

AP US Government & Politics

Ribét Academy – Rm. 502

Office Hours: M-F 7:30-8:00 AM & by appointment

Mrs. Jamie Martin

jmartin@ribetacademy.com

www.martinsocialstudies.com

The course will serve the multi-faceted needs of Ribét Academy's students. The main practical goal of the course is for students to be well prepared for the AP examination in the spring. Given the difficulty of the test and its comprehensive nature of material, students will be responsible for knowing factual information, but, given that the exam includes essays, students will also need to be able to manipulate those facts using critical thinking and higher order cognitive functions (such as making predictions, connecting different time periods, etc.) in order to be able to achieve high preparation for the test. Of course, the class serves more than a simple vehicle towards the AP test, but will also serve to help students make connections between the political theories and real life events. Therefore, broad themes such as economics, race, war and peace and other such eternal issues that are relevant today will be examined throughout the course and will be connected to students' lives, particularly in collaborative assignments and the reading of articles.

The course will be based on the expertise of the teacher through lectures that will be based on student-teacher dialogue as opposed to straight delivery of information. Students will be encouraged to learn and teach through work in small groups and the presentation of material in formal presentations made to the class using PowerPoint or other creative methods such as film, games, etc.

All curriculum and assessments are designed to implement and reinforce Ribét Academy's **Expected School-wide Learning Results (ESLRs)**. It is the mission of Ribét Academy to empower and enable all students, regardless of age, ability, or background, to become **enthusiastic life-long learners, creative problem solvers, and effective communicators**.

Texts

Students are required to **purchase** the textbook for this class, **Government in America** (Edwards) (ISBN: 978-0-20-0566289-0), as well as the accompanying study guide for the text. (ISBN: 978-0-20-568436-6).

Students are also advised to purchase at least one AP Exam preparation guide or set of materials, such as Barron's *AP U.S. Government and Politics*. The instructor has copies for loan if students would prefer to borrow such materials instead of purchasing them.

Additional Readings and Texts:

Select Articles from: *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Harvard International Review* (for foreign affairs articles).

Excerpts from: Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, de Montesquieu, de Tocqueville, Paine, Jefferson, Douglass, du Bois, Chomsky.

Data from the Council on Economic Affairs, House & Senate Budget Committees, Gallup and other polling results.

Documents including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, key political speeches ("Cross of Gold," "Military-Industrial Complex," etc.), voting pamphlets and registration forms, political party platforms.

AP Essay questions and other support materials and articles from the College Board.

Course Objectives

Students will:

- Pass the AP test with at least a "3"
- Use higher order thinking and apply it to material covered in class, including comparing and contrasting, making predictions, summarizing, making evaluations, analyzing from different perspectives.
- Work in groups on collaborative projects, which will include problem-solving activities and presentations using appropriate technology (video, PowerPoint, etc.)

- Identify broad governmental themes such as the role of the media, development of political parties and their functions, federalism, the role of money in a democracy, etc. and how through these phenomena affect the way that our government functions.
- Be able to use quantitative and qualitative data in order to support arguments made in essays and in verbal discussion.
- Improve writing capability, especially essays.
- Analyze and interpret current events in the context of governmental theory and policy. Students will be responsible for keeping abreast of current issues, as well as discussing these issues in a "blog" format shared with other students.

Course Schedule (Each section covers 1-2 week's time):

I. Introduction to Course; Government in America

- a. Students will learn about theories of democracy and the limits that are placed on the pure ideal of this practice. Students will be introduced to the concept of scope of government in American, since it will be a key reoccurring theme throughout the course.

II. The Constitution

- a. Students will understand the origins of the U.S. Constitution against the backdrop of the failed Articles of Confederation. They will focus on the issue of compromise as a key feature of the American system. Finally, a clear understanding of the Constitution itself will be achieved through analysis of the actual living text and its connection to the present.

III. Federalism

- a. Students will understand the concept of federalism and will learn about its manifestations both historically and today. Students will be asked to consider in what ways federalism affects them as well as to discover how federalism tends to be a cooperative, if at times conflicting, system.

IV. Civil Liberties and Public Policy

- a. Students will gain knowledge on the evolution of civil liberties starting with the Bill of Rights and continuing through today with such controversial issues as the PATRIOT Act, gun control, hate speech, etc.

V. Racial and Gender Equality

- a. Students will deal with the expansive nature of the American civil rights movements and will learn both about formal discrimination at the governmental level in the past, but also about enduring social discrimination through the formation of policy on wealth distribution, educational expenditures, and the controversial issue of same-sex marriage and military service.

VI. Public Opinion

- a. Students will learn about public opinion, its origin through political socialization and the specific ways that government takes public opinion into account, including polling. The labels of conservative and liberal will be dealt with. A key feature of this section will be to empower students by having them learn about the ways that they can participate in politics.

VII. Mass Media

- a. Students will learn about the mass media in its different forms. They will study such issues such as the rise of cable news channels, the differences between the print and broadcast media, government regulation of the media and the different strategies that the media uses to present information.

VIII. Political Parties

- a. Students will learn about the origins of political parties in the United States. They will also learn the different party eras of American history. The basic functions of parties will be covered as well as their organizational types. Students will learn about political party platforms and will analyze these critically. Key importance will be given to the 3rd party and its role in society at key moments in our nation's political development.

IX. Nominations and Campaigns

- a. Students will learn about how a person can run for office and the difficulties that this presents for the average person. Particular attention will be paid to campaign finance and their role in political nominations and campaigns. Students will learn about primaries and caucuses and how these function.

X. Elections and Voting Behavior

- a. Students will learn about the behavior of the American voter. Issues such as voter turnout, party identification and who votes will be covered in class. The issue of the Electoral College and its role in elections will be addressed.
- b. Students will analyze and interpret polling data, as well as create their own polling questions to better understand the challenge of obtaining accurate and true representation of public opinion.

XI. Interest Groups

- a. Students will gain expertise on the issue of interest groups starting with a theoretical foundation of the ideas of pluralism. Students will learn about the different types of interest groups and what their roles are in our society. They will learn about the different ways that these groups try to affect government, including lobbying, affecting political campaigns and court actions. Students will be required to evaluate the role of the interest group in a vibrant democracy.

XII. Congress

- a. Students will learn about the composition and function of this branch of the federal government and will link this new knowledge to previous information on elections and political parties. Special attention will be placed on the idea of incumbency and the limits its places on democratic change. Students will evaluate Congressional bicameralism. Additionally, in view of students' future possibilities in the work force, the informal mechanism of Congress will be covered in class, including potential starting careers as interns and staffers.

XIII. The Presidency

- a. Students will learn about the evolving role of the president in the nation over time, particularly in regards to the expansion of presidential power. They will learn about the structure of the presidential administration and its key role in the formulation of national security and foreign policy. Students will understand the different roles that the president needs to play in society, such as commander-in-chief and America's main representative with foreign countries. Students will learn about the president's interaction with Congress and will evaluate the role of the veto in American public life. Students will link new information to previous information such as knowledge about elections, public opinion, polling, etc.

XIV. The Budget and National Finance

- a. Students will learn about how government finances itself through the creation of a budget based on revenue and expenditures, the founts of which are taxation and borrowing. They will learn about the concept of the national security and social service state and will debate "guns vs. butter" issues as well as evaluate America's budgetary policies.
- b. Students will analyze and interpret recent budgetary decisions made by Congress and the President, and predict where the budget shortfalls and surpluses may lie.

XV. Federal Bureaucracy

- a. Students will learn about the entrenched federal bureaucracy that provides a modicum of stability during changes in administrations. They will learn about the different roles that bureaucracies play in our society (implementers and regulators). They will learn specifics about government agencies and special attention will be paid to career possibilities in government in these agencies.

XVI. The Courts

- a. Students will learn about the federal court system and its different levels. The ways in which judges are appointed will be covered in the class. Students will learn about key Supreme Court cases and the role that the court has played not only in interpreting laws, but also in "legislating from the bench." Special attention will be placed on the scope of the federal court system and students will evaluate as to how democratic the federal court system actually is due to its policy setting agenda despite the fact that the courts are not composed of representatives of the people (in the sense that they are not directly elected by the people).

XVII. Economic Policymaking

- a. Students will learn about the role that government has in regulating (or not regulating) the American economy. They will understand the dual nature of that policy and will make a stand for either regulation or more laissez-faire deregulation in the government-national economy relationship. They will learn specific instances of where economic change has brought about changes in administrations and congressional political party representation. Students will learn that the federal government also sets the agenda for international trade. Special attention will be paid to the role of international economic commitments and their apparent reduction of state sovereignty. Students will be asked to evaluate this process. A section of the unit will specifically cover monetary and fiscal policy as well the Federal Reserve System.

XVIII. Social Welfare Policymaking

- a. Students will learn the specifics as to what it means to be rich, middle-class and poor in America. They will understand the redistributive policies that the federal government has undertaken over the years to ameliorate the plight of the poor. They will evaluate the role of welfare in our society and will make judgments on the future of social policy given increased social spending, especially on social security, health care and the environment.

XIX. National Security Policymaking

- a. Students will learn about the government's agencies and the role they play in keeping America safe. Special attention will be paid to new agencies that have arisen in the last few years to deal with these issues, such as the Department of Homeland Security. Students will learn about how the different agencies and branches of government cooperate in order to formulate foreign policy and national security priorities. They will learn about interagency rivalry and the limits it has placed on governmental actions. Students will evaluate defense spending and the global role that America has played since WWII. As with previous sections, students will learn about career opportunities in the national security agencies.

XX. State and Local Governments

- a. Students will learn about the composition and functions of state and local governments and their role in preserving a local-state-federal balance through the delegation of powers throughout the different levels of power. Students will learn about state bureaucratic systems. Students will evaluate federalism and judge if it is an efficient system that promotes democracy.

- XXI. AP Test practice based on Barron's guide, College Board materials, in-class essay and multiple-choice practice, explicit teaching of test-taking strategies including elimination, mastery of several important concepts, etc.

A key part of class will be student-focused simulations. These will relate to course material but will allow students to actively manipulate knowledge in an engaging way. Student preparation for simulations will be critical. The school courtroom will provide a location for the simulations that removes the students from the typical classroom setting in order to provide a more formal environment for the simulations. The simulations will encompass:

Critical Course Reenactment

The choice of the case will be formulated by the instructor together with the students. Roles will be distributed to students according to their strengths and interests. The role of the judicial branch will be highlighted during this simulation. Students will need to familiarize themselves with **original source documents** in order to understand the process at hand.

Cuban Missile Crisis Reenactment

The reenactment will stress the role of the president and his administration in making national security decisions. The reenactment will also teach students about the value and importance of compromise in governmental decision-making.

Congressional Budgetary Reenactment

Students will reenact a congressional discussion on a draft budget. Students will utilize such concepts as pork, committees, drafts, appropriations, and other terminology. The simulations will culminate in a written post-mortem reflection that evaluates group performance during the simulation.

Pollster Reenactment

Students will create and administer polling questions to other students in the high school. Students will then be asked to analyze and interpret the data in order to accurately represent the public opinion of their peers.

Classroom Rules

- Be respectful of others' views. We will be debating things frequently, and there are going to be several times where you will not agree with what is being said. Wait your turn, and prepare your argument. When it is your turn, we will be happy to listen to what you have to say, but if you consistently call out or become disrespectful you will be asked to refrain from commenting any further.
- Be on time. If you are late, you will lose out on participation credit for the day. **If you are absent and/or tardy (unexcused) more than 10 times in one semester, I reserve the right to fail you for the course.**
- Bring supplies with you to class. This is an upper-level class, and I expect that you will have learned by now what is needed in a classroom. Books should be brought every day unless otherwise specified.
- **No iPods, cell phones, or any electronic/noise-making devices are to be permitted in the classroom.**
- **Plagiarism** is not accepted in any way, shape, or form. Consequences for cheating are laid out in the Handbook, and it will earn you an F in my class, not to mention some pretty severe consequences from the school. It's really not worth it. **If I suspect cheating and/or plagiarism, I reserve the right to give you a zero for the assignment and may require you to redo it. If it becomes a problem, I WILL fail you for the course. Copying from another source is NOT your work and is NOT acceptable in my class.**

Make-Up Policy

Check the website (www.martinsocialstudies.com) for all assignments/upcoming quizzes! I realize you have other classes and obligations--I'm willing to be flexible. Don't abuse it! (This does not apply to Projects—on those, there is no grace period.)

Make-up exams/quizzes are generally administered the day you return to school from an absence. **It is up to you to come to me and tell me you need to take the make-up exam.** I will not come find you. If you do not take it the day you return, you forfeit the points and take a 0 for the exam. (exceptions only on a case by case basis) You may choose to use a missed quiz as your dropped one. **Make-up work/exams will only be given with a verifiable excuse!** No make-ups will be allowed for truancies or other unapproved absences.

Grading Policy

I grade by percentages and points. There will traditionally be no curves, but I reserve the right to implement one if the situation calls for it. **I often will bump you if you are at a "_9" (79, 89, etc.), but I am not REQUIRED to do so. I bump on a case-by-case basis, and your participation and effort in class is what I will use to decide.** Grades are available through RenWeb, and I try to update it as often as possible. Rubrics will be given for large projects **in advance.**

90.0 – 100% = A

80.0 – 89.9% = B

70.0 – 79.9% = C

60.0 – 69.9% = D

0.00 – 59.9% = F

Tests (20% per quarter)

You will have a Midterm exam and a Final exam (please consult the school calendar for specific dates). Each is worth 20% of your TERM grade. They will be cumulative up until that point in the semester.

Quizzes (30%)

There will be a quiz at the end of each chapter. You will always be given advance notice of a quiz, and we will always try to review in class the day before the quiz. You will be allowed to drop one quiz grade per semester. If you miss a quiz, you can use your "dropped quiz" to replace that grade. **Midterms and finals are NEVER eligible to be dropped. You must take your midterm and final.**

Classwork (20%)

This includes all work done during class (group and individual). Classwork may include reading, research, writing, design of games and other review activities, alternative and contemporary political issue seminars, AP preparation essays and multiple choice practice exams, and much more.

Homework (5%)

Completed study guide (SG) pages (**still in the workbook, DO NOT tear them out**) are due the day of the quiz for that chapter. I will collect them the day of the quiz, and they will be given back to you at the next class meeting. They will be accepted for half credit the next class meeting after the quiz, and then **I will not accept them** after that.

Projects (15%)

You will have several projects in this class. Many will require work outside of class. **Projects must be turned in on the due date, even if you are absent that day.** Dates will be given **far** in advance—there is no excuse to be late! Projects in this class include AP preparation, debates, PowerPoint presentations, participation in History Fair (in applicable years), research & essay writing, and primary source interpretation and analysis.

Participation (10%)

GOOD: Raising your hand, answering questions, asking questions, putting in effort on group projects, following directions, otherwise being ENGAGED in class. **Doing these things gets you POINTS!**

BAD: Using cell phones, doing work for other classes (unless I have given permission to do so), using laptops inappropriately, talking/being a distraction, being late, leaving a mess, disrespecting/abusing the classroom materials, falling asleep, being rude to other classmates and/or me. **Doing these things gets you an unhappy teacher and possibly a trip downstairs to the dean's office.**

