

## Suggestions for Success:

**Desire to Learn:** The most important thing that you can bring to the table (or computer) is a desire to learn. This presupposes that you have by now grasped the importance of knowledge in your life as well as in your chosen career field. We all have two choices in this respect at any moment in our lives ..... right now, we can choose to remain as ignorant as we are at this moment in time or we can choose to be smarter, that is to actively and energetically pursue knowledge. If we choose to be smarter then we can commit ourselves to a life-long pursuit of knowledge and accept the energy and work that make it possible ....in other words, we become devoted to a never ending pursuit of knowledge. If you bring and maintain this devotion to this course, you will succeed!

**Historical Perspective:** This course provides an enduring understanding of the historical evolution that produced the state of affairs in American government today. Have you ever wondered why things are the way they are? Why we have this form of government? Why the ACLU attacks the Church? Why America has gone to war in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century more often than any other nation? The answers to these and thousands of other questions are found in our political history. This course will enable you to understand the development of the political world you live in and to make decisions as an informed citizen. This course will help you to understand yourself, your values, beliefs, and points of view in connection with the American identity. A study of government and political history even helps you to look into the future and make predictions with informed accuracy. In short, knowledge and understanding of our nation's political history builds both a personal and national perspective.

**Current Events:** *Follow currents events daily* to understand the connections between government and contemporary concepts and events, and to broaden your own perspective ....this practice will also serve to increase retention and recall. I recommend a good, objective online source rather than commercialized and politicized broadcast media. The advantage to online news is that you can choose the articles or videos that you prefer and, in our case, your focus should be on government related topics.

**AP Central** Whether or not you intend to take the AP test for American Government and Politics, you would do well to spend a great deal of quality time at the AP Central website. If you follow the advice below, you will not need a textbook.

Google 'AP Central' and navigate the site as follows:

- When the site comes up, click on Course Home Pages.

- Find the chart of all AP courses then select and click *American Government and Politics*.
- On the page that appears, look down to the third section, find the third bullet, *Exam Information and Resources* and then click.
- On the next page scroll down slightly and find the two sections, *Multiple Choice Questions* and *Free-Response Questions*.

When you click on the link to *AP Government and Politics Course Description* you will immediately see the course description for this course. In the first week or two, read and think about the entire document.

You will find sample *multiple-choice* questions. At your own pace, answer three or four questions then check your answers with the scoring key that follows. Do online research to develop understanding and clear insight with anything in the question or the answers that you do not fully comprehend. Be sure you understand the entire scope of the question **and the answers**, even the incorrect ones, before you move on. I will provide you with additional Multiple Choice questions and answers from previous tests.

You will find a chart that offers all of the AP test, free-response essay questions from 1999 to 2012. This is a total of 56 essay questions that together cover the entire compass of American government, past and present. At the beginning of this course study the essay questions with online research. In the second half of October, start taking the tests and scoring your essays with the rubrics provided in the second column of the chart. If you master four of the essays per week, let's say spending less than an hour each day, you will have gained valuable knowledge, understanding, and insight from all 56 questions. Also read the sample essays from the third column of the chart. Combined with regular attention to current events, vocabulary studies, and the class sessions, you will easily make the grade on the AP test. More importantly, you will be qualified to assume the mantle of 'Citizen of the United States' and participate with competence in making our country a better place to be.

**Fabulous Facts in American Government** is a *Video* program with a slide presentation featuring multiple overlaying graphics designed to give the student of politics and government the widest possible view of specific concepts central to an understanding of American government today. After exploring the graphics with the teacher/narrator (Me!), a prompt will appear asking you to name the concept in question. At this point, write down an answer, even if you have to create one of your own (guess!). Once you record your answer, the correct answer will appear.

**Quadrant Analysis** To properly analyze the slide presentation graphics, mentally divide each graphic into four quadrants by imagining one horizontal line and one vertical line that intersect in the center. Then examine every detail in each quadrant separately. When you have finished all four quadrants put it all together in a whole-

graphic perspective. Remember to draw conclusions and formulate hypotheses as you go .... always be in an analytical frame of mind.

- **What is a prompt?** The prompt is a question without a question mark.....it tells you rather than asks you what to answer.
- **Attempt to Answer Each Question:** If you don't know or are unsure of the correct answer, create your own logical answer or title. This practice, along with correcting a wrong answer, will increase retention and recall by 26% simply because you are actively involved in the learning process.
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**General Election Year, 2012:** Our constitution requires elections of all members of the House of Representatives and one-third of the Senators every two years. In every other election, the President and Vice-President (four year terms) will also be on the ballot and this is called a general election. Because 2012 is a general election, we will pay attention to and discuss relevant aspects of the election, connecting them to the Constitution, to previous elections, and to election laws passed by congresses over the years. This is another reason to follow current events regularly!

**Vocabulary I:** The real secret to remarkable success in learning and understanding American government is the mastery of vocabulary. You will find government related vocabulary terms in the multiple-choice questions, the multiple-choice answers, and in the free-response essay questions as well. Combined with the ability to write, a command of political vocabulary will allow you to breeze through the AP test with flying colors! To help you with this area of study, I will send approximately 400 terms for study (many of which you may already know). Look each one up in three different sources then put the sources aside and write down your own definition, identification or explanation ....having done this, the vocabulary term and its meaning are lodged firmly in your long-term memory.

**Vocabulary II** Never let an unknown word get by you. Even if the word or term is not related to politics or government, look it up and add it to your personal vocabulary.

**Memorization:** Do not attempt to memorize vocabulary or any other aspect of government that you encounter in this course ....you will learn them in time. When you memorize, you lose 99% of the material within six months! The 'three source' approach is a vastly superior mode of learning

**When to Research:** When you develop questions that arise during your studies, pause and research online immediately for instant insight. I like most of the well-documented articles on Wikipedia for a quick look at facts and details ....for more thorough research the Library of Congress, the National Archives, most university websites, and the History Channel are all good choices.

**Take a Break:** During your studies, stay mentally fresh by taking short breaks when you feel that you are losing focus. Walk around, go outdoors, get a drink of water or a snack, or do whatever works for you so that you can recover your focus and energy. **Always maintain a focus on the material!**

**Be Patient and Do Not Be Discouraged:** “I never saw a wild thing sorry for itself. A bird will fall frozen dead from a bough without ever having felt sorry for itself. “  
~D.H. Lawrence~

Understanding *American Politics and Government* can be difficult and confusing at times. Be determined, be persistent and appreciate the fact that only the hard things are worth doing. Believe in yourself and your ability to learn.

Your Instructor,

~ Professor Robert Woodrow Wilson