

# AP American Government

Junior Statesmen Summer School  
June 22 – July 17, 2008  
8:30 – 11:30 am  
Yale University, Becton 102

NOTE: This is the general plan for the course, but listen for announcements during class for changes and adjustments to the syllabus. This syllabus provides you with course information and the expected reading assignments for each day. In class I will provide specific discussion questions to prepare for and particular pages to focus on.

**Professor:**           **Francis X. Shen**  
J.D., Harvard Law School (2006)  
Ph.D., Harvard Department of Government (2008)  
fxshen@fas.harvard.edu, 617-462-3845

**Dates & Deadlines:** Here are the most important exam dates and paper deadlines:  
:: Exam #1: Saturday, June 28  
:: Outline of Paper Due: Monday, June 30  
:: Exam #2: Saturday, July 5  
:: Rough Draft of Paper Due: Monday, July 7  
:: Final Paper (12-15 pages) Due: Saturday, July 12  
:: Exam #3: Tuesday, July 15

**Required Texts:**   Textbook: *We the People* by Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir  
Supplemental Book: *Who Governs* by Robert A. Dahl

## I. The Power of Politics

So you want to change America? Good. So do I. And to do it, we're going to have to work through the political system. If you can understand, and then master the workings of government and politics you will be in a remarkably powerful position relative to your peers. Whether you want to run for office, generate new policy proposals, make existing policy more effective, change the laws, or prevent the laws from changing, you need to know how the system works. In this course I will introduce you to the system, with a special emphasis on how political power is gained, lost, and maintained.

## II. Course Aims and Objectives:

*Aims.* This course has two aims: (1) to introduce you to government and politics in the United States, and (2) in doing so, prepare you to excel on the Advanced Placement (AP) exam in U.S. Government and Politics. The short length of the course does not allow us to cover all of the AP topics in depth, but you will be exposed to all of the material.

*Specific Learning Objectives.* By the end of this course, you will:

- ✦ Recognize, understand, and be able to discuss fundamental concepts and historical developments in American government and politics
- ✦ Gain exposure to each of the main subject areas covered by the AP multiple choice examination: Constitutional Foundations; Political Theory and Beliefs; Political Parties, Elections, Interest Groups, and Media; Formal Institutions of Government; Public Policy, and Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
- ✦ Improve your analytic writing skills through a 12-15 page research paper and through exam essay questions
- ✦ Improve your in-class oral presentation and question-asking skills
- ✦ Be able to analyze and discuss current political events with more specificity and clarity
- ✦ Have developed general critical thinking skills applicable to many subjects

### **III. Format, Procedures, & Course Philosophy**

This is an intensive four-week course that meets six days a week for three hours a day. If you estimate that your high school class typically meets for :50 minutes, we are covering 3.6 regular high school classes every day. Add that up and you get 21.6 classes per week, or roughly 4 regular high school weeks for each JSA week. That's intense!

Such a compact schedule may sound daunting. But after the initial shock, I know you can handle it. If you commit to these four weeks, I guarantee you it will pay off. This is a bit like politics boot camp – you will do more than you ever thought you could in four weeks, and those ‘normal’ high school courses will seem easier when you return to them.

The day-to-day course experience is built on two premises: (1) active learning is better than passive learning (i.e. you don't want to hear me drone on for 180 minutes every day); and (2) simply collecting more factoids is not as important as sharpening your analytical skills (so you can arrange those facts in new, more powerful ways).

I will teach the course the same way that I teach Harvard undergraduates in the Government Department. This means that I will promote your in-class participation, and ask you to back up your claims with evidence. It also means that I will share with you my bad jokes and puns. (So get ready to groan). I think you'll find that studying politics is not only powerful, but fun as well.

### **IV. Course Requirements**

1. *Class attendance and participation policy:* You must be in class, on-time, every day. I will keep close track of attendance and tardiness. In class, I will encourage your active participation. You are expected to participate in our learning activities.

2. *Course readings:* All course readings will come from your textbook or the supplemental book.

3. *Assignments.* You will be given daily assignments to prepare for class. At the end of each class session, I will announce the assignment for the next day. Often this will be preparing a short response to a discussion question or being prepared to identify a key term or concept. In addition to

the three exams (details to be discussed in class), your big assignment for the course is the preparation of a 12-15 page research paper. This big assignment is really 3 assignments in one:

- Research Paper, Part A: By Monday, June 30<sup>th</sup> you need to submit an outline of your paper to me. I will discuss the format of the outline in class, and it will include a thesis sentence stating your argument; specific details of evidence that support the argument; and identification of counter-arguments.
- Research Paper, Part B: By Monday, July 7<sup>th</sup> you will submit a rough draft of the paper. The rough draft needs to be at least 5-7 pages (but can be longer). As I will discuss in class, the more work you do on the rough draft, the better your final draft will be.
- Research Paper, Part C: By Saturday, July 12<sup>th</sup> you will submit your final paper of 12-15 pages.

We will devote class time to topic selection, argument development, and writing skills. Some of your daily assignments will include asking possible arguments to make in a paper, and thinking about types of evidence you could use to answer those arguments.

4. *Extensions.* Because of the compact schedule, there are **no extensions** unless the circumstances are truly dire. You will turn in whatever you have on the due date, and will be graded on that submission.

## V. Grading

- First exam: 15%
- Second exam: 15%
- Final exam: 20%
- Research paper: 30%
- Class participation: 10%
- Congressional workshop: 10%

The grading scale will be:

- A+ 98-100
- A 93-97
- A- 90-92
- B+ 88-89
- B 83-87
- B- 80-82
- C+ 78-79
- C 73-77
- C- 70-72
- D+ 68-69
- D 63-67
- D- 60-62
- F Below 60

## Cell Phones and Laptops

Our three hours together each day will be cell-phone free. When you walk into the class room, you are expected to turn off your phones or leave them at home altogether. If your cell phone rings in class, I am going to employ the “Danny Hayes” rule: “If your phone rings in class, I get to answer it and talk to whomever is on the line—whether it’s your mother, brother, or that person you just recently met. So leave it on at your own peril.”<sup>1</sup> I’m serious about that rule: this is a cell-phone-free zone.

Laptops are a conundrum to many professors, and professors at some schools (including my alma mater Harvard Law School) have experimented with banning them from classrooms altogether. If you are taking notes on your laptop, you are expected to refrain from any computer use that is not germane to the course.<sup>2</sup> This includes, but is not limited to, emailing, chatting, posting photos on Facebook, or reading the latest gossip from TMZ. To enforce this policy, I will be making regular walks around the classroom.

## VI. Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the policies discussed in the JSA policies you have been given. You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in our sessions. With the exception of clearly noted collaborative tasks, however, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an email, an email attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy. Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this policy can also be extended to include failure of the course and disciplinary action. If at any time you have questions about the right way to proceed, simply ask.

## VII. Accommodations for students with disabilities

In compliance with the JSA policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. All discussions will remain confidential, and we can work out a solution.

## VIII. Course Schedule

### Monday, June 23: Introduction: Politics, Power, and Persuasion

- *Who Governs*, pp. 1-8, “The Nature of the Problem”
- *Who Governs*, pp. 276-281, “Citizenship Without Politics”

### Tuesday, June 24: The Constitution

- *We the People*, pp. 16-20 (start at heading “Government” on p. 16 and read through first paragraph at the top of p. 20)
- *We the People*, Chapter 2, pp. 36-79

---

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Danny Hayes is a political science professor at Syracuse University. He lists this policy on his syllabi.

<sup>2</sup> Recent research suggests that in large lecture classes, laptops invite multitasking and distract from the learning enterprise. (See Fried, Carrie B. 2008. “In-class laptop use and its effects on student learning,” *Computers & Education*. 50 (3): 906-914)

**Wednesday, June 25: Federalism**

- *We the People*, Chapter 3, pp. 80-117 (check out page 117 – very difficult material 😊)

**Thursday, June 26: Political Parties: Origins and Development**

- *We the People*, Chapter 9, pp. 319-363
- *Who Governs*, pp. 100 (bottom) – 114, 163-165
- [Note: this is the last reading that will be tested on Saturday's exam]

**Friday, June 27: Campaigns and Elections**

- *We the People*, Chapter 10, pp. 364-413
- *Who Governs*, pp. 223-228

**Saturday, June 28: Exam #1**

- Exam #1, on material from 6/23 – 6/26

**Sunday, June 29: No Class**

<b>MONDAY, JUNE 30: PAPER OUTLINE DUE</b>
-------------------------------------------

**Monday, June 30: Political Participation and Voting**

- *We the People*, Chapter 8, pp. 282-319
- *Who Governs*, pp. 52-62

**Tuesday, July 1: Public Opinion**

- *We the People*, Chapter 6, pp. 208-249

**Wednesday, July 2: The Media**

- *We the People*, Chapter 7, pp. 250-281

**Thursday, July 3: The Courts**

- *We the People*, Chapter 15, pp. 592-635

**Friday, July 4: Review for Exam #2**

- No new reading material

**Saturday, July 5: Exam #2**

- Exam #2, on material from 6/27 – 7/3

**Sunday, July 6: No Class**

<b>MONDAY, JULY 7: PAPER ROUGH DRAFT DUE (5-7 pages)</b>
----------------------------------------------------------

**Monday, July 7: The Courts and Civil Liberties**

- *We the People*, Chapter 4, pp. 118-159

**Tuesday, July 8: The Courts and Civil Rights**

- *We the People*, Chapter 5, pp. 160-205

**Wednesday, July 9: No Class (Speaker Day)**

**Thursday, July 10: Congress**

- *We the People*, Chapter 12, pp. 454-504

**Friday, July 11: Presidency**

- *We the People*, Chapter 13, pp. 506-544

**Saturday, July 12: Policy Considerations**

- *Who Governs*, pp. 305-308
- No other required reading (finish up your papers!)

<b>FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON SAT., JULY 12</b>
--------------------------------------------------

**Sunday, July 13: No Class**

**Monday, July 14: Interest Groups**

- *We the People*, Chapter 11, pp. 414-452

**Tuesday, July 15: Exam #3**

- Exam #3

**Wednesday, July 16: Final Wrap-Up**