IMSA
Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy

Comprehensive Course Syllabus

United States Government and the Constitution

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course will give students a broad, introductory analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States with the Constitution as a central document informing class discussions. This course considers both general concepts used to interpret U.S. government and politics as well as an analysis of specific examples. It will develop a familiarity with the various institutions, political groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute U.S. government and political life. Students will become acquainted with a variety of theoretical perspectives and explanations for various behaviors and political outcomes.

INSTRUCTOR: Rachel Banke, PhD

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Office Phone: 630-907-5495
Office Hours: A 128D (history pod)
A and D days, mod 3
B days, mod 6
and by appointment

MEETING INFORMATION:

Class Meeting Times: Mod 2 (A, C, D)
Class Location: A149

LEARNING GOALS AND OUTCOMES:

Students successfully completing this course will:
• know important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to U.S. government and politics by collaborating with peers, and discussing in class, to build an understanding of history and policy.
• understand typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences (including the components of political behavior, the principles used to explain or justify various government structures and procedures, and the political effects of these structures and procedures) by synthesizing information and ideas into a coherent argument in papers and discussions.
• be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to U.S. government and politics (including data presented in charts, tables, and other formats) by discussing ideas in class and attempting to resolve differing conceptions involved in the production of a research paper.

• be able to critically analyze relevant theories and concepts, apply them appropriately, and develop their connections across the curriculum by drawing appropriate conclusions and making generalizations based on reliable information in both discussions and writing.

Primary SSLS
A Develop automaticity in skills, concepts, and processes that support and enable complex thought.
IV.A Construct and support judgments based on evidence.
IV.B Write and speak with power, economy, and elegance.
V.A Identify, understand, and accept the rights and responsibilities of belonging to a diverse community.

Instructional Design and Approach
Group projects, presentations and quizzes, as well as reading discussions will accompany each of the themes listed below. Essays of varying lengths will synthesize the material in the course. Class discussions are a primary mode of teaching and learning in history courses.

Constitution, Rights, and Liberties
Political Beliefs and Behaviors
Political Parties, Interest Groups and Mass Media
Institutions of National Government
Public Policy

REQUIRED TEXTS & COURSE MATERIALS
Krutz, Glen and Sylvie Waskiewicz. 2017. *American Government*.
   Note: The required textbook for this course is an open access resource. This book is available online free of charge to all students: https://openstax.org/details/american-government

Other Electronic Resources:
https://www.oyez.org/
https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-supreme-court
https://www.law.cornell.edu/
http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/
http://www.pewresearch.org/

ASSESSMENT PRACTICES, PROCEDURES, AND PROCESSES
Each quarter there will be several formative assessments (e.g. reading quizzes, short paper, discussion posts) and a longer assessment (e.g. a paper, presentation or project). **Assessments in the class fall into three basic categories with the following weights for the semester: essays and projects (60 percent), presentations and participation (20 percent), and in-class assessments (20 percent).**

Students will confront source material on their own, before class discussion in formative papers. Frequent quizzes and in-class work will also hold students accountable for course material.

Longer essays will give students the opportunity to make their own conclusions about the subject matter and to practice writing and the construction of arguments.

Written Assignments

Rights Essay
How we understand our rights and liberties is not merely static. Carrying around a copy of the Bill of Rights with you does not necessarily tell you what they mean in a Constitutional sense. In this essay you will trace the history of a right or liberty through Supreme Court decisions. Use the resources on the Google Classroom page to find Supreme Court cases on the particular right or liberty you have identified. Then cite at least five of these decisions and describe in this short essay how that right or liberty has changed over time through court interpretations.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media Essay
Develop a thesis and explain the interactions between parties, interest groups, and the mass media. The essay will work best covering one particular subject and must contain an assessment of the intersections between all three groups.

UNSDG Policy Memo (presentation and essay)
Students are required to produce a policy memo in which they propose a policy solution to one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). In this memo, students must make an argument to a relevant national political official – President Trump, Senate Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, etc. – about how best to solve this policy conundrum.

The structure of the paper should be as follows. First, students should briefly identify the issue and discuss the problems surrounding it. Next, students must draw upon **academic/legitimate** sources from current events-related (e.g., The Wall Street Journal, The Economist) and/or scholarly (e.g. The American Political Science Review, Journal of Politics) journals in order to explain potential solutions to this problem.

Response Posts
In most respects, politics requires interaction with others. Citizens and their leaders regularly communicate their ideas through conversation, debates, blogs, op-eds published in leading news outlets, and in many other ways. Students will have numerous in-class opportunities to discuss politics with their colleagues, honing their arguments through engagement with their peers and the instructor. Simultaneously, students will have opportunities to engage with one another electronically, the increasingly preferred method of communication for many of us.

Several times throughout the semester, a discussion prompt relating to the course material will be posted on Google Classroom. Students will have 72 hours to respond to this prompt. After the 72 hours has lapsed, students will have an additional 48 hours to respond to at least one of their classmates' posts. One of the goals of this exercise is to encourage students to share political ideas outside of the traditional classroom setting, while also helping them develop their critical thinking and written communication skills.

Posts should be respectful and thoughtful, meaning that they show a grasp of the material covered and an application of that material to the questions posed. Responses should incorporate clear language and proper grammar, and they should be at least 300 words in length.

Additional Assignments
Throughout the semester, you will be given additional small assignments (partner work, preparation for an in-class debate, brief oral presentations, mini-projects, etc.) that will help you build expertise in particular areas. You will be given time in class to work on these assignments, but additional time outside of class may be needed to complete the work to a high standard.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS
My expectation is that, at least once per class, you voluntarily respond to a question or comment from your teacher or another student. I want this class to be based on your questions and discussions about them. As to why participation in class is important beyond your grade, consider these statements from some of today's business leaders:

"We are routinely surprised at the difficulty some young people have in communicating: verbal skills, written skills, presentation skills. They have difficulty being clear and concise; it's hard for them to create focus, energy, and passion around the points they want to make."
-- Mike Summers, VP for Global Talent Management at Dell

"I want people who can engage in good discussion—who can look me in the eye and have a give and take. All of our work is done in teams. You have to know how to work well with others. But you also have to know how to engage customers—to find out what their needs are. If you can't engage others, then you won't learn what you need to know."
-- Clay Parker, engineer and president of the Chemical Management Division of BOC Edwards

"People who've learned to ask great questions and have learned to be inquisitive are the ones who move the fastest in our environment because they solve the biggest problems in ways that have the most impact on innovation."
-- Mike Summers, VP for Global Talent Management at Dell

All quotations taken from Tony Wagner, *Rigor Redefined* (2008).

Study Habits: I expect you to take notes in this class. If I think a topic is important enough to spend significant class time on, it's probably important enough to be on an assessment. It would also be wise to take notes as you read. I may ask to see your notes.

Electronic Devices: We will be mindful of our use of technology in this course. Success in this course will require you to read attentively, listen actively, participate fully, and even sometimes embody a historical persona. Therefore, you will keep your cellphones, laptops, and other devices put away as a general rule. At times, I will invite technology to be brought to class for a specific pedagogical purpose. These activities may include use of laptops, tablets, or cell phones for researching, writing, using multimedia sources, or participating in online polling.

Technology does not necessarily help us learn better. The pedagogical literature has demonstrated that laptop notetaking is less effective for learning than taking notes by hand. Even when you use your laptop solely to take notes (i.e. are not distracted), your processing of information tends to be shallower and your performance on conceptual questions is worse:

> Researchers have repeatedly found that students who use laptops in class learn less than their "disconnected" peers (see Cornell's 2003 study "The Laptop and the Lecture"). Studies at Princeton and the University of California have found students who take notes on laptops performed worse on evaluations such as quizzes than those who took notes by hand "even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing"
>
> --Mueller and Oppenheimer (2014)

But electronic device use in class harms more than just the user – it also negatively impacts students seated nearby. Sana, Weston, et al (2013) found that:

> participants who multitasked on a laptop during a lecture scored lower on a test compared to those who did not multitask, and participants who were in direct view of a multitasking peer scored lower on a test compared to those who were not. The results demonstrate that multitasking on a laptop poses a significant distraction to both users and fellow students and can be detrimental to comprehension of lecture content.

Therefore, I require that you please keep your devices away during class unless you have been specifically asked to use it, and I would encourage you to keep it closed in other classes, as well. Moreover, the recording of this class in either audio or video form is forbidden by the instructor.

If you do have a documentable condition in which it would be necessary to use technology in the course, please meet with me after class to discuss accommodations.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory for success in this class. Athletes or students in activities need to check in with the instructor <u>in advance</u> of upcoming events.

Respect Accorded Students and Faculty: I am committed to maintaining a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination.

The right to dissent shall not be stifled, but the need to reflect and articulate intelligently is also demanded. Class debates should address the issue at hand and its supporting evidence, not differences in student personalities or opinions.

Courtesy and respect to each other and to the instructor should be maintained at all times in both e-mail correspondence and in class. All written correspondence to me should follow the form it would if being sent to the head of a company you are working for. I expect your best grammar, punctuation, and language use.

Please do not expect instant feedback on assignments or to inquiries. Please be considerate and patient of my schedule. The instructor will offer the most timely feedback possible. Written work

will require at least a week. Essays generally take two to three weeks. Student email inquiries will generally be answered within a school day (but occasionally you may wait two days for a response if I need to consult with other staff).

If you believe your work has been misgraded or a score incorrectly entered into the gradebook, you must contact me within three school days of its return to you. You may not email me to ask for grades to be rounded. At the end of the semester, grades <u>may be</u> rounded up to .5% based on improvement over the term.

Late Work: Be on time, turn in assignments as scheduled, back up your files! Technical errors do not excuse late work, so do not wait until the last minute to submit work. Late assignments are otherwise penalized by 5% per day except where otherwise indicated in the assignment prompts. All writing assignments must be submitted in order to pass the course.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:
All of the work you turn in for this course should be your own. Claiming as your own the work of others, in whole *or in part,* will result in a referral to the appropriate campus office. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams in their book *The Craft of Research*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) explain that:

> You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else's words or ideas but fail to credit that person. . . . You plagiarize even when you do credit the source but use its exact words without using quotation marks or block indentation. . . .You [also] plagiarize when you paraphrase a source so closely that anyone putting your work next to it would see that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow.

MODIFICATIONS:
This syllabus and the subsequent unit schedules are roadmaps, not a rocket launch protocols. Unforeseen circumstances may require us to make detours. However, the instructor will only make changes that are in your interest and beneficial to your learning in this course. I will explain the rationale for any such changes.