

American Government

One Semester

**Instructor:** Mr. Joseph Samuelson **Classroom:** Room 319 (East)

**Phone:** (319) 433-2400 Ext. 14333 **E-mail:** [samuelsonj@waterlooschools.org](mailto:samuelsonj@waterlooschools.org)

**Cell Phone:** (319) 849-5565

**Class Website:** [www.mrsamuelson.weebly.com](http://www.mrsamuelson.weebly.com)

**Description:** American Government is a required course by the Iowa state board of education for students to graduate. It is also an extremely necessary class for students to become fully functional citizens and contributing members of society. Students will better understand how society functions and thus will be more adept to handle themselves after high school.

Political science is the study of power and authority through the examination of political processes, governmental institutions, and human behavior in a civil society. In this context the study of civics is understood to include the form and function of government. Civic literacy encompasses civics but also addresses the individual’s social and political participation.

**Texts:**

Barbour, Christine & Wright, Gerald (2010). *American Government: Citizenship and Power*. St. Paul, MN: EMC Publishing.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

**Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the rights and responsibilities of each citizen and demonstrate the value of lifelong civic action.***

• Understand rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare.

• Understand that constitutional democracy requires the participation of an attentive, knowledgeable, and competent citizenry.

• Understand personal, political, and economic rights are secured by constitutional government, the rule of law, checks and balances, an independent judiciary, and a vigilant citizenry.

• Understand ways citizens participate in the political process at local, state, and national levels.

• Understand the importance of becoming knowledgeable about public affairs.

• Understand the importance of voluntarism as a characteristic of American society.

**Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand how the government established by the Constitution embodies the enduring values and principles of democracy and republicanism.***

• Understand the central ideas of American constitutional government and how this form of government has shaped the character of American society.

• Understand the role of government in major areas of domestic and foreign policy.

**Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the purpose and function of each of the three branches of government established by the Constitution.***

• Understand the purpose of government and how its powers are acquired, used and justified.

• Understand the necessity of politics and government.

• Understand the purposes, organization, and functions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches and the independent regulatory agencies.

**Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the differences among the complex levels of local, state and national government and their inherent, expressed, and implied powers.***

• Understand the design and features of the Constitution prevent the abuse of power by aggregating power at the national, state, and local levels and using a system of checks and balances.

• Understand provisions of the Constitution and principles of the constitutional system help to insure a government that will not exceed its limits.

• Understand the limits the United States Constitution places on the powers of the states and on the powers of the national government over state governments.

• Understand the policies of state and local governments provide citizens with ways to monitor and influence the actions of members of government and hold them responsible for their actions.

**Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand strategies for effective political action that impact local, state, and national governance.***

• Understand participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals.

• Understand the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society.

**Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand how law and public policy are established at the local, state, and national levels of government.***

• Understand the purposes and functions of law.

• Understand the processes by which public policy concerning a local, state, or national issue is formed and carried out.

• Understand issues concerning the relationship between state and local governments and the national government.

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| Illustration of ***Understand how law and public policy are established at the local, state, and national levels of government*** in the ICLE’s Rigor and Relevance Framework | |
| **Quadrant C**  Students will predict the fate of a piece of proposed legislation based on an assessment of the current political climate, partisan perspectives, public opinion and media coverage. | **Quadrant D**  Students analyze a local, state or national issue and prescribe a legislative response that promotes the public interest or general welfare. |
| **Quadrant A**  Students will be able to create a sequence diagram that shows how a bill becomes a law at the federal and state level as well as how local statutes are established. | **Quadrant B**  Students select a current bill that they support and track it through the legislative session. |

**Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand how various political systems throughout the world define the rights and responsibilities of the individual.***

• Understand ideologies, structures, institutions, processes and political cultures of different political systems in the world.

• Understand the essential characteristics of limited and unlimited governments.

**Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the role of the United States in current world affairs.***

• Understand conditions, actions and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations.

• Understand the significance of foreign policies and events in the United States' relations with the world.

• Understand the idea of national interest and how it is used as a criterion for shaping American foreign policy.

• Understand the effects that significant world political developments have on the United States.

• Understands the influence that American ideas about rights have had abroad and how other peoples’ ideas about rights have influenced Americans.

**Method of Instruction:** Learning will be done through collaborative and cooperative techniques with links to TOK. It will be done in a constructivist method to ensure a student-centered classroom rather than teacher-centered classroom. Students are expected work with others to develop and formulate ideas and conclusions. It is their responsibility to take charge of their own learning while it is the job of the teacher to work alongside them when they reach their zone of proximal development.

**Grading Procedures:**

Letter Grade GPA

A 92-100% 4.0

A- 90-91% 3.67

B+ 88-89% 3.33

B 82-87% 3.0

B- 80-81% 2.67

C+ 78-79% 2.33

C 72-77% 2.0

C- 70-71% 1.67

D+ 68-69% 1.33

D 62-67% 1.0

D- 60-61% 0.67

F 59% and below

Exams/Tests 40%

Final Citizenship Test 20%

Daily Assignments/Homework 40%

Total: 100%

**Course Schedule:**

Changes may be made based on the class' interests and the instructor's judgment. The following schedule is the suggested pacing guide for each unit. Firm due date will be given as specific dates upon appropriate time. It’s important to submit assignments in a timely manner to ensure pace is kept with the rest of the class.

Chapter 1: Principles of Government and Politics

Chapter 2: Origins of American Government

Chapter 3: The Constitution

Chapter 4: Federalism

Chapter 22: Foreign Policy and National Defense

Chapter 23: State and Local Government

**Attendance: Attendance is required**. Your presence to class is important for your own learning and well as your contribution to the work of the class. If an absence is unavoidable, please arrange ahead of time to discuss options for making-up work. Full credit can be earned on work submitted on or before the due date.

**Assignments:** Assignments are due on or before the specified date. If you anticipate being absent, arrange to have the assignment turned in before the due date.

**Make-up Exams/Assignments:** Exams/assignments that are missed due to an excused absence may be made-up before the next class meeting by arrangement with the instructor.

**Student Behavior:**

Academic Honesty – Students are expected to conduct themselves in conformity with the highest standards with regard to academic honesty. Violation of academic honesty with regard to plagiarism, cheating, or falsification of work will not be tolerated. Students violating such standards will be subject to discipline, as per the Waterloo Schools Academic Honesty Policy (504.21).

Attendance Policy – Pre-IB assumes that students will seek to profit from the instructional program and will recognize the importance of attending every class meeting of courses for which credit is expected. Responsibility for notifying faculty of absences, and for arranging potential make-up, rests with the students.

Civility **–** Civil behavior enhances the academic setting, and is expected at all times. Courtesy and respect for others are essential elements of the academic culture. The academic environment welcomes a difference of opinion, discourse, and debate within a civil environment.

**Disclaimer:** This syllabus and schedule is articulated as an expectation of class topics, learning activities, and expected student learning. However, the instructor reserves the right to make changes in this schedule that, within my professional judgment, would result in enhanced or more effective learning on the part of the students. These modifications will not substantially change the intent or objectives of this course and will be done within the policies and procedures of Waterloo Schools and International Baccalaureate.