# Advanced Placement **American Government & Politics**

Instructor: Mr. Kevin Comtois Email Addresses: [kcomtois@ndatyngsboro.org](mailto:kcomtois@ndatyngsboro.org)

[kevin@kevincomtois.com](mailto:kevin@kevincomtois.com)

***Description:*** Advanced Placement United States Government

Grade: 12 / Full Year

This course is for the motivated student who is interested in studying the government and politics of the United States in depth and in understanding the ins and outs of the American electoral process. As we prepare for the AP Examination offered by the College Board in May, you will hone your critical writing and reading skills (newspapers, magazines, Supreme Court decisions, and ‘Think Tank’ research papers) along with your ability to interpret charts and graphs, identify relevant information, and develop criteria for evaluating an array of information. It is designed to provide students with the analytical and factual knowledge necessary to deal critically with problems in, and the materials of, American government. This course is a survey of the structure and operations of the federal government as well as state governments. It will consider the relationship of the three branches of the federal government to each other and to state governments. U.S. and state constitutions and their interpretations will be discussed. Emphasis will be given to American political traditions, parties, processes and a range of governmental policies.

***Required Texts:***

1. Thomas E. Patterson, We the People: An Introduction to American Government, 12th Edition 2017
2. Ann G. Serow, et al, editors, The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity, Sixth Edition, 2016

***Additional Materials***: a) Three ringed binder for notes, tests and class materials

b) Blank lined paper for binder

c) AP US Government Test Prep Book (any publisher)

Please Note:

Class notes and discussions will be an integral part of preparation for the AP Exam.

Other articles and information may be added to the curriculum and will be available on the website: www.kevincomtois.com

***Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives:***

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

* Describe and compare important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to US Government and politics
* Explain typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences
* Interpret basic data relevant to US Government and politics (including charts, tables and other formats)
* Critically analyze relevant theories and concepts, apply them appropriately and develop their connections across the curriculum

Topics:

1. The Constitution, Federalism, the Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances
2. Political Beliefs, Ideology and Political Participation
3. Political parties, Interest Groups and Mass Media
4. Institutions of National, State and Local Governments
5. Civil Rights, Civil Liberties and the Supreme Court
6. Public policy/Foreign policy development and implementation

***Teaching Procedures:***

This course is structured around a complete examination of America’s democratic republic. Because participation is an essential element to any form of democracy, participation in every class is required. Before each class, students should have read each chapter and/or any other material assigned for that day. Each class will begin with a number of terms and questions that are available on that directly relate to the assigned readings. The class will together discuss the meaning of the terms and answer the questions. Students will be expected to participate in the class discussions by asking questions and expressing observations about the material at hand (and in the text). The instructor will make sure the discussion stays focused on the subject of the day. Students are required to take detailed notes.

Questions from students are encouraged in order to stimulate independent thinking about how this material relates to current American government and politics.

***Instructional Methodologies:***

**Exams:** 40%

Multiple choice, matching and essay questions based on a particular chapter of the text, various readings, lectures, and discussion questions

**Homework**: 30%

Home work will be checked periodically through the course, see schedule for home work

**Quizzes:** 30%

Weekly quizzes based on the reading assignments

**Late Policy:** An assignment that is late loses 10 points (out of a hundred) for each class day that the assignment is late. If an assignment is turned at the end of the day (instead of in class) the assignment will lose 5 points.

**Class Participation:**  Class notes and discussions will be an integral part of the exams. Students must attend class. It is the student’s responsibility to obtain any missed notes due to an absence.

**Make- Up Policy:**A missed test is to be replaced by a make-up exam or a 10 - 12 page paper (method of make-up and subject of paper to be determined by instructor). It is each student’s responsibility to contact the instructor to schedule the makeup exam or to receive the essay topic and due dates.

**Student Accountability***:* Cheating on tests or plagiarism on essays will not be tolerated. If any student is caught cheating they will immediately fail the exam or quiz and may be reported to the proper school authorities.