

MVLA
Fall 2026
COURSE INFORMATION SHEET

Course Title: AP U.S. Government & Politics

School: MVHS

UC/CSU requirement: Yes/Yes; g

School: Mountain View High School

Textbook and/or other learning resources: *American Government: Roots and Reform* by Karen O'Connor, Larry J. Sabato, and Alixandra B. Yanus. Articles and primary sources will supplement the textbook.

Student Learning Outcomes:

This course explores the political theory and everyday practice that directs the daily operation of our government. The purpose of this course is to help students gain and display an understanding of American politics and the processes of government that help shape our public policies. Throughout the course, we will examine our institutions of government, the people who run those institutions, the public policies made by those institutions, and the influences of the electorate and other groups on policy. By the completion of the course, students will be able to understand and evaluate competing arguments and formulate and express opinions on political and policymaking processes.

This course is the equivalent of an introductory, one semester college course in American government and it requires a substantial amount of reading and preparation for every class. Students will study U.S. foundational documents, Supreme Court decisions, and other texts and visuals to gain an understanding of the relationships and interactions among political institutions, processes, and behaviors. They will also engage in disciplinary practices that require them to read and interpret data, make comparisons and applications, and develop evidence-based arguments. The course will employ a variety of instructional approaches with a central focus on Project Based Learning. This approach provides students with a central problem or question to consider and they engage in collaborative learning through a variety of tasks to help them construct a solution or response that reflects their learning and mastery of course content and skills.

Although the AP exam is not the primary focus, the course is structured to provide thorough preparation in both content and skill.

Assessment and Grading ([BP 5121](#) / [AR 5121](#)): To ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their learning, the course instructors implement aligned grading practices and common assessments with the same frequency.

1. Grading categories and their percentage weights:

The course standards, and the weight of each in the calculation of the final semester grade, are as follows:

- Civic Participation = 10%
- Content Strands = 90%
 - Content strands are broken down into units that reflect the course scope and sequence recommended by the College Board.
 - In AP Gov't, there is also a written component, in which students are expected to show their content knowledge through quantitative analysis, argumentation, and comparison.

As we progress through a unit, students will be given informal formative feedback on their knowledge, understanding and civic participation through various checks of understanding. In contrast, formal summative assessments of a student's ability to demonstrate proficiency in achieving the course standards will be used to determine final grades. See rubrics and scoring scales for criteria used in the scoring process.

2. Achievement evidence collected within each grading category:

- Civic Participation: will constitute the 10% weight of the semester grade. Ability to meet deadlines, completion of assignments as directed and participation in various in-class activities including debates and simulations will be considered for this category.
- Content Strands: Each content strand (unit) will include open note short assessments that are guided by the reading, 1-2 assignments or activities where students will engage with content and build skills including discussions and analytic writing and a unit summative assessment with AP style multiple choice and a free response question. There will also be a comprehensive semester final assessment.
 - Foundations of American Democracy = 20%
 - Political Ideology & Participation = 25%
 - Interactions Among Branches of Gov't = 30%
 - Civil Rights & Civil Liberties = 15%
- Research-based Projects: per the College Board, students will be engaged in a variety of projects/tasks that are research based through the Project Based Learning approach.

3. Grading scale:

Letter Mark	AERIES Final Grade Percent Scale	Letter Mark	AERIES Final Grade Percent Scale
A	92.5 and above	C	72.5-77.49
A-	90-92.49	C-	70-72.49
B+	87.5-89.99	D+	67.5-69.99
B	82.5-87.49	D	62.5-67.49
B-	80-82.49	D-	60-62.49
C+	77.5-79.99	F	59.99 and below

This scale will also be for:

- raw score grading of assignments and exams
- when raw scores are scaled into performance levels
- Unit exam raw scores will be converted into a 5-point scale.
- performance level scores are derived from rubrics

4. **Homework/outside of class practices** ([AR 6154](#)):

Students are expected to participate in class by bringing completed work, joining in discussions and simulations, and completing in-class assignments. Students must be prepared, and collaborate in class activities, Project Based Learning requires active and engaged collaboration. Students will have homework assignments that include reading, written applications, and studying for assessments. Some assignments and in-class activities will require homework preparation beyond nightly reading and writing expectations.

5. **Excused absence make up practices** ([Education Code 48205\(b\)](#)):

It is the student's responsibility to check Canvas and their email and to speak with their teacher before they return (when appropriate) to arrange any make-up work. Students who miss a major Content Strand assessment must make it up the day they return to school.

6. **Academic integrity violation practices** ([MVHS Academic Integrity Policy](#)):

Students will regularly be expected to collaborate in this course to earn full Civic Participation credit. These instances of instructor led collaboration will not be considered violations of Academic Integrity. Teachers will create structured collaboration opportunities in-class and through digital platforms. The assessments and assignments provided will assume student access to many resources at home including those resources provided by the teachers. Assessments and assignments will be structured to help students harness those resources in demonstrating understanding of course content and skills. Students can be expected to use tools such as Turnitin.com to demonstrate the integrity of their work. Students are reminded that coursework is to be their own original product. Use of outside tools that generate or alter work meant to be created by the student, including AI, is not permitted unless expressly noted otherwise by the teacher.

7. **Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use:**

By default, GenAI is not to be used on assignments or assessments. If/when GenAI is allowed, the teacher will explain the level and type of GenAI use permitted for that assignment. Using GenAI in a way that does not follow the assignment directions, turning in AI-generated work as your own, or not disclosing GenAI use when required may be considered an academic integrity violation.

8. **Late work practices:**

Completing work on time is highly recommended, as it allows students to reinforce content knowledge and practice skills in class, and for the teacher to provide better feedback. The result is increased learning and higher grades.

Students will receive a unit calendar with major due dates and each assignment will have a due date posted. All assignments must be submitted within one week from the original due date in order to receive credit. All work must be submitted prior to the start of final exams.

9. **Revision and reassessment practices:**

Students are encouraged to take advantage of revision and reassessment opportunities.

Revision practices: Because making and correcting mistakes is part of any learning process, students are encouraged to keep working all semester on their content and skill proficiency. To capture student improvement over the course of the semester, the final exam provides a chance to demonstrate greater proficiency and raise grades for the multiple choice portion of summative assessments. For written assignments, including FRQs, students will have the opportunity to retake or revise written work. Grades for retakes/revisions of written work will replace the original score regardless of outcome.

10. Extra credit practices:

There is no extra credit in this course.

11. Additional grading practices:

Students will regularly do work with a team in a group work assignment, but each student will only be graded for the part of the assignment in which they are able to demonstrate individual work.

12. LMS Used: Canvas

Instructors' email addresses:

Felitia Hancock: felitia.hancock@mvla.net

Paul McHenry: paul.mchenry@mvla.net

Additional information:

Students will find success in the course if they maintain regular communication with the teachers about any extenuating circumstances that may impact their ability to be in-class, to participate and to complete their work successfully. The class is a partnership between students and teachers and communication is key to a successful partnership.

The use of devices in class will ***only*** occur for specific assignments and activities. Unless a student has an accommodation through a 504 or IEP plan, all students are expected to take notes using paper and a writing utensil. While all class materials will be posted to Canvas, students may only access those materials on their devices in class when explicitly directed or permitted to do so. Therefore, it is recommended that all students maintain a binder or notebook for their notes and handouts.

Academic Integrity: Students are reminded that coursework is to be their own original product unless expressly noted otherwise by the teacher. Inappropriate use of AI tools will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. It is critical for students and parents to understand that AI tools may not be used to complete an assignment unless they are explicitly told to do so.

Citations: Along with other resources, if AI tools are used, they should be cited.

All course materials and information will be distributed through [Canvas](#). This includes the unit calendars, assignments and activities with due dates, the exception is weekly assessments which will always be done on paper in-class. **It is expected that students will access Canvas and emails everyday to stay up to date on the course, particularly when they are absent.** Parents/Guardians may also access Canvas to guide students. Please see information regarding this on the [MVLA website](#).

Students are encouraged to collaborate with each other to support their learning and are reminded that their course grade is based on their individual progress and work. In addition, they should reach out to their teachers and schedule time to get help as needed.