

SECONDARY READING LIST

United States Government and Politics Advanced Placement and Dual Credit Kingwood High School 2018-2019

Students,

This course includes two required secondary texts and students are responsible for acquiring a digital or hard-copy of each text. You may purchase the texts new or used, or rent them.

Secondary Texts (required):

Give Us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America. Berman, Ari. Picador, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-250-09472-8.

Students need to have *Give Us the Ballot* by: Monday, January 21

Who's Counting: How Fraudsters and Bureaucrats Put Your Vote at Risk. Fund, John and Hans von Spakovsky. Encounter Books, 2012. ISBN: 978-159403618-7.

Students need to have *Who's Counting* by: Monday, March 18

Purpose: Our course theme for this year will be voting rights and the health of democracy. The texts that have been selected will provide students a comprehensive understanding of the history of voting rights, current issues surrounding voter registration and voter fraud, efforts to reform the election process, and sharply differing political and partisan views. These topics are both relevant and contentious. Your student is expected to utilize their own critical thinking skills to evaluate the claims made by each text and to decide for themselves what they think about the current state of voting rights and how American democracy could be improved. Each text is intended to provide the student with an unfiltered perspective from opposing sides of the political spectrum. Given how polarized our politics have become that means that either text could easily be perceived as “biased” depending on your political views.

Who's Counting was written by John Fund of the conservative publication National Review and Hans von Spakovsky of the conservative Heritage Foundation. Spakovksy is also currently serving on President Trump's Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity.

Give Us the Ballot was written by Ari Berman of the liberal/progressive publication The Nation.

We will read *Who's Counting* and *Give Us the Ballot* to learn about the history of voting rights from the Constitutional Convention to the Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement to today. The texts will provide an in-depth analysis of the content and history of a single piece of legislation; the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The texts will be used to expand upon course content such as the president's “bully pulpit,” the role of the filibuster and committees in crafting and passing legislation, the role of the mass media in the policymaking process, the role of the Supreme Court in interpreting legislation and the U.S. Constitution, the evolution of American political culture, the tension that exists within a federal system between the federal government and state governments, and the history of civil rights and racial equality. The texts will also provide an engaging and relevant summary of recent voting rights events including the new interpretation of the VRA since *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), concerns about voter fraud and Voter ID laws, and efforts to reform voter registration and election processes. President Trump's Advisory Commission on Election Integrity is evidence that voting rights issues will remain front page news in the coming years and students should be equipped to participate in the coming debates about the future of voting rights.

Curriculum and Instruction: *Who's Counting* and *Give Us the Ballot* will be used to enhance the student's understanding of the AP U.S. Government and Politics curriculum, guarantee the college-level rigor expected by Lone Star College, and make the course relevant to current events. Students will be provided a list of key terms for each text that will help them focus on the important concepts and terminology. The student will read the texts during the regular semester following a reading schedule built into the course syllabus. The student is responsible for adhering to the reading schedule. The texts will be assessed using short-answer quizzes, informal discussions, and a Critical Essay that will require the student to evaluate and compare the texts, and ultimately articulate a position on how voting and election processes should be reformed.

Course Expectations and Format: Advanced Placement and Dual Credit U.S. Government 2305 is designed to give students a general overview of the U. S. system of government at the national level. This course will focus upon the U.S. Constitution, democratic theory, federalism, political culture, political socialization, public opinion, political participation, electoral behavior, political parties, interest groups, and the role of the media in U.S. politics. In short, we will study the institutional and legal framework supporting our current system and the many links between Americans and their government. This course emphasizes the development of intellectual, academic, social, and civic skills. The specific course expectations include: 1) To nurture the student's ability to read critically, think rationally, and communicate effectively, 2) To provide problem-solving opportunities that will challenge students to think analytically, while encouraging intellectual risk-taking, 3) To encourage student responsibility for learning, 4) To foster civic participation, 5) To develop a commitment to civil dialogue and willingness to express ideas and consider opposing viewpoints.

Course Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
6. Analyze the election process.
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.