

U.S. Government
Instructor: Mrs. Petersen (she/her)
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D3
Extension: x40147

Welcome to U.S. Government! I am very much looking forward to an interesting and productive year. I have been teaching at Cibola since 2000, and have taught World History, Economics, AP World History, AP Government, U.S. Government, American Humanities, New Mexico History, AP Seminar and French I. Prior to living in New Mexico, I worked in the Alief Independent School District outside Houston, teaching Social Studies. I have a MA in Political Science and a BA in Political Science and French from Binghamton University in New York State. I have 2 kids of my own, both in college, so I understand a parent's desire for their child to be valued and to be successful in every class.

Below are the general policies of the course. I know it is a lot. While reading them, bear in mind that I have good reasons for the policies I have implemented, but I also know that sometimes difficult or unexpected circumstances can affect a student's ability to be successful. Above all I strive to treat students reasonably and fairly. If your student is struggling, please communicate with me so we can work together to help them succeed.

Controversial Topics

In our politically polarized society, social studies teachers frequently come under fire, especially teachers of government/civics. Please know that I am dedicated to teaching students how to think, but not what to think. I prioritize the accurate teaching of social studies, which may include areas of scholarly consensus and disagreement. Students explore issues through both primary and secondary sources. They develop their own perspectives, which are often differences of degree rather than binary choices, by evaluating and synthesizing the evidence. I try to present multiple perspectives in a way that people who hold those perspectives would consider fair. I hope to model good citizenship by listening to the perspectives of people who disagree and responding respectfully. Students are encouraged to weigh evidence and come to their own position based on which evidence they think is stronger, rather than taking cues from me. Students are graded on how well they synthesize and evaluate evidence, rather than which conclusion they choose. The government standards address issues of discrimination and civil rights, access to power, voting and elections, civil liberties, media, and ideology. These are often discussed in the context of demographic groups, both powerful and marginalized, majority and minority. I value student feedback and am willing to listen to and carefully consider student reactions to the curriculum.

Academic Integrity and use of A.I.

Academic integrity is the foundation of our learning community at Cibola High School. In this course, you are expected to submit work that represents your own authentic voice, effort, and original thinking. Engaging in prohibited activities, such as plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration (aka copying, splitting up the work), or the unauthorized use of Generative AI, is unacceptable, and you will be held accountable for any such actions. If there are questions about the authenticity or source of the ideas in your work, you may be asked to provide examples of your drafting process (such as version histories or notes) or to orally explain your reasoning. Additionally, I reserve the right to ask students to explain reasoning or provide oral responses for any work done outside of class as an integrity check. All violations will be logged in your Synergy record and handled in accordance with the Cibola High School Academic Integrity Policy. Consequences will vary based on the severity and number of violations, but could include student-teacher conference, parent contact, re-doing the assignment under supervision during teacher officer hours, loss of assignment credit and referral to administration.

Please assume you are not to use generative AI or "to google" answers on any assignment unless expressly given permission to do so, with specific parameters.

Class Format

Lecture/Notes: Since post-secondary courses are often lecture-based, lectures will comprise a substantial portion of the course. Outlines/topic headings will be provided, but students are expected to incorporate explanations, examples and definitions into their own notes to develop listening and summarizing skills. Research also indicates that note-taking, especially handwritten notes, is associated with greater retention/comprehension of content. Students should keep their notes chronologically in a notebook for easy reference. Notes may be evaluated as part of developing key academic skills.

Bellringers: Bellringers/warm-ups will be given most days during the 1st 5-10 minutes of class. They may vary from "info dump", quizzes, current events, writing for understanding, skill practice etc. These may be graded. Bellringers can only be made up in person during office hours (usually before school)

Homework/classwork: Typically, homework is simply finishing up class work and should take no more than 20-30 minutes max. If no class time is given for an assignment, students will usually get more than one night to complete it.

Projects: Some assessment will be done through projects completed in class, at home, or both. I will often allow a choice of project, as well as individual/group formats.

Exams: Exams will generally be given at the end of a unit and are multiple choice and/or short essay. Notes may not be used on exams (unless specified by an IEP). If students are unhappy with an exam grade, they may re-take it IF they schedule/attend a tutoring session and provide a completed study guide. Exam retakes must be completed within 10 days of the original test.

Final: The final will be weighted 20%. It will either be a project or a cumulative, multiple choice test. If it is an exam, a review sheet will be given in advance. Final exams do not have re-takes.

Supplies

I buy markers, colored pencils, etc., as well as the first few units of tissues, paper, etc. If school supplies are straining your finances, please send me an email, and I'll take care of your student, no questions asked.

- Notebook with pockets OR 1 inch binder: Students keep all course materials organized in a single notebook which may be collected periodically for grading of assignments. Bring them to class each day.
- Pen/pencil/eraser
- Chromebook, fully charged, AND the charger (we won't use these every day, but students are supposed to have them)
- One thing for the classroom---*pretty pretty please!!* Tissues and paper towels are appreciated.

Highlighters, index cards, whiteout, colored pens etc, as students prefer.

Grades

I follow APS' grade policy (ex. $\geq 90\%$ =A)

Grades will have weighted categories as follows: Major grade (tests/quizzes/major projects)=40%; Daily work (classwork & homework)=30%; Warm-ups (bellringer/current events and mini-quizzes)=20%; notes/notebook checks/participation grades=10%

Semester grade =Course grade (80%) + Final (20%)

Make-up work

Homework/Daily work philosophy:

I believe that classwork and daily work is practice - we are developing our knowledge and skills; therefore, *students can redo any question they legitimately attempted on time for full credit within 1 week* of the day we graded it in class. Corrections are not available for late work or make-up work.

Absences: Please encourage your child to attend school every day. Not only is it the primary factor in determining a student's success in this class, it also affects the types of lessons I can do. If I can't count on students showing up, I cannot do collaborative assignments, simulations, debates etc., Ultimately the instructor and the other students have to help bridge the gap of missed instruction. APS policy is that students get one day for every day absent to complete work. Students who miss more than 2 weeks of class may be asked to have a conference to determine an appropriate schedule for completing missed work.

Submitting makeup assignments: Most fact/content based assignments are peer-graded in class. If a student returns with makeup work, they should ask a peer to do the initial grading using their own corrected paper as a guide. One that is done, the student submits it to me for review. Skill based makeup work (ex. essays, projects, posters etc.) should be submitted in the basket. Cheating is pretty common with makeup work, so I reserve the right to ask students to explain their answers or how they arrived at them. Students get 1 day for every day they missed to get work in. Occasionally students may have to complete makeup assignments in-person during office hours.

Late assignments: If there are extenuating circumstances, please talk to me. Otherwise the late work policy is:

- Students can turn in 3 daily/class/homework assignments up to 1 week late with no penalty (attach one of the favor passes issued in week 1).
- More than 1 week late or any late assignment without a favor pass) - 20% penalty (up to 1 month late or the 9wks grade, whichever is first)
- After 1 month or 9wks grade, assignments will receive 50% credit.
- students submitting late work may be asked to defend their work orally by providing information on the assignment or explaining reasoning etc. to ensure that they completed the work themselves (since other students will have the correct responses by then)

Long-term assignments: For a major long term assignment (projects etc.), students who are absent on the due date may be assessed late penalties, even if the absence was excused. If there is an emergency which prevents the student from being able to deliver the assignment on time, a parent must call or email me on or before the deadline. Students will be made aware of those assignments which fall into this category.

Exams: Missed exams must be made up within 1 week of the absence or the end of the grading period, whichever comes first. Exams can be made up during office hours.

Behavior Norms

Students are expected to respect themselves, me, each other, the classroom environment, and their learning process. Violations can result in student/teacher conference, parent phone call, lunch detention and office referral for repeat offenders.

Phones

Cell phones can be disruptive and discourage social connections from forming in the classroom. In my experience, when students can easily access them, they have difficulty self-regulating that behavior. I will enforce the school's cell phone policy. When entering, students will turn off their phones and place them in the cell phone holder that corresponds to their assigned #, to be

retrieved at the end of class. If your student doesn't have a cell phone for whatever reason, please email me to let me know. Note, if a student lies and says they do not have a phone or refuses to put it into the pocket or puts a decoy phone in the pocket, they are essentially waiving their first warning. If they can keep it in their backpack and never touch it/use it in class, then there is no issue. If they forget and take out their phone, or if it goes off, they move straight to a second offense/defiance. Chromebooks may be out ONLY if specific assignments require them, or if students have accommodations for their use in note-taking in class.

- if there are special circumstances where a student needs access to their phone, they have to tell me before class, and an exception can be made, as long as it isn't used inappropriately..
- Students with health accommodations can keep their phone on their person as long as it isn't used inappropriately.

Communication

Email: petersen_w@aps.edu (preferred)

Phone: 505.897.0110 ext: 40147

(please allow 48 hrs)

For students: Remind.com Class codes posted on google classroom, in class, and on my website.

3rd=@gd6e9h

4th=@8aahdbk

Google classroom: 3rd=qb5v37z4

4th=gjkynksu

Google classroom will be used primarily to store assignments for makeup work, or occasionally to access materials for homework, or for assignments using online platforms. Unless otherwise specified, students receive their work in-person and will submit work the same way. Almost all work in this class will be completed on paper and handwritten, since all research indicates that is better for learning. Do not assume all assignments are posted on google classroom or that you can submit assignments on google classroom without prior approval.

If you need accommodations or have particular medical or family circumstances which might affect your success, PLEASE communicate with me so we can determine appropriate support!

Policies and procedures may need to be updated mid-year as circumstances warrant. If so, parents and students will be notified in writing via email.

UNIT I CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS (approx. 5 weeks)

Historical/Philosophical Context

- Explain the various types of political systems, including advantages and disadvantages.
- Analyze what democracy means and how it is manifested in the American political context
- Analyze the historical and philosophical sources of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence
- Analyze how the Constitution remedied weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation
- Analyze the arguments for and against ratification
- Explain the processes by which the Constitution is changed
- Explain Constitutional principles like checks and balances, separation of powers etc.

Federalism

- Define and explain the characteristics of federalism

- Analyze the relationship between the federal government and the states, especially with respect to commerce clause
- Analyze the pros and cons of federalism

Bill of Rights

- Trace the development of certain key civil rights and liberties through relevant case law, evaluate examples where rights can conflict, and analyze how rights protect Americans.

UNIT II POLITICAL PROCESSES (approx.. 5 weeks)

Political Culture/Ideology

- Discuss elements and origins of American political culture
- Describe how public opinion is assessed
- Evaluate the forces affecting the socialization process
- Describe basic beliefs/demographics of Democrats and Republicans; liberals and conservatives
- Evaluate the relationship between public opinion and policymaking
- Analyze voting patterns and behavior

Political Parties

- Explain the origins of both major and minor political parties in the U.S.
- Describe the features, functions and differences of the major political parties
- Assess the role and importance of parties in elections, governance and policymaking
- Evaluate the importance of third parties in the American political system

Campaigns and Elections

- Analyze the factors affecting success or failure in modern campaigns
- Analyze the function of elections in a democratic system
- Analyze the role of money in elections and evaluate the effectiveness of current campaign finance regulations
- Describe the electoral process (for Congressional, Senate and Presidential elections), including nomination systems (and their pros/cons), and the electoral college

Mass Media and Interest Groups

- Define interest groups, and evaluate their tactics in policymaking
- Analyze the function of media and interest groups (including PACs) in a democratic system
- Evaluate the relationship between politics and the media (how they affect each other)

UNIT III: Political Institutions (approx.. 6 weeks)

Legislative Branch (Congress)

- Leadership and organization
- Powers/lawmaking process
- Norms and informal rules
- Benefits of incumbency
- Theories of representation (substantive/descriptive; delegate/trustee)
- Reapportionment/redistricting and gerrymandering.

Executive Branch

- Describe the constitutional basis of presidential power (terms, qualifications, powers)
- Describe the president's informal powers analyze reasons for their expansion
- List and explain the roles of the president's advisers, including the Executive Office and the White House staff
- Discuss relations between President and Congress, including the War Powers resolution
- Describe the characteristics of bureaucracies and analyze their pros and cons.
- List and explain the functions of the major types of executive branch organizations, including government departments, government corporations, and independent agencies and regulatory agencies.

Judicial Branch

- Structure and jurisdiction of federal and state courts
- Nomination/confirmation process for selection of federal judges
- Process by which the Supreme Court selects and decides a case
- Limitations of Supreme Court power
- Role of common law/precedent in American legal system

Please sign and return by 8/17/26

I have read and understand the policies as stated in the above syllabus for Government 2026-27

STUDENT NAME (PRINT)

STUDENT SIGNATURE

PARENT NAME (PRINT)

PARENT SIGNATURE