

# POLS 124 – American National Government

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## **Course Description:**

American National Government and Politics will give students an analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States. This course includes both the study of general concepts used to interpret U.S. politics and the analysis of specific historical and contemporary examples. It also requires students to familiarize themselves with the various institutions, mechanisms, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute our political system. The major topics to be examined are:

- \*Constitutional Underpinnings of U.S. Government
- \*Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
- \*Institutions of National Government
- \*Political Beliefs and Behaviors
- \*Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media
- \*Public Policy

Because this is the a college course students must meet the high expectations for the course and share the responsibility for mastery of the course objectives. This involves the careful reading of the textbook, class participation, cooperation, collaboration, as well as the knowledge and application of current examples of contemporary American Politics.

## **Course Objectives:**

Our primary objective is to develop an understanding of basic theories of government, political participation, and institutions of government. Specifically you will be asked to the following:

- Explore the various forms of government found around the world.
- Analyze the structure and contents of the Constitution.
- Identify the powers of Congress.
- Examine the roles of the President
- Describe the power of the Supreme Court.
- Analyze case law protecting civil liberties.
- Evaluate the workings of a two party system and the role of minor parties in that system.
- Examine the role interest groups play in American politics.
- Examine the process of creating the federal budget and government policy
- Identify the impact of the economic, domestic, and foreign policy agendas of the United States

## **Materials / Supplies:**

- Textbook : Janda, Kenneth, et al. The Challenge of Democracy (Twelfth Edition). Boston: Cengage Learning, 2014.
- Supplemental Readings: The Government Reader: Current and historical documents, texts, and articles that supplement the text.
- Notebook, pen/pencil, binder (or section of a binder), markers or colored pencils
- Access to the internet (at home OR at school) for web assignments, video notes, discussions, and simulations
- Dry Erase Pens/Markers

## **Course Expectations:**

- This is a college course with high expectations. Therefore, students should enroll in the course only after careful consideration and be prepared to commit the required time and effort to the course once this commitment has been made.
- Daily work is a key to this course. Learning about our government historically and in its current context is a daily effort requiring students to pay attention to the news and apply learning in new ways to make the information real. Therefore, neglecting one daily assignment not only hurts your ability to understand for that day but also impairs your ability to understand future concepts. Since this is a college-level course, and will be run as such, there is no "busy work" and all work assigned should be given the attention a course of this nature merits.
- You will be given homework assignments, some of which will be graded. These assignments vary in difficulty. Some will require you to use your text to figure out the problems. They may also require you to go beyond the obvious. It is key to work through the problems and find answers.

- Homework assignments are all due at the beginning of the class on the day for which they are due. Late work will not be accepted. If you need an extension for any assignment, this must be obtained prior to the day that the assignment is due.
- Since you will be given a list of assignments in advance, all tests and assignments will still be taken or due on the day in the schedule even if you have been absent. It is your responsibility to make up the work. If extenuating circumstances arise, please see me as early as possible.

### **Grades & Grading Procedure:**

Your grade is a cumulative total of points achieved in the semester. There are no “weighting” in the grade book, but daily assignments will be smaller in point total than a test in the same unit. There will be a final exam at the end of the semester and it is worth 10% of the course grade. Any zeroes in the grade book are considered missing assignments and must be made up.

We will use the following grading scale: 100-90% A; 89-80% B; 79-70% C, 69-60% D, 59-0% F.

For purposes of this class an “A” represents excellent work that is above and beyond expectations.

“B” is superior work that goes beyond expectations and shows deeper analysis/work on the assignment

“C” is average work that meets the expectations for the assignment, but can show more analysis/application

“D” is below average work that shows an attempt but fails to show understanding, application, and analysis

“F” is work that is partially completed and shows no real effort to meet the expectations of the assignment

Daily assignments will use the rubrics provided in this directive. The hope is that you will be able to see on the rubric why you scored what you did on the assignment. You will get used to this rubric and the expectations because you will see it for each assignment. I will not attach a rubric to each assignment, but rather assign a score and you can use the rubric to determine why you received a particular score.

The following major projects will compose most of the final grade:

5-6 Unit Tests --- Study guides will be provided for each one

Research Paper (of at least 7 pages) --- we start work on this very quickly

Midterm Current Events Portfolio

Citizenship Portfolio

Final Exam (there are no exemptions and it is worth 20% of the final semester grade)

Grades are typically rounded at the tenths decimal place and remain my discretion. Meaning, if you have a 79.6 that would become an 80 in the grade book after I look at the “Rounding Assignments”. Those assignments will be given periodically and will be considered extra credit in the grade book. If students have made a commitment to these assignments and they **STILL** remain on the cusp, I will take that into consideration when finalizing grades. **THIS IS THE ONLY ROUNDING THAT WILL HAPPEN!**

### **Missing Assignments & Late Work:**

Activities that are assigned are designed to encourage thinking and learning about the content. If this is done later it does not remain connected to the material we are covering. Late activities will be accepted only if you have communicated with me your delay and put together a timeline mutually agreeable. If that is violated then there will be late penalties.

If you miss school the day before a test and you come to school on test day, you will take the test on the scheduled day. You should make it a habit to consult my website on a daily basis to get the resources you may have missed

### **Personal Technology Devices:**

Electronic devices (including cell phones, iPods, iPads, Androids, etc) have a place in class when I say it is fine to use them. TEXTING, Facetime, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter and such communication **DOES NOT!** There may be times when I will encourage you to look something up for class and that is legitimate. The device will have a designated “Screens Down Parking Place” on each desk. However, if the device is used outside of these parameters it will be confiscated for the day. Unless told otherwise.....

**KEEP THE DEVICE FROM BECOMING A DISTRACTION OR IT WILL BE CONFISCATED!**

### **Cheating and Academic Dishonesty:**

Any form of cheating will result in a zero, an office referral, and a call home. This includes assignments, as well as tests/quizzes. Copying homework is considered academic dishonesty and will not be tolerated. Please refer to the BVHS Honor Commitment for more information/explanations.

### **Plagiarism/Writing Expectations:**

Plagiarism is also an important part of academic honesty. If you represent someone else's work as your own in a paper or writing assignment without citing it, you have committed plagiarism. This is serious and will be dealt with accordingly. For our writing assignments you will be using Turnitin.com and this will red flag your work as plagiarized if you don't cite things properly.

### **Tardiness & Absences:**

Beginning the second week of class if you are tardy you will have to go to the Tardy Tracker and get an admittance slip to my class. You will be tracked and after 3 tardies will be referred to an administrator to speak with them about your attendance issues. If you are carrying a pass from another teacher to excuse your tardy you will not have to go to the Tardy Tracker. If you know you are already late, save yourself the time and get the Tardy Tracker ticket before coming to my class.

### **General Course Expectations**

Students, teachers, and visitors are to be treated with respect at all times. We will co-create our classroom expectations for this semester and come up with common standards for our work together. Everything is rooted in RESPECT. Know that we will get little or nothing accomplished if we don't give respect to all members of the class.

Being "present" is also an expectation of this course. This DOES NOT mean simply occupying a seat. Rather, it means you should be ready to engage in class, participate fully in the simulations and discussions, and not be distracted or a distraction. We are a community of learners and this is a very important expectation throughout your educational career.

### **Bullying Statement**

The BVHS community fosters respect by promoting zero tolerance of bullying and harassment of any form.

### **Preparing for the AP Exam**

Students in the first semester are encouraged to take the AP test in May 2016 as this course prepares you for success on the AP exam. More information about registration for the test will occur in the Spring semester.

As you prepare for the exam, consider one of the district's best resources available for you,



available through our BVHS Library website and for student use. This contains two full length practice exams (including M/C and FRQ questions)



available at [www.learnerator.com](http://www.learnerator.com) (free subscription gives you "Easy" and "Medium" level questions; "Difficult" level requires paid subscription)  
These online M/C questions are great for review and practice

***General Outline/Course Schedule:***

Units and Key Topics	Resources and Assessment	Percent of Course / Percent of Exam
<p>Unit I: Foundations of American Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Considerations that influenced the formation and adoption of the Constitution</li> <li>➤ Separation of Powers/Checks and Balances</li> <li>➤ Federalism</li> <li>➤ Power and the role of government</li> <li>➤ Theories of democratic government</li> </ul>	<p>Readings/Data Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Janda Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4</li> <li>➤ The US Constitution</li> <li>➤ Discussion/Analysis of Key Concepts</li> </ul> <p>Formative Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chapter Quizzes</li> <li>➤ Reading guides and Vocab</li> </ul> <p>Summative assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Unit Exam:</b></li> </ul>	<p>5-15%</p>
<p>Unit II: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Development of civil rights and liberties by judicial interpretation</li> <li>➤ Substantive rights and liberties</li> <li>➤ Impact of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties.</li> </ul>	<p>Readings/Data Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Janda 15 and 16</li> <li>➤ Relevant Supplemental Readings</li> <li>➤ Discussion/Analysis of Key Concepts and various relevant Supreme Court cases</li> </ul> <p>Formative Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chapter Quizzes</li> <li>➤ Reading guides and Vocab</li> </ul> <p>Assessment:</p> <p><b>Unit Exam:</b></p>	<p>5-15%</p>
<p>Unit III: Political Beliefs and Behaviors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Beliefs about government and leaders</li> <li>➤ Political socialization</li> <li>➤ Nature, sources, and consequences of public opinion</li> <li>➤ Voting and civic participation</li> <li>➤ Factors influencing political beliefs and behaviors across the population</li> </ul>	<p>Readings/Data Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Janda chapters 5, 7</li> <li>➤ Discussion/Analysis of Key Concepts</li> <li>➤ Demographic Voting Data</li> </ul> <p>Formative Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chapter Quizzes</li> <li>➤ Reading guides and Vocab</li> </ul> <p>Summative assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Unit Exam:</b></li> </ul>	<p>10-20%</p>

<p>Unit IV: Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Political Parties and Elections, political process, and systems</li> <li>➤ Interest groups, PACs, SuperPACs</li> <li>➤ Activities of interest groups</li> <li>➤ Mass Media functions and structures</li> <li>➤ Impact on and consequences for political process and politicians</li> </ul>	<p>Readings/Data Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Janda chapters 6, 8, 9, 10</li> <li>➤ Relevant Supplemental Readings</li> </ul> <p>Formative Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chapter Quizzes</li> <li>➤ Reading guides and Vocab</li> </ul> <p>Summative assessment:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Unit Exam:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">10-20%</p>
<p>Unit V: Institutions of Government: The “four” branches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Formal and informal institutional arrangements of power</li> <li>➤ Relationships among institutions and balance of power</li> <li>➤ Linkages between institutions and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public opinion and voters</li> <li>○ Interest groups</li> <li>○ Political parties</li> <li>○ The media</li> <li>○ State and local governments.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Readings/Data Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Janda chapter 11, 12, 13, 14</li> <li>➤ Discussion/Analysis of Key Concepts</li> </ul> <p>Formative Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chapter Quizzes</li> <li>➤ Reading guides and Vocab</li> </ul> <p>Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Unit Quiz:</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Unit Test:</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">35-45%</p>
<p>Unit VI: Public Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Formation and implementation in the federal system</li> <li>➤ Policy agendas</li> <li>➤ Institutions and the enactment of policy</li> <li>➤ Role of the bureaucracy and the courts</li> <li>➤ Linkages between policy process and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Political institutions and federalism</li> <li>○ Political parties/interest groups</li> <li>○ Public opinion</li> <li>○ Elections</li> <li>○ Policy networks</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Readings/Data Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Janda chapter 17, 18, 19</li> <li>➤ Discussion/Analysis of Key Concepts</li> </ul> <p>Formative Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chapter Quizzes</li> <li>➤ Reading guides and Vocab</li> </ul> <p>Summative assessment:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Unit Exam:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5-15%</p>

This is the basic rubric used in scoring work for my classes. Please note that when an assignment is worth more than 10 points total I simply use a multiplying factor. If it is a 20 point assignment the scores below are simply multiplied by 2.

**This rubric assumes that a C is meeting the AVERAGE expectations for peers in the class/age group. The grade of C is not a bad grade. Just reflects the need to kick it up a notch and grow as a student.**

10	9	8	7	6	5 and below
A+ (perfect job!)	A (excellent work that is above and beyond expectations)	B (superior work that shows deeper analysis)	C (average work that meets the expectations)	D (below average work that shows an attempt, but lacks depth/ quality)	F (partially completed showing little or no effort)
<p>-Clearly in the top 1% of the class in terms of quality of responses and detail.</p> <p>-is unmatched in their response for this assessment</p> <p>-Detail, supporting evidence, and deep analysis is evident in this response and clearly shows mastery of the material beyond their peers.</p> <p>-uses writing conventions and complex ideas well beyond grade level expectations</p> <p>-Example: On a short answer response the student goes well beyond expectations writing a well-developed response that ties other portions of the course, current events, and historical analysis making it a comprehensive summary of information already learned.</p>	<p>-Goes above and beyond the superior student for this assessment</p> <p>-contains exemplary detail and supporting evidence for this response. Deep analysis is used in this response making it an exemplar for the class!</p> <p>-uses writing conventions and complex ideas well beyond grade level expectations.</p> <p>-Example: On a short answer response the student goes well beyond expectations writing a well-developed response that ties other portions of the course together making it a comprehensive summary of the information already learned.</p>	<p>-Clearly meets the expectations and goes beyond the average student for this assessment</p> <p>-contains good detail and supporting evidence/analysis making this an above average response.</p> <p>-uses writing conventions and complex ideas beyond grade level expectations</p> <p>-Example: On a short answer response the student goes above and beyond expectations by writing a well-developed paragraph with supporting details when only a few sentences was required as a minimum</p>	<p>-Clearly met the expectations for average performance on the assessment</p> <p>-needs more detail and supporting evidence or analysis to make it superior or excellent.</p> <p>-uses writing conventions and complex ideas appropriate for grade level</p> <p>-Example: On a short answer response the student answers the question directly with only minor details supporting their answer.</p>	<p>-Only a basic attempt at the assessment</p> <p>-lacks detail and contains little supporting evidence or analysis</p> <p>-uses only basic writing conventions, not appropriate for grade level</p> <p>-Example: On a short answer response the student only minimally answers the question and offers no insight or supporting details in their response.</p>	<p>-very little effort is evident and the response does not even begin to address the question</p> <p>-simple one word answers that offer little or no information on which to assess progress / achievement</p> <p>-uses writing conventions that are below grade level and show only minimum comprehension of the material</p> <p>-Example: One word answers, or short responses, that have little or no relation to the question asked.</p>

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**Student Name**

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**Course**

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**Hour**

**We have read the Directives for 2015-2016 together and understand the following:**

Course Objectives  
Grading Procedures  
“Rounding”  
Missing Assignments and Late Work  
Personal Technology Devices  
Cheating, Plagiarism, and Academic Dishonesty  
Tardiness and Absences  
Course Expectations  
Bullying Statement  
Preparing for the AP exam resources  
Basic Rubric

**If we have any questions we will contact your via phone or email.**

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Student Signature

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Date

Signature below states that you have read the above policies and discussed them with your child and will support our work in the classroom given these expectations.

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Parent Signature

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Date