

AP US Government and Politics

Summer Assignment

Welcome to AP Government! This course will consist of a college-level survey of American politics and government. You should be prepared to work hard. There will be many difficult and complex readings and concepts to analyze, and the course is meant to prepare you to excel on the AP US Government and Politics Exam, which you will take in May 2011. Standards will be high and cannot be altered to suit individuals, so you should expect to do college-level (NOT college preparatory, but actual COLLEGE-LEVEL) work if you are to succeed in the class. In preparation for the course, you will need to complete the following summer assignment (BOTH #'s 1 and 2):

1. Current Events Journal

AP Government is more directly related to current events than any course you will take in high school. Everything that we will study relates to how politics and government works in modern America. Accordingly, knowledge of current political and governmental affairs will significantly help you to understand the things we study, and will, in fact, be *necessary* to succeed in the course. If you know what is going on in the country with respect to politics and government, you *will* do better in the course.

You should follow major current events by doing one or more of the following on as close to a daily basis as possible:

- Read either the print or online version of a major newspaper.
- Watch a national/international news broadcast (CNN, MSNBC, FOXNews, PBS, ABC, CBS, NBC) – **not** a local news broadcast.
- Read major newsmagazines or political journals (*Time*, *Newsweek*, *US News and World Report*, *The Economist*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*)
- Watch daily or weekly news/current affairs programming (*Hardball*, *Meet the Press*, *Face the Nation*, *This Week*, etc.)

During the course of the summer (beginning the week of June 26 and ending the week of August 21), keep a current events journal. At the end of each week, type two paragraphs (minimum) about the major event or events in American government and/or politics from the past week. In the first paragraph, you should describe the event or events, and, in the second paragraph, you should analyze the significance of it/them and state any opinions, thoughts, or analysis that you might have about it/them. You must intelligently discuss one particularly important issue each week.

Your journal should deal with issues that are of *significant importance* to American politics and government. Such things include what the president is up to, what Congress is debating or legislation that they are passing, constitutional issues or major federal court decisions concerning them, debates over political issues in America, international crises or foreign policy issues that somehow affect the US or that our government must deal with, etc.

With each week's entry, you must include a list of news media sources you used during that week.

To show your progress, you must e-mail me a copy of your journal *through the week that begins on July 24 by Wednesday, August 3*. The full journal will be due on the **first day of school**.

2. Hardball Assignment

Pick up a copy of *Hardball* by Chris Matthews (1999 or after Edition) and read it. The book is a lively and entertaining analysis of how the game of politics is played in the United States. It is intended to encourage you to develop an interest in the great on-going pageant of American politics, which you will also be following in your observation of current events.

Write a 3-5 page paper (typed, double-spaced, reasonable font and margins) on the following topic (*You must incorporate BOTH "A" and "B" into your paper!*):

A. Choose **two** of Matthews' maxims or lessons about politics from the book. For each maxim, explain what it means and discuss an example from current political affairs that shows the maxim being either followed or ignored.

Choose from among the following maxims or lessons:

It's better to receive than to give.
Dance with the one that brung ya.
Keep your enemies in front of you.
Only talk when it improves the silence.
Always concede on principle.
Hang a lantern on your problem.
Spin
Triangulation
Positioning

B. Provide your own analysis of Matthews' take on how to succeed in politics. Do you agree with his points? Do you see any flaws in his "political wisdom? Would you be inclined to follow any of his particular bits of advice or not follow them?, etc. I really just want your own thoughtful reflection upon completing the book. You should demonstrate an understanding of the book and an ability to analyze/think about it.

GRADING

The current events journal and the Hardball assignment will be worth one full test grade each.

NOTE

How you do on these assignments will be taken as an indication of how well prepared you are to take the course. Students who do not perform up to expectations on the summer assignments will be asked to drop the course.