

Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics
Notre Dame de Sion High School
Introduction & Summer Assignment for 2017-18 School Year
NOTE: “Summer” Assignment is due 2nd Day of SECOND Semester

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Introduction and Explanation of Course.

AP United States Government and Politics is designed to provide students with the analytical skills, factual knowledge, and enduring understandings necessary to deal critically with problems and issues in U.S. government. It also develops familiarity with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute U.S. government and politics and acquaints the student with the variety of theoretical perspectives and explanations for various behaviors and outcomes.

By the end of the year, students successfully completing this course will:

- Know important facts, concepts and theories pertaining to U.S. government and politics
- 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)
- Be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to U.S. government and politics (including data presented in charts, tables, and other formats)
- Be prepared to take the AP United States Government and Politics exam in early May. A student may earn college credit in political science depending on the student's performance on this exam and the admitting institution's AP credit policy.

The program prepares students for intermediate college courses by making demands upon them equivalent to those made by semester-long introductory college courses. These demands include, but are not limited to, the amount of reading, the complexity of material, and the degree of engagement with the class and subject matter.

We are offering it as a one-semester course, which will require significant reading ahead of the course and during the semester in which you are enrolled. A one-semester course also offers **logistical problems** for an exam offered in early May for students in each semester-long course, **including:**

- This year, we are only offering the course for 2nd semester. For that reason, the summer reading (and exercises related to it) will be due on the 2nd day of Sem2, although we'd recommend reading part of it this summer so it is not an "extra" assignment during the Fall.
- ALL students must complete the "Summer Assignment" and register for and take the AP exam in May 2018.

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Summer Assignments –

- 1. Summer READING #1– Howard Fineman “*The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates that Define and Inspire Our Country*” (2009, paper):** ISBN:
 - Overview: A relatively recent book that addresses many contemporary issues that are being vigorously debated in the United States written by a well-known journalist.
 - **As you read the book, do the following:**
 - a. Pay attention to the discussions about the Constitution. Make notes on (i) what arguments took place among those who drafted the Constitution, and (ii) how those issues continue to be contentious today.
 - b. Note the political figures discussed (primarily, our presidents). How do public figures and leaders such as Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, the Roosevelts, Kennedy, Johnson, Reagan, G.W. Bush, and others fit into the 13 arguments?
 - c. Know what the chapter titles mean. What are the basic issues raised? Be able to discuss at least one important issue that is mentioned in each chapter. What are the arguments on both sides of the issue?
 - d. Can you apply any of the arguments to today’s political arena? Consider this at not only the national level, but also as the arguments might arise on the state and local government levels.
 - e. **Respond to 10 of the 12 Questions on the *Thirteen American Arguments* HANDOUT (attached below).** 2nd Sem students– the assignment will be given credit as your first assignment in Sem2.
- 2. Summer READING #2 – Chapter one of the textbook. Make sure you get the ELEVENTH EDITION of Ginsberg, et. al, *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics*.**
- 3. Familiarize yourself with the text – its organization, its use of charts and graphs, its links to outside material. You will be quizzed on Chapter One on Day 3 of Second Semester.**

The Thirteen American Arguments HANDOUT --- Due Day 2 of semester:

As you read the Fineman book, complete the attached assignment, making sure that:
Fully respond to any 10 of the following 12 questions. Please use complete sentences.
Your responses need not be hand-written **BUT all work must be your original ideas.**

1. What is an argument, according to Fineman? How and why is Howard Fineman qualified to make the arguments he makes? Explain, in your own words, the six goals of the author.
2. How has our definition of a “person” changed over time?
3. *“We were, and are, different. We are founded on ideas, not genetics; on aspirations, not the accidents of geography. We do not trace our nationhood to a tribal history, but to a concept of liberty and constitutional order that was unique in the world when it was first officially proclaimed in 1776. In theory, anybody could become an American – and most of*

the world has tried.” What does Fineman say about this? What do you think of this statement?

4. How does Fineman use Senator Bill Frist as an example? What does this say about the role of faith and its traditions in society today? How, historically, has it been “our destiny to argue about faith in public life”? What examples exist of how faith and politics are intertwined? Cite examples from the text.
5. How does Fineman argue that 9/11 changed journalism and the protection that journalists’ writings had? What is the difference between “personal privacy” and “government secrecy”? How is/was that changed by other media, war, and history? Consider the Espionage and Sedition Acts in your answer.
6. Considering Fineman’s discussion of the work of Hamilton and Madison, how can words be given such power (as in our United States Constitution)? How and why are judges entrusted with interpretation of those words? How did *Marbury v. Madison* establish all future interpretations?
7. How can Hurricane Katrina be used as evidence in the debate between local versus national authority? What does this say about the strengths and weaknesses of federalism? How do the three colonial subcultures contribute to the issue of sovereignty and power?
8. “In 2001, Osama bin Laden did more to centralize government power in America than anyone since FDR.” Still “states’ rights isn’t just a Southern idea; it is an American one.” How does the author resolve both ideas? Use specific evidence from the book in your response.
9. Why has presidential leadership (or the lack thereof) come to dominate the discourse of American public life? Consider the founding fathers, events like the Civil War and the Great Depression, controversies like Watergate and Vietnam, and elections in your response.
10. What is the argument over foreign policy about and not about? How did it begin and where have we, as a nation gone from there? (Suggestion: Consider only hitting the high points as mentioned by the author.) How has politics and the economy shaped our decisions about diplomacy?
11. “We need elites, even admire them. We designed a meritocracy to produce them in what we regard as a democratic way. But we never fully trust them.” While considering the “American character,” explain this idea from both a political and economic viewpoint.
12. How did the 2008 campaign reflect the architecture of the American argument? Respond considering two of the following: (A) the Limits of Individualism, (B) A Fair, “More Perfect” Union, (C) Who is a Person, (D) War and Diplomacy.