Participation in Government
Mr. Thoman
High School of American Studies
Fall, 2011

Course Information:
Participation in Government (PIG) is a required course for all public high school students in the state of New York. There is no Regents exam that follows this class, but it is mandatory to pass this class in order to graduate from high school. (Option: summer school at Clinton!)

The reading load will be lighter than earlier Social Studies classes, and this class should be fun. It is meant to be a highly interactive course that allows for significant student input (and hopefully less teacher dominance).

While this class may not be as taxing on the brain as AP American History (or even Economics!), it is still a class to be taken seriously. This course is designed to prepare you for a major aspect of being an adult in this country: an active citizen. You will have many competing demands this spring, with senior social events and weighing multiple college acceptances. While Mr. Thoman will keep the work relatively light, you will still be expected to take the class projects seriously, and take an active role all course activities.

Key Components of the class (not necessarily covered in the order presented here)

- ***Introduction to Government***: What is it? Do we really need it? What are the various theories of government? What are the different types of government? How does our democracy function? Just how democratic is our government? What are the different layers of government in our society? How does the US government compare with that of other governments around the world?
- ***Mechanics of Government:*** How is our government set up? How are government officials elected to office? Do we have a democratic system in place when it comes to electing our President? How do things REALLY work in Washington? How does a bill ultimately become a law?
- ***Focus on the Republican Candidates:*** Who is currently running? What are the salient characteristics of each candidate? How is this crop of Republicans different from past Republican candidates? Do any of these candidates have a viable chance of beating Obama and becoming the next President?
- ***The Power of Lobbyists:*** With the recent Supreme Court decision Citizens United v. The Federal Election Commission 2010), the topic of lobbyists, and the influence they have in the political process has dominated the news cycle. We will take a close look at how lobbying works, some specific lobbyist groups, and the kind of sway they hold over politicians today.
- ***Campaign Simulation:*** Two members from the class will run for President, and run campaigns. Every member of the class will participate in the two campaigns.
- ***Lawmaking Simulation***: This will be a major part of the semester. The class will become a simulated version of the US Senate, with each student taking on the role of a selected Senator. There will also be a Presidential election with lobbying, campaigning, and political ads as integral parts of the exercise. The class will be broken up into Committees, with each group taking on a major issue, crafting a bill, presenting it for debate on the floor, and ultimately bringing it for a vote to the Senate (with the final word

being made by the President).

Text to be used in this class:
William McClenaghan, *Magruder's American Government*, 2005

How is the class grade determined?

Component	**% of grade**	**Description**
Projects	40%	There will be one to two projects for each marking period: some involving groups, and others individually based. If a project is turned in late, five points are deducted for each day late.
Exams	20%	There will be on average one multiple choice and one essay exam per marking period. All exams are closed book exams. If absent for an exam, make sure to bring in a note from home.
Quizzes	20%	For every reading assignment, there will be a quiz that follows. There will be very little written homework. Instead, you will be tested on the reading you do at home, whether it is from the text or from other materials assigned in class. You will be able to use notes with some quizzes. Quizzes will always be given at the start of the period. If you should come to class late, and miss the quiz, NO make up will be given unless there is a note brought from home the following day.
Participation	20%	Discussion and engagement in class activities will be an important part of most classes. Simply being a big talker won't necessarily garner high marks. Most important is the content and quality of what is said! This is the one part of the grade that is subjective, and if it is the feeling of the teacher that you are making a real effort to stay engaged with the material, it should translate into a nice participation grade. Regular lateness, excessive and unexcused absences, efforts to do unrelated work in class, or behavior that exhibits a lack of effort will only hurt this part of your grade. All students begin with an "account" of 75 points. Points will be added or deducted from this foundation. Absences, latenesses, and disruptive comments will mean points lost, while positive contributions and good group work will mean points gained.

http://www.thomania.org/school is the place to go when you have missed an assignment, need links for a project, or simply want to check your grade in the class. If out for any reason, make use of this site, so you will not come to class behind in your work.