, drink, cell phone, etc.)

# Student Requirements

1. *Readings*
   1. **Textbook**  There will be almost daily textbook reading assignments. There will be regular quizzes on these reading as well as summary questions to answer. Do not get behind!
   2. **Readings** Every several days there will be a seminar on assigned readings. You will prepare a short summary of the readings as homework.
2. *Tests*
   1. There will be four tests during the semester. All of the multiple-choice questions will be in AP format.
   2. Free Response Questions – the tests will include free response questions that are in the same format as the questions from the AP exam. I will teach you the most effective format for answering these questions.
   3. Cell phones – If your cell phone or any other electronic device is used or activated during a test or quiz, you will receive a zero on the test/quiz and receive a referral to the Dean’s Office.
3. *Quizzes* – There will be an almost weekly quiz on the textbook readings.
4. *Papers* – you will write at least one research paper and a few shorter position papers.
5. *Class Participation* – class will consist of discussion, short lecture, debates, student presentations, and group work. I firmly believe that classroom discussion is an essential way to achieve the critical thinking that you will have to demonstrate to do well on the AP Exam. For that reason, I expect all students to contribute to in-class discussion. I will put you on the spot. Current events are a large part of class participation.
6. *Final* – yes, we will have one at the end of first semester and, yes, it will be cumulative.
7. *State-mandated Constitution Test* – administered on Thursday, January 5, 2012. You must correctly answer 60 out of the 100 multiple choice questions in order to graduate from high school.
8. *Attendance is essential*. Expect a call home for any unexcused absence. I want you to be in class!

# Grading

Grades for the course are based on the following areas with the following approximate relative weight:

Tests (MC and Timed Writing) 30%

Summer Homework 5%

Participation 15%

Homework 10%

Quizzes 10%

Projects/papers 15%

Final 15%

Cheating/Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as “stealing and passing off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own**;** use (of another's production) without crediting the source.” (*Merriam-Webster* online). This includes copying homework assignments. Lastly, assisting a fellow student to cheat or plagiarize is also considered academic misconduct. A student who cheats or plagiarizes, or who assists another student to cheat or plagiarize, on any assignment will receive an automatic zero on that assignment and a referral to the Dean’s Office and the Athletic Office for possible additional penalties.