**U.S. Government Syllabus**

**Fall 2023/Spring 2024**

**Ms. Arechaga**

Welcome to U.S. Government! I’m so excited to have you all in my class and hope that this is a great semester we can all enjoy. I would like to outline our class so you have an idea where we are going and what will be covered. There will no doubt be some slight changes throughout the year, but this will be the basic map.

**Course Description:**

Here we go! In one semester we will be discussing the influences, roots, structure, function, impact, and evolution of our country’s government. This is going to be surface level because we only have a semester, but I will do my best to cover it all. The goal of this class is to help you become informed, well rounded, analytical, empathetic, citizens. Each of you are essential to the continuation of this country and we are in this together. I hope by the end of the semester you are confident to question others AND yourself, to truly be able to hear and humanize those who have vastly different views than your own, and to hopefully, maybe, even allow your own views to mature and evolve.

**First, I would like to state my expectations**

**What you can expect from me:**

You can expect me to be prepared for class every day, both with materials and mentally.

You can expect me to be respectful of who you are and of your beliefs.

You can expect me to be positive and to always encourage and challenge you to do better.

You can expect me to facilitate an open, safe, and secure environment for you to learn in.

You can expect me to take your work seriously and know that I thoughtfully grade and look over your assignments.

You can also always come in during office hours for any help you may need.

**What I expect from you**:

I expect you to be prepared, not just with your chromebook, notebook, and writing utensils, but mentally prepared as well. If there was a reading you had to do for homework, I expect it to not just have been read, but thought of and fresh in your mind.

I expect you to be respectful of your peers and of myself. If someone says something you don’t like or you’re especially cranky, or whatever, you don’t take it out on other people, and you find an intelligent appropriate response to other people’s beliefs or statements. If we’re doing something that is not interesting to you in class, I still expect you to put your all into it, to try as best you can, and to keep complaints to a minimum.

I expect you to take accountability for your actions. Everyone makes mistakes, everyone messes up, own it. There are always consequences to one’s actions, sometimes good, sometimes bad.

I expect you to be a positive member of your peer group. This means you try to encourage others, to go out of your way to help someone, to set a good example.

**Behavior Policy:**

School is supposed to be a safe, educational environment. No one has a right to take that from you, if someone in the class compromises that, it needs to be addressed.

This subject can sometimes strike some passions. Which is great! Please just remember to always be respectful. It’s also ok to be pushed outside our comfort zone, that’s what schools is for. To ask questions we aren’t sure of, to be able to question and reflect on controversial issues and our own opinions about them.

That being said, opinions voiced that are downright offensive, use expletives, racist, homophobic, or sexist, will not be tolerated. There is a difference between ignorance and asking uncomfortable questions and knowingly saying something to upset or offend others.

This goes both ways, if I say or do something that upsets you or offends you, please come talk to me. If you feel like there is something going on or someone making comments that I’m not addressing, please tell me.

I would ideally like to deal with behavior problems in the class, during lunch, or before or after school. But if chronic disruption, rude or unsafe behavior, or tardiness/absences begin to occur, then office intervention will be used.

**Game Plan:**

Unit One: Roots of American Democracy

Political philosophers, evolution of democracy, establishment of the United States

Unit Two: The Constitution and Federalism

Writing of the constitution, focus on bill of rights, federalist system and functions (federal, tribal, state, and local governments)

Unit Three: Political Parties and Elections

Types of political parties, evolution of parties, party politicians and candidates, how elections work

Unit Four: Three Branches of Government

Legislative – Duties and function of congress, prominent pieces of current legislation

Executive – Duties and function of president and cabinet, expansion of presidential powers

Judicial – History of the rule of law, supreme, federal, state, tribal court systems, prominent and current supreme court cases and controversies

Unit Five: Native American Sovereignty – inherent rights and sovereignty of tribal nations, major and current supreme court decisions and congressional acts

**Materials needed and used:**

Binder with notebook paper or a notebook, writing utensils, chromebook, textbook – which will remain in the classroom

**Assignments/Grading:**

We will have tests, essays, classwork, research projects, presentations, and discussions. No one group is weighed over the other – but larger assignments will hold more weight. I will also email parents halfway through the semester if you are failing or close to it to try to come up with a plan for you to pass.

This class is required for graduation and I will not pass you just to pass you. I don’t take myself too seriously, but I do take my time with you seriously and I expect the same. So, if you do not show up and do the work then I cannot help you. I will not give last minute assignments with three weeks left in the semester for you to make up a whole semester worth of work.

But as long as you show up and try and turn in assignments, you will be fine. I am here for you! Please come see me if you need help, I want to help you, I want you to do well and be successful.

**Extra Credit:**

I do not usually give extra credit out. The only time I do this is when a student is failing but close to getting a D, and has been at school and is putting in effort. Please don’t ask or have your parents ask for car insurance purposes or because you want a higher GPA but have lower grades in other classes.

**Digital Media:**

We will be watching clips of political debates, campaign commercials, films regarding the history, evolution, policies, functions and issues with our government, various news articles from the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, and various other educational resources.

**Circles:**

We’ll do periodic circles to check in. A circle is time for gathering together and checking in on one another in order to build trust, community, and just to have a place to be heard.

Syllabus:

By signing this I attest that I have read and understand the contents of this syllabus/classroom rules and I will abide by this contract for the spring 2023/ fall 2024 school semester.

Student Name – Please Print

Student Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature