AP Government and Politics Letter

AP Government and Politics is a one-year elective course open only to students in their senior year. As with all Advanced Placement classes, this is a college-level course in terms of homework, material covered, and expectations. Students should expect regular reading assignments and assessments that include multiple-choice exams, in-class essays, legal research papers, and graded discussions. Like all AP classes, AP Government is a weighted course in terms of grade point average.

At the end of the year students have the option of taking a standardized exam; satisfactory performance in that exam is recognized by most universities with either college credit or the satisfaction of graduation requirements. In addition, colleges and universities see enrollment in AP courses as an indication of academic ability and commitment when making enrollment decisions. Lastly, it is a course that is designed to give students a strong sense for what their first year of college will be like in terms of topics, discussions, and readings.

Students do not have to have been previously enrolled in an AP course to take AP Government. In fact, AP Government is the only AP class for roughly a third of this year’s students.

Content of the course includes:

- Daily current events discussions focusing on national and international politics.
- The use of formal logic in examining modern debates and the avoidance of fallacies.
- An examination of political philosophy ranging from Aristotelian and Plato to Locke and Hobbes.
- The debates of the founding fathers and how those discussions created a system that was purposely complicated and inefficient.
- The emergence of federalism and how it has come to play a role in everything from gun control to gay marriage.
- An analysis of civil rights and civil liberties that includes a discussion of student rights, rights of the accused and other hot-button legal issues.
- The importance of the US Supreme Court, including an examination of judicial philosophy. As part of the course students will be participating in a simulation of a supreme court case that will include writing legal briefs (for students who take the role of attorneys), oral arguments, and crafting legal decisions (for students who take the role of judges). Students will receive guidance on the simulation from attorneys who have argued cases before the nation’s highest court.
- The role that the media plays in modern elections will be examined. As part of that unit students will be simulating a campaign crisis and its ensuing “spin. The students’ subsequent strategies for handling the campaign crisis will be judged by professional political consultants and journalists who will be visiting the class.
- A history of political campaigning that will look at past campaign strategies, negative ads, and the mistakes that have ruined many a presidential campaign.

In short, this is a class that offers students the opportunity to understand their world at a deeper level, to get ready for college early, and to win a lot more arguments around the dinner table.

How do you get into AP Government?

To get into AP Government is a two-step process. The first is that students forecast for the class as part of the normal forecasting process. The second step is for the student and a parent or guardian to sign this letter and then turn it in to the student’s current social studies teacher by February 28.

If we have concerns about a student’s qualifications they will be notified in mid March. The student can later change their forecasting plan or opt to remain forecasted for the class. Some students have found success in the course despite a less-than-sterling academic past while others have not. So again, to enroll in AP Government is a two-step process: 1) forecast for the class as you would any other course. 2) sign this letter and give it to the student’s current Social Studies teacher by February 28.

Student’s name ____________________________

Student’s Signature ____________________________

Parent’s Signature ____________________________