# 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)

d) Approximately 75 5x7 case cards

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
* Interpret, compare and contrast the following fundamental documents:

*The Articles of Confederation*

*The Declaration of Independence*:

*Federalist No. 10*

*Federalist No. 51*

*Federalist No. 70*

*Federalist No. 78*

*Brutus No. 1*

*The Constitution of the United States/Bill of Rights & Amendments*:

*Letter from a Birmingham Jail*

* Describe the facts, constitutional questions/answers and impact of the following Supreme Court Cases. Cases may be added throughout the year. **CIVIL LIBERTIES** (except where marked)

Baker v Carr 1961

Brandenburg v. Ohio 1969

Bowers v Hardwick 1986

Burwell v Hobby Lobby 2014

Citizens United v FEC 2010

D.C. v. Heller 2008

Employment Div. v Smith 1990

Engle v. Vitale 1962

*\*Gibbons v Ogden 1824*

Gitlow v. New York 1925

Griswold v. CT 1965

Gideon v Wainwright 1963

Gonzalas v Carhart 2007

Hamdi v. Rumsfeld 2004

Hamdan v. Rumsfeld 2006

Korematsu v US 1944

Johnson v Zerbst 1938

Lawrence v Texas 2003

Lemon v Kurtzman 1971

Mapp v. Ohio 1961

*\*Marbury v Madison 1803*

McCreary County v. ACLU 2005

*\*McCulloch v Maryland 1819*

McDonald v Chicago 2010

Miller v California 1973

\*non-Civil Liberties Cases

Miranda v Arizona 1966

Missouri v Siebert 2004

Near v MN 1931

New York Times v US 1971

New York Times v Sullivan 1964

Nix v Williams 1984

Panetti v Quarterman 2007

Planned Parenthood v Casey 1992

Riley v CA 2014

Roe v Wade 1973

Schenk v US 1919

Shaw v Reno 1993

Snyder v Phelps 2011

Texas v Johnson 1989

Tinker v Des Moines School 1969

United States v Leon 1984

United States v Lopez 1995

Van Orden v Perry 2005

Whren v US 1996

Witherspoon v IL 1968

Weeks v US 1914

Zelman v Simmons-Harris 2002

**CIVIL RIGHTS**

Adarand v Pena 1995

Brown v. Board of Education 1954

Craig v Boren 1976

Dred Scott v Sanford 1854

Fischer v U of TX 2016

Gratz v Bollinger 2003

Grutter v Bollinger 2003

Lau v Nichols 1974

League of United Latin American Voters v Perry 2006

Lawrence v Texas 2003

Loving v Virginia 1967

Obergefell v Hodges 2015

Plessy v Ferguson 1896

Ricci v DeStafano 2009

Romer v Evans 1996

Rostker v Goldberg 1980

Shelby County v Holder 2013

Schuett v Coalition 2014

Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Board of Education 1971

University of CA v Bakke 1978

United States v Virginia 1996

Wisconsin v Yoder 1972

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 copious notes.

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

**Assessments:**

**Exams:** 40%

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

**Homework/Classwork**: 30%

Home work will be collected and/or checked periodically through the course, see schedule

**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.