

AP U.S. Government and Comparative Systems
Mr. Jeremy Nichols

Phone # - (314) 415-5708

E-mail - jnichols@parkwayschools.net

Classroom Expectations

Let's be honest, you are juniors and seniors and should know how to act in a classroom by now. My classroom expectations are nothing extraordinary. But, just so there's no confusion, here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Come to class every day and on time. Frequent tardiness and absenteeism will negatively affect your grade.
2. Be prepared for class. Have pencils, notebooks, and anything else you need to succeed.
3. Participate in class activities and discussions. Be responsible for your learning. If you participate, class will be more enjoyable than if you just sit there doing nothing.
4. Complete all assignments given in and out of class.
 - a. All assignments handed in late will receive a 10% reduction in points each day it is late.
 - b. Any assignment not turned in by the time I grade it and hand it back will receive a zero.
5. Cellphones are permitted at my discretion. If someone is addressing the class, please put your phone away. If you are doing individual work, or small group work, you may have your phone out to assist you in research or to listen to music quietly. Do NOT have your phone out during a quiz, test, or exam. I reserve the right to ask you to put away your phone any time it becomes a disruption to your learning or the learning of others.
6. Respect yourself, your classmates, other staff members, guests, and the classroom.
7. This is a year-long course, if you commit to it, you are expected to stay. I will push you as hard as I can – I expect you to rise to the challenge.

Grading

Grades will be determined by adding the points you earn on tests, projects, and homework and dividing them by the total number of points available.

Breakdown: 97.0↑ = H 96.9-90 = A 89-80 = B 79-70 = C 69-60 = D 59 ↓ = F

Any percentage falling “between” grade levels will be modified according to class behavior, work completion, participation in class, and effort given throughout the semester. So, if you receive an 89.9, I will not necessarily give you an “A.” Grades have to be **earned**.

Testing

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requires all students to take three standard tests:

1. The End of Course Exam – this is worth 10% of your final grade
2. The U.S. Constitution Test – You MUST pass this test in order to graduate. This test is worth 10% of your final grade. You will have one shot to pass this test. If you do not, you must retake the test on your own time at a later date.
3. The Missouri Constitution Test – You MUST pass to graduate. This test is 5% of your final grade. As with the U.S., you will have one chance in class to take the test.

The AP Exam – This is given in May. You are not required to take it. I encourage you to take one of the two.

Goals

Upon completion of this course students will:

- know important facts, concepts, and theories related to U.S. government and politics.
- understand the patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences.
- be able to analyze and interpret basic data which is significant to U.S. government.
- be familiar with the governments and political policies of the United Kingdom, Mexico, Russia, China, Nigeria, and Iran.
- understand major concepts, themes, and generalizations used in political comparison.
- be able to compare and contrast political systems.

Units of Study

I. U.S. Government

- A. Foundations of U.S. government
 1. Ideas that influenced the Constitution
 2. Federalism
 3. Separation of powers
 4. Democratic systems
- B. The Legislative Branch
 1. Foundations
 2. Formal and informal powers
 3. The law making process
 4. Political parties vs. interest groups
 5. The roles of congressmen
- C. The Executive Branch
 1. Powers of the President
 2. Structure of the office of the presidency
 3. Foreign policy
 4. The bureaucracy
 5. Economic policy
 6. Social policy
- D. Elections, Parties, and Campaigns
 1. Campaign strategy and financing
 2. Elections and voter behavior
 3. Political parties
- E. Media and Public Opinion
 1. The media – how it covers government and its impact
 2. Political cartoons
 3. Public opinion – how it's measured and its impact
- F. The Judicial Branch
 1. Structure of the Court
 2. Civil Liberties and Supreme Court cases
 3. History of Civil Rights

II. Comparative

- A. Introduction to comparative politics
 1. Purpose, methods, and concepts
 2. Nations and states
 3. Sources of power
 4. Types of governments
 5. Belief systems used to justify power
 6. Supranational organizations
- B. Political institutions of Great Britain, Russia, Mexico, China, Iran, and Nigeria
 1. Levels of government
 2. Executives and legislatures
 3. Elections and political parties
 4. Military institutions and judiciaries
 5. Political culture – what issues are the focus of the people and the government
- C. The Missouri government
 1. How it compares to the national government
 2. The systems which are unique to state government

Focus Questions

These questions will guide our study throughout the course of the year:

- Who has the power?
- How is power shared?
- How are the people involved in the government?
- What outside forces affect government?
- What do governmental systems have in common? How are they different?
- Do the actions of one government affect the global community?

Final Thoughts

If you need to see me, please do so during Ac Lab. Since I coach, meeting after school is usually difficult to do.

All other PSH rules and regulations not specifically mentioned herein DO apply.

This syllabus is subject to change at my discretion.