

American Government and Economics
Course Syllabus
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Course Description

A major purpose of the course is to provide the opportunity for students to gain both critical and practical thinking skills through an integrated approach of the two main disciplines---American Government and Economics. From a critical thinking perspective, one goal of the class will be to achieve an understanding of the major themes and concepts that define and characterize the nature of government and economic systems in the U.S. and around the world. From a practical standpoint, students to be exposed to the political process, provided options for their involvement, and will utilize the study of the stock market as an approach to investing/saving and personal budgeting.

Classroom Policies

Attendance and Tardiness

Regular attendance is essential for success in the class. Assignments (per school policy) can only be made up for EXCUSED absences. This includes tests and quizzes! Tardiness will result in missed class time and assignments that cannot be made up. Please consult the student handbook for additional information on Northland Preparatory Academy's attendance and tardy policies.

Materials

All students MUST have two 3-ring notebooks (1 should be a minimum of 2 inches while the other should be no less than 1½ inches) for the class. The 2-inch binder must be brought to class daily and will include bell ringers, lecture notes, class handouts, and current events, which will be checked periodically (usually, at the end of each unit), and will count towards a significant portion of the final grade. The smaller notebook will be utilized to produce a stock portfolio and will be used intermittently throughout the school year. Lined paper, pencils, colored pencils and pens will also be needed. Students will need to acquire and bring a flash drive for any related computer generated projects/activities.

Assignments/Homework

Homework, which may include readings, vocabulary, worksheets, internet-based activities, projects, or writing assignments, are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. The only exception to this is if you have an excused absence the day an assignment was given. Students with an excused absence will have a maximum of three days after an excused absence to complete work that is due. This includes tests and quizzes! Students will not receive any credit after the three-day grace period. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the student to seek out and obtain any make-up work. Some assignments, such as major projects will be due on the assigned date whether you are in class or not. When this rule applies, you will be informed in advance.

Assessment

A variety of measures will be used to evaluate student performance, which will include but are not limited to the following:

- Tests and quizzes---will be announced. However, some quizzes will not; hence, the name “pop” quiz!
- Projects---will be conducted both individually and/or as cooperative team efforts. When projects are of the ‘group’ variety, individual skills/talents within the “team” will be utilized to complete the task. That means each student in the group will receive an individual grade for their “portion” of the entire project. Either the instructor or the “team” divides each project into equitable components so that no one individual or part of the whole will be “dumped upon.” In short, you will be evaluated for your individual effort and in some cases an additional grade will be assessed for team performance. This mirrors what happens in the workplace today----working in teams, utilizing individual talents and skills to complete and present a finished task!
- Selected Readings---Students will be required to keep up with assigned readings from various sources.
- Oral Presentations---Topics will be discussed on a need-to-know basis.
- Notebooks will be divided in to four sections---Title Page, Class Notes/Activities, Current Events, and Graded Material---with a specific layout and format that will be covered as a class activity.

TITLE PAGE: Will follow standard language conventions. In this section students will keep the class syllabus and other similarly related documents as they occur.

CLASS NOTES/ACTIVITIES: Lecture notes, handouts, documents for analysis, focus questions/statements, topic related activities, political cartoons, etc. will be kept in this section. Items must be kept in sequential order. Keep in mind that the instructor will NOT provide missed lecture notes for those who are absent (except for extenuating circumstances). It will be the responsibility of the student to obtain missed notes from your peers. Handouts and other printed materials can and will be provided by the instructor for those that are absent, but it will be the students’ responsibility to obtain and complete the assignment on their own.

CURRENT EVENTS: Each day class will commence with an oral presentation of a current event that is entered in to this section of the notebook. Explicit procedures on how this will be accomplished will be addressed in class. Generally, sporting events, pop cultural, and “normal” weather conditions are non-examples of an acceptable current event (extreme/unusual weather events that impact both people and the environment will be considered as relevant and thusly acceptable events). For each current event that is recorded in notebooks, students will follow this format:

1. **Number** (1-10) each entry at the top right-hand corner.
2. **Date** (current day) each entry below the sequence number.
3. **Source** of each entry across the top of the page on the first line.
4. **Who/What, When, Where,** and the **Significance** of each entry.

Note: When addressing the significance of an event, an effective method in “breaking down” current events will be accomplished by using the following themes to analyze your event:

1. Social---Development and transformation of social structures
2. Political---State-building, expansion, and conflict
3. Economic---Creation, expansion, and interaction of economic systems
4. Cultural---Development and interaction of cultures

5. Technological---Development of new or adaptation of existing technologies
6. Environmental---Impact on people and places
7. Historical---Context of time and space

It will be the student's responsibility to make-up any entries missed due to absences. Either getting the current event from a peer or obtaining your "own" current event can be used. This section of the notebook will be assessed after every ten (10) entries and are worth 10 points/event for a total of 100 points. A rubric based on a 1-4 point system will be utilized to evaluate the analysis portion (significance) of the current event. This will be disseminated to the class during the first week along with all pertinent information for students to be successful with this component of the notebook.

Class Rules (Partial)

Electronic and Cell Phone Use

The use of electronic devices (iPods, gamers, Kindles, notebooks, etc.) and cell phones is prohibited. Any violations will lead to the immediate confiscation of the item, and may entail parental involvement to get the item returned. However, under certain circumstances and with prior approval from the teacher, some tolerance MAY be allowed.

You are Responsible

All people who enter this classroom will be treated with the utmost respect and are expected to respect the rights, ideas, and property of others.

Be Prepared

In order to succeed in this class, you must arrive on time with all necessary materials. Frequently, there will be an assignment on the board at the beginning of class that may or may not be available if you are late.

Participate

You will be expected to be an active participant in all aspects of the class, including lectures/note taking, bell ringers, current events, oral discussions, debates, group and individual projects, field trips, among various other activities.

Consequences

1. Warning, which may also include a teacher/student conference
2. Loss of privilege and/or classroom detention
3. Parental contact
4. Referral to Dean or dismissal

Note: Consequence sequence may be altered at instructor's discretion, especially in instances of a severe infraction.

Evaluation of Student Performance

- A point system will be utilized for student grading with point weights based upon the value of the task in relation to the total points possible in the class, complexity, length, etc.
- In order to receive an "A" grade the student must maintain an average of at least 90%.

- In order to receive a “B” grade the student must maintain an average of at least 80%.
- In order to receive a “C” grade the student must maintain an average of at least 70%.
- In order to receive a “D” grade the student must maintain an average of at least 60%.
- Failure to maintain at least a 60% average will receive an “F” grade.

Note: I strongly recommend that you save all your graded assignments as documentation in the rare instance that a student may disagree about their grade. The presentation of an item may be necessary to alter a disputed grade. Let’s be real, mistakes do happen!

Extra Help/Tutoring

Should a student find that after making a consistent concerted effort and completing all assignments, they need extra help; tutoring or the assignment of a peer tutor can be obtained from the instructor. Make an appointment!