

# AP US Government and Politics

## Summer Assignment 2017

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 2018. Standards will be high, 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 Forum

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, an understanding of current political and governmental affairs will significantly help you to understand the things that we study and succeed in the course. I'm sure that not all of you know much about important current events right now, so this assignment will be an excellent opportunity for you to learn a little bit about what's going on in the country and world in which you live and give yourself a head start on AP Government in the process. Doesn't that sound like fun? I think it sounds like fun.

You should follow major current events by doing one or more of the following on as close to a daily basis as possible (I know that you aren't all that likely to do it on a daily basis, but do the best that you reasonably can. Every little bit will help you in the long run.):

- Read about major events affecting American politics and government in 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 (**unless** you are talking about a local story).
- 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* on MSNBC every evening, *Meet the Press* on NBC Sunday mornings, *Face the Nation* on CBS Sunday mornings, *This Week* on ABC Sunday mornings, *Washington Week in Review* on PBS, etc.)

During the course of the summer (beginning with the week of June 25 – the week beginning Sunday, June 25, that is -- and ending with the week beginning on August 20), you must make at least one post per week on the AP Government Discussion Forum, which may be accessed by clicking on "DISCUSSION FORUM" in the left-hand column of the AP Government course website). You will receive an e-mail, at the e-mail address that you have given me, inviting you to the course website and guiding you through the registration process. Commenting on an article posted by me or another participant **or** commenting intelligently on another participant's post are acceptable and count towards your posting quota each week.

At least once during the summer, you will be responsible for starting ***and moderating*** a discussion thread by posting a link to a relevant article and intelligently analyzing that article. A “relevant article” is an article that you have found that deals in an intelligent way with a major issue affecting American politics and government. It can either be a straight news article (just describes what happened or is happening), or it can be an opinion piece that takes a position on a significant current issue. In a post accompanying the link to your article, you should analyze the significance of the article and/or the issue that it represents and state any opinions or thoughts that you have about it (the issue and/or the article). Your goal should be to show that you understand the issue that your article deals with and its significance to American politics/government (in addition to stimulating discussion on the forum). You, of course, may post more than one article if you like. ***You may need to do additional research into the event/issue that you choose in order to fully understand it and its significance, and you will be expected to do so if necessary.***

You will sign up for a week during which you will do your *article post and serve as moderator of the discussion relative to that topic/article(s)*. You will be responsible for posting an article during the week that you are assigned *and moderating the discussion that ensues*.

Hopefully, your article post and the article posts of the other members of the class will generate some discussion that students may comment on to fulfill their weekly posting requirement. I (able raconteur that I am) will also make some posts of my own to help encourage or direct interesting discussions.

Acting as ***moderator*** for the discussion sparked by your article(s) will include keeping the discussion lively and on track and encouraging accuracy and thoughtfulness in the discussion. ***In other words, in order to be a successful moderator, you need to do more than just make a post and forget about it. You will act as the “expert” on the discussion topic that you chose and lead/facilitate the class’ discussion throughout the week.*** My hope is that this discussion forum will provide a fun and informative way to learn a little bit about significant current events and help you to form and express **intelligent** opinions about them.

Your articles and posts should deal with events//issues that are of ***significant importance*** to American politics and government **ONLY**. 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, major developments in political campaigns, major developments in the news that affect American politics and/or government, international crises or foreign policy issues that our government must deal with, etc. If you are unsure of whether an event/issue qualifies, you can drop me an e-mail ([jonathan.meagher@holynome.net](mailto:jonathan.meagher@holynome.net)) to ask me.

I will be reading and keeping track of your posts to the forum and their quality. You will receive a **test grade** reflecting the quality of your efforts and whether you fulfilled the requirements of the assignment.

There is a **rubric** attached to the assignment posted on the class website.

## 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 2-4 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 ("current" meaning now or in relatively recent history) 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 (by referring specifically to it) and an ability to analyze/think about it.

### GRADING

Your *Hardball* paper will be worth **one test grade**. There is a rubric attached to the assignment posted on the new website.

*NOTE that both parts of this summer assignment are posted on the "Assignments" page of the course website. A **rubric** for each of the two parts of the summer assignment, the Discussion Forum and the Hardball paper can be found there.*

**ANY QUESTIONS?** -- Send me an e-mail at [jonathan.meagher@holynome.net](mailto:jonathan.meagher@holynome.net). You will receive a prompt reply (usually within 24 hours).