

# American Government Syllabus

## Spring 2019

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**Teacher:** Valerie Wichaël

**Text:** *American Government in Christian Perspective - Third Edition*

**Grading:** Class Participation 33%; Test/Quizzes 33%; Homework/Papers 33%

*I expect to begin each class with a brief quiz covering the prior class period's discussion and the material assigned for discussion that day. In addition, a significant portion of your grade in this class will be based on the quantity and quality of your participation in class discussion. The quality of your participation will be determined by your understanding of the material assigned to read BEFORE that class period. Our discussion will focus on the main points listed below as "In Class Discussion Topics."*

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### Pre-class Assignment - preparation for January 25 class discussion

Read: Chapter 1 (pp2-13)  
Chapter 2 (pp15-32)

Questions: Chapter 1: Terms (page 14); #4,5  
Chapter Concepts (page 14); #1,2  
Chapter 2: Section 2 Review (page 28); #7  
Terms (page 33); #9,12,13,16,17,18,21,22  
Chapter Concepts (page 33); #1

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### January 25 - Forms of Government (Pros, Cons, and Abuses)

#### In Class Discussion Topics:

God's design for leadership and government  
Rule by one/few: Theocracy, Monarchy, Dictatorship; Oligarchy  
Rule by many/all: Democracy, Republic (and the difference between them)  
Separation of Church and State

#### Assignment for next class, Sept 12:

Read: Chapter 3 (pp 34-50)  
Chapter 4: Section 1 only (pp 52-55)

Questions: Chapter 3: Section 1 Review (page 39); #8,9  
Section 3 Review (page 45); #2,3  
Section 4 Review (page 50); #2,8  
Terms (page 51); #4,6,14,15,16,24,25  
Chapter Concepts (page 51); #2,5

Chapter 4: Section 1 Review (page 55); #1,5,8

All Write: A 2-3 paragraph response to **one** of the following questions:

- 1) How did English History and Government influence the American system?
  - 2) What was so important about the Mayflower Compact?
  - 3) What were the major issues leading to the Declaration of Independence?
  - 4) Could England have avoided the American Revolution, why or why not?
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## **February 1 - Brief US Government History**

### In Class Discussion Topics:

Monarchy and the Colonies  
Mayflower Compact  
Declaration of Independence  
Articles of Confederation  
God in our government formation

### Assignment for next class, Sept 19:

Read: Chapter 10

Questions: Chapter 10: Section 1 Review (page 182); #2,3,7  
Section 2 Review (page 188); #4,5  
Terms (page 189); #6,7,8,11,13,14,15  
Chapter Concepts (Page189); #2,3

**Jr/Sr Write:** A 2-3 paragraph response to **one** of the following questions:

- 1) Why did America's Founder's choose to establish a **federal** republic?
  - 2) How has the idea of federalism changed over the course of US history?
  - 3) Is power in the American government still balanced today, why or why not?
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## **February 8 - Balance of Power**

### In Class Discussion Topics:

Power of the People and Limited Government ... "We the People..."  
Federalism - States Rights and Central Government  
Separation of Power through Branches of Government  
Checks and Balances  
Power/Influence of the media and popular culture

### Assignment for next class, Oct 3:

Read: Chapter 4, sections 2-3 (pp56-69)

Questions: Chapter 4: Section 2 Review (page 63); #2,4,5  
Section 3 Review (page 69); #2,4  
Terms (page 70); #7,8,9,10,14,15

All Write: A 2-3 paragraph response to **one** of the following questions:

- 1) Explain how compromise was integral in framing an acceptable Constitution
- 2) Explain the purpose of the constitution using the language of the Preamble
- 3) Explain why segregation of power and checks and balances are so important.
- 4) Explain how the forethought of the founders is evident in the construction of the Constitution

\*\*\* Additional Assignment: Memorize the Preamble to the Constitution:

***"WE THE PEOPLE, of the United States of America, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America..."***

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## **February 15 - Formation of the United States Constitution**

### In Class Discussion Topics:

Articles of Confederation  
Constitutional Conventions  
Compromise and Ratification  
Basic Constitutional Structure & the Preamble  
Influence of a post-modern culture  
Rights of Individual vs. masses supreme (good for one vs. good of all)

Assignment for next class, Oct 10:

Read: Chapter 5

Questions: Chapter 5: Section 1 Review (page 82); #2,3,5,6,7  
Section 2 Review (page 84); #4,5  
Section 3 Review (page 90); #2,3,5,10  
Section 4 Review (page 94); #1,3,4  
Terms (page 96); #7,13,15,18,21,22,24,

\*\*Additional Assignment: Outline the process of how a bill becomes a law

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***March 1 - Legislative Branch - Congress***

In Class Discussion Topics:

Lawmaking Process  
House of Representatives  
Senate  
Reapportionment and Redistricting  
Two-Party System / Party Alignment / Political Extremism and Polarization

Assignment for next class, Oct 17:

Read: Chapter 6

Questions: Chapter 6: Section 1 Review (page 106); #1,2,4  
Section 2 Review (page 107); #3  
Section 3 Review (page 115); #1,2  
Section 4 Review (page 117); #1,2,3,4  
Terms (page 117); #1,2,6,7,8,9,14,15

\*\*Additional Jr / Sr Assignment (Bonus points for Fresh/Soph): Research bills before IL House, select one and write a letter to representative (Turn a copy in on Nov 7, mail a copy after it is graded)

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***March 8 - Executive Branch: The Presidency***

In Class Discussion Topics:

President and his roles  
Electoral College  
Executive Office of the President  
Impeachment  
Executive Orders

Assignment for next class, Nov 7:

Read: Chapter 7

Questions: Chapter 7: Section 1 Review (page 128); #3,5,6  
Section 2 Review (page 133); #1,2,3  
Terms (page 140); #1,5,6,7,8,9,15,16,17

All Write: A 2-3 paragraph response to **one** of the following questions:

- 1) Does the federal bureaucracy hinder religious, economic or social freedom today? If so, select one area and explain how?
  - 2) What are some ways Congress could reform the federal bureaucracy
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### **March 15 - Executive Branch: The Bureaucracy**

#### In Class Discussion Topics:

Executive Departments and the Cabinet  
Independent Agencies  
Expansion of the federal bureaucracy and it's impact on the American citizen  
Reform of the federal bureaucracy  
Personal Privacy and National Security

#### Assignment for next class, Nov 14:

Read: Chapter 8

Questions: Chapter 8: Section 1 Review (page 144); #3,6  
Section 2 Review (page 147); #1,3,6  
Section 3 Review (page 154); #3,5,8  
Terms (page 155); #8,9,13,14,15,17,18,28,29

\*\*Additional Assignment: Pick a landmark Supreme Court case from the list provided and summarize the background, importance, arguments, outcome and impact of the case (due Nov 21, specific format provided)

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### **April 12 - Judicial Branch (Part 1)**

#### In Class Discussion Topics:

Constitutional Courts  
Legislative Courts  
Judicial Process  
Precedent & Case Law  
Landmark Decisions  
Strict / Loose Construction  
Judicial Activism vs. Judicial Restraint

#### Assignment for next class, Nov 21:

Prepare for Mock Court Case, additional material provided

\*\*\*Begin to prepare for Final Exam on Dec 8\*\*\*

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### **April 26 - Judicial Branch (Part 2)**

#### In Class Activity:

Mock Court Case

#### Assignment for next class, Dec 8:

Read: Chapter 9

Questions: Chapter 9: Section 1 Review (page 158); #1  
Section 2 Review (page 164); #1,2,6,8  
Section 3 Review (page 171); #6,10  
Section 4 Review (page 174); #1  
Terms (page 175); #2,3,4,10,12

\*\*Additional Assignment: Pick an amendment from the list provided and summarize the background, importance, and impact of the amendment (specific format provided)

\*\*\* Prepare for Final Exam \*\*\*

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### ***May 3 - Amending the Constitution***

#### In Class Discussion Topics:

Bill of Rights  
Process for new amendment / ratification  
Convention of States

\*\*\*Final Exam\*\*\*

## **Other Planned Events**

*(Note: These events not mandatory; participation is optional)*

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### ***Springfield, IL Field Trip***

*Location: One day trip to IL capitol while State Legislature is in session*

*When: To Be Determined; if schedule allows*

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