



Carpinteria High School
American Democracy
5 Credits
Fall 2010-11
Prerequisite(s): None

Instructor Information

Instructor: Mr. Bisson

Phone: (805) 684-4107 ext. 243

Website: <http://mrbisson.com/AmericanDemocracy/index.html>

Email: gbisson@cusd.net

Class meetings: Modified block schedule per school calendar

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 06:30 – 07:45 & 15:00 – 16:00; or by appointment

Course Description

American Democracy (5 credits)

This is a **college preparatory** course. It is an overview of the government of the United States. Specific topics include the Constitution and Bill of Rights, legislative processes, the judicial system, federalism and contemporary issues in domestic and foreign policy. (Each student has received a copy of these standards along with this syllabus and a complete list of standards is available online at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/hstgrade12.asp>). American Democracy meets CHS graduation requirements as well as admissions standards for both UC and CSU systems. **This course is required for graduation from Carpinteria High School.**

Reading Comprehension:

10.1.1 Identify and use the literal and figurative meanings of words and understand word derivations.

10.2.3 Generate relevant questions about readings on issues that can be researched.

Writing strategies:

10.1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.

Mathematical Reasoning:

6.2.4 Use a variety of methods, such as words, numbers, symbols, charts, graphs, tables, diagrams, and models, to explain mathematical reasoning.

Course Scope

This course is designed for high school students studying the American government and its history. Students will engage in observations of local government and / or the court system as well as investigate the Amendments and how the Constitution has been deliberated in court. Building on the principles learned in Modern World History and US History, the objective of the course is to expand knowledge about the history and current implications of the US Constitution and American government in everyday situations.

Course Objectives / State Standards Headings

12.1 Students explain the fundamental principles and moral values of American democracy as expressed in the U.S. Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy.

12.2 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured.

- 12.3** Students evaluate and take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of civil society are (i.e., the autonomous sphere of voluntary personal, social, and economic relations that are not part of government), their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.
- 12.4** Students analyze the unique roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government as established by the U.S. Constitution.
- 12.5** Students summarize landmark U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments.
- 12.6** Students evaluate issues regarding campaigns for national, state, and local elective offices.
- 12.7** Students analyze and compare the powers and procedures of the national, state, tribal, and local governments.
- 12.8** Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life.
- 12.9** Students analyze the origins, characteristics, and development of different political systems across time, with emphasis on the quest for political democracy, its advances, and its obstacles.
- 12.10** Students formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within our constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the following concepts: majority rule and individual rights; liberty and equality; state and national authority in a federal system; civil disobedience and the rule of law; freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial; the relationship of religion and government.

Course Delivery Method

Students are assigned readings and homework on a daily basis. This includes keeping up to date with political news and forming opinions which they are able to support from their readings. Readings and homework are to be completed prior to the beginning of class. Class consists of a variety of instructional methods including lecture, film, class discussion, student reports and presentations, debates, etc. Students are expected to take notes on in-class activities as they are all considered testable material. All students are expected to participate in all facets of the class. Students have been given an assignment calendar along with their syllabus and are expected to have it in their class binder, which will be brought to class daily along with their **covered textbook and other necessary materials**. Points will be deducted from students' scores for failure to bring materials to class. Chronic lack of materials will result in detention.

Class Text

McClenaghan, William A. **Magruder's American Government**. Pearson, 2006

Evaluation Procedures

Grades for this course will be based upon nine grading instruments.

Grade Instruments:	% of Final Grade	Points
Attendance / Class Participation	12.5%	300
Class work	9%	220
Constitutional Data Project	5%	120
Government / Court Case Research	2.5%	60
Current Events	12.5%	300
Final Project	8%	200
Court Observations (2)	5%	120
Homework	12.5%	300
Tests and Quizzes	32%	800
	100%	

Grading Scale

90% - 100%.....A	60% - 69.99%.....D
80% - 89.99%.....B	Less than 60%.....F
70% - 79.99%.....C	

Course Information

Attendance – Attendance to class sessions is mandatory. **Missing or arriving late to class will impact the student's grade.** Missed work and points cannot be made up except for excused absences. In any case, participation points cannot be made up. It is the student's responsibility to check with the teacher concerning missed work and to turn it in a timely manner (generally work missed from a one day absence is due the day of the student's return; with regards to block schedule, whether we have class or not). Students arriving late to class will lose participation points from the day's grade and assigned homework from any option (including emailed work) will be considered late. Habitual tardiness will result in lower grade and/or detention.

Readings, Assignments and Classroom Participation – You will be required to read daily for this course as well as keeping abreast of current political events. Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions and activities. Students who fail to participate, have their heads on their desk, attempt to sleep, etc. will lose participation points and/or be sent to the office. This course requires you to develop a time management plan and self-discipline to follow it.

Final Exam – The comprehensive final exam will be administered at the end of the course. It will consist of multiple choice questions, essay, and short answer questions.

Answers on all assignments should be specific and detailed in essay format. Specifically, that means your answers should be in paragraph format with complete sentences. Paragraphs should include a beginning statement, detailed and specific information responding to the question, and a summary statement. Do not submit answers with bulleted categorical headings or incomplete sentences with bullets or numbers unless directed.

Examination questions are derived from course readings, class discussions, and films shown in class. **If you miss class you miss testable material.** Your synthesis and analysis of the material in the course should be clearly demonstrated with detailed and specific responses. Some essay questions can be completely and thoroughly answered in two (2) paragraphs; whereas, other questions may require two (2) pages.

Assignment Submissions – All assignments are due at the beginning of class. **No late work is accepted** with the exception of excused, full day absences. If you are on campus for any part of the day, you are expected to turn in your homework. All work must be completed word processed or hand written in black or blue ink on standard sized 8 ½ x 11 inch lined paper, neat and legible, with a complete heading in order to receive a grade. Work torn from a binder, spiral, etc. is unacceptable. Students arriving late to class will receive a zero (0) on any work due as it is considered to be late. Work may be turned in via email (as a WORD attachment – not in the email body) if a student chooses but it must be received prior to the beginning of class and the student must arrive on time. I will send an automatic acknowledgement of receipt. Work submitted via email must be readable by Microsoft Word 2003. Sometimes problems occur with email. Be sure to keep a copy of the message in your sent folder. These messages are electronically dated by your provider and are the only items I will accept as proof of work.

Homework Options – After the first four weeks of class, students will choose one of three homework options. These may be changed between units, if they wish. With all three options, all students do the daily reading, must turn in written current events according to the guidelines, conduct the court case research, do the observations, and complete the Constitutional Data Sheet. **These options only apply to the written homework from the daily readings.**

Option 1: Students complete the Section Assessments as they do the day's reading. Some days this will require the student to do assessments for multiple sections. These assessments are due daily. This option is recommended for chronic procrastinators who will save up other work until the night before a test and then do a poor job on both the homework and the test.

Option 2: This option is recommended for students planning to go to college, especially a four year university, directly after high school. If done as instructed, it will help them develop valuable skills which will increase retention of material and cut down study time before tests. Students will take Cornell Notes as they do their reading. Instructions for how to take Cornell Notes are on the class website. It is recommended that these are done neatly in a spiral notebook dedicated solely to this class. Notebooks are turned in regularly on the days of the Unit tests.

Option 3: Study Guides for each unit are posted on the class website. Student will download the Study Guide and, in a handwritten form on separate paper, per the guidelines in the **Assignment Submissions** section, define each of the vocabulary words and terms in their own words and completely answer all the questions (per the guidelines in the **Writing Expectations** section). This option is turned on the days of the Unit tests.

Class Expectations

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

Carpinteria High School supports and promotes academic honesty and personal integrity. Cheating may include but is not limited to:

- Submitting another person's work
- Working in a group effort without faculty consent
- Writing a paper for someone else
- Buying a paper from a research service

The Web & Plagiarism Note: The Web has made it quite easy to copy and insert materials into a paper. Students must be careful to properly attribute materials found on the Web. In a collegiate setting, attribution typically relies on a formal academic style manual for its citation models (At CHS we use the MLA style that you learned in your English classes. If you need a refresher, see: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>).

WRITING EXPECTATIONS

All printed submissions, including those submitted via email, should be written in 12 point Arial, Times New Roman, or Verdana font, double-spaced format, and page margins top, bottom, left and right = 1 inch, with reasonable accommodation being made for special situations and online submission variances. All work must be readable with Microsoft Word 2003 or with Open Office. If you do not have either, Open Office is available online free of charge at <http://download.openoffice.org/2.2.0/index.html?focus=download>. Be sure to check your spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. Points will be subtracted for these types of errors. All handwritten work must be completed in black or blue ink on standard 8 ½ x 11 inch lined paper, neat and legible with a complete heading in order to receive a grade.

Nothing detracts from written work as much as a misspelled, misspeled, miss-spelled, misspelled word. The question, "Does spelling count?" is similar to "Do I *always* have to drive on the right side of the road?" "No" is an acceptable answer to both questions, but only for a short time. When professors read essays and papers in college one spelling error brings a smile – bad proofreading. Two errors cause a frown, three absolute disgust and the conclusion that this student is not college material.

Any work done in class is graded leniently with regards to spelling and English mechanics. Papers done at home give students ample time to spell check and have someone proof-read their work so frequent errors will reduce score.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

As noted above, late work is not accepted if you are on campus during the day. If you arrive late or leave early on a day when an assignment is due, you are expected to either bring it by the classroom or put it in my box in the office. **Students who leave for athletic events, roundtables, appointments, etc. are expected to take tests and turn in work due PRIOR to leaving. Late work is accepted only for excused all day absences.**

CLASS GUIDELINES

Be punctual, be prepared.

Electronics (including cell phones and iPods) are turned off and out of sight before entering the classroom (and stay out of sight until you are outside). If I see them, I take them.

No food, or gum in the class.

Profanity, even mild profanity, gets you a trip to the office. If I don't say it, neither can you.

No use of hats, caps, bandannas, hoods, scarves, other head coverings, sunglasses, mirror glasses, etc.

Follow the dress code.

Stay in your seats at all times, unless directed to do otherwise.

Work from the tardy bell until the teacher tells you to stop.

Be respectful.

No personal grooming during class time (brushes, make-up, creams, lotions, etc.). If I see it, I take it.

Sit in your assigned seat daily.

Follow directions the first time you hear them.

Know you that are responsible for your actions. All actions have consequences, good or bad.

The teacher dismisses the class. Stay seated until directed to leave the room at the end of the period.

Stay away from the door.

Issues dealing with an individual student and not the entire class should be discussed with the teacher before school, after school, at lunch, or at nutrition. **NOT** in the passing periods.

In addition, all school guidelines (including dress code) apply in this class. See student/parent handbook for details.

Failure to comply with these rules will result in loss of points, a call to parents, other disciplinary measures as required, and will also affect your citizenship grade.

EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS

I will permit up to 10% of the total available semester points (approximately 140 pts this semester) of extra credit work per semester. These must be arranged with the teacher before work begins and finished no later than two weeks prior to the end of the semester (03 December 2010). These are student initiated assignments which will include a written proposal, a negotiated point value, a due date, and a grading rubric. Once negotiated and put in writing by the student, these extra credit contracts will be signed by the student, a parent or guardian, and the teacher.

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If you, the student, understand this syllabus and agree to abide by these guidelines, please sign below:

(Print Name) _____

(Period) _____

(Sign) _____

(Date) _____

If you as parent, have read and understand these guidelines, please sign below:

(Print Name) _____

(Sign) _____

In an effort to create more efficient communication between Teacher and Parent, please provide a daytime telephone number and an email address where you can be reached:

Telephone# _____

Parent's E-Mail (please print clearly) _____

Grades are usually updated on Saturdays and are available on the Aeries Portal which can be accessed per instructions sent to the student's parent or guardian at the address on record. If you do not have your log in information, see office for a copy of your letter.