Marshall High School Civics Fall 2025

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Canvas Instructure Course Site: **https://k12.instructure.com/enroll/EE6LEX**
Remind Group Texting Enrollment: ***https://www.remind.com/join/agdcdca***

Welcome to the study of American Civics this semester! My goal is to engage you in an understanding of why government exists, in what forms it exists, and how it operates, with a specific emphasis on government in the United States. By the end of the semester, we should be reasonably prepared to discuss policy and ideology in United States government.

In understanding my classes, and my teaching style, and hence the expectations I have of you as a student, it is important to understand my philosophy of teaching. In general, first and foremost, I **do not** believe in stupidity. My brother is a high school dropout. I have a Bachelor's Degree suma cum laude, yet he can take apart and put together a car blindfolded while I am lucky if I can check the oil level. Which one of us is stupid? I think all of you are fully capable of doing the work I will be assigning, and grasping the concepts I am teaching, if you apply yourself and take advantage of the time I extend to you for assistance. Yes, it may be difficult, and it may not hold your attention, or be the thing that wakes you up in the morning, but I believe in each and every one of you. **YOU WILL HAVE NO BIGGER FAN IN THIS CLASSROOM THAN ME!** This means that I will do everything in my power to make sure that you succeed in meeting the expectations set out for you in this class. In fact, the class grading system is specifically weighted to preclude failure for any other reason than ***NOT TURNING COMPLETED WORK IN THAT YOU HAVE MADE AN ATTEMPT TO DO CORRECTLY AND/OR NOT ATTENDING CLASS!!*** Therefore, failure in my class is merely a product of the worst four letter word in the world to me, and perhaps the trait that irks me more than any other, and that is being **L-A-Z-Y**. Though you may not think of Civics as your favorite class, it is a graduation requirement, and failing it means repeating it in your senior year, or not graduating, so my advice to you is to avoid laziness, seek my assistance when needed, and do the work, so you can move on in your academic career, and in life.

Secondly, Civics is a Social Science, and my philosophy of the Social Sciences as a necessary subject to our lives is;

- To understand the fundamentals of the society in which the students live
- To understand how that society has developed those fundamentals
- To understand issues and conflicts arising in those societies due to the inevitable changes of time and technological and societal progress
- To prepare students to be active , knowledgeable, and responsible participants in their societies
- To prepare students for critical thinking and logical analysis and developing and strengthening those skills
- To prepare students to utilize effective written and speaking communication skills and developing and strengthening those skills

- To develop solid and successful college students and entry level employees who understand personal responsibility and demonstrate such traits as respect for superiors and co-workers, timeliness, effective uses of technology for communication and research, and the ability to meet deadlines and expectations of performance.

Lastly, my specific philosophy on teaching Civics is;

- To ingrain the basic rules and philosophies central to the foundations of our government and enshrined in the founding documents of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution
- To understand the inner workings of each branch of the federal government and how they work together to develop policy
- To understand the machinations of politics as the primary motivator of policy making over policy development in the marketplace of ideas.
- To be able to examine current events in terms of the inner workings of governmental foundations, public policy, ideology and voter interaction
- To understand the basic framework of their local and state governments and their role as citizens in these smaller governmental units.

We will begin the course discussing a brief history of governments, then move on to the various forms in which they currently exist, and then delve into the history of how and why our government was designed as it is. Our second unit will discuss the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. This unit will ultimately lead to the U.S. portion of the State of Illinois mandated Constitution Exam required to graduate. From this point, our third and fourth units will cover the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the government in that order. The fifth unit will cover Illinois and local government, and will lead to the state and local government portion of the Constitution Exam.

There will also be required readings to develop a higher understanding of Constitutional law in the United States.

I encourage you to ask questions, and to contact me for any reason, if needed. My contact information is listed above. I may not be able to reply immediately due to other obligations after school, but I will reply as soon as I can, and if need be will allow extra time in order for us to work through any difficulties you are having, within reason.

Your grade in this course will be based on the following:

Notes: ***Are not a graded component of this class, but are highly encouraged and recommended as they will enable you to study more thoroughly, and organize the information you have learned. They may also be used, in some instances, on exams and quizzes.***

Participation (20%):
This grade will be based on attendance, behavior, and participation in classroom discussions. Participation points for discussion are awarded on a ticket based program with varying point totals awarded based on the quality and thoughtfulness of the participation. These point totals are awarded at the end of each quarter.

Homework and Labs (15%):
This grade will be based on timeliness of submission, evidence of thought, and completeness, as well as on the ability to accurately extrapolate, apply, and communicate materials learned from class, and fulfill civic duties and responsibilities.

Quizzes (15%):
All quizzes will cover material learned in lectures and readings, emphasizing vocabulary and foundational concepts. They are all located online in the CANVAS application.

Tests (20%):
All tests will be given on CANVAS and will include multiple choice, matching, short answer, and essay questions.

Class Readings: (15%)
The class will be reading materials related to what is being learned in class, including books that delve deeper into class material, and primary sources that allow them to consider the origins of the ideas being presented, and that will allow students to delve deeper into the knowledge being gained.

Semester Project(s): 15%
The semester project is a group research paper putting forth a law of the student's choosing and illustrating their knowledge of the governmental processes necessary to enact such law, as learned in class.

I am not a big fan of extra credit, because I have never had a job where I got extra credit as part of my performance based pay. However, I do occasionally give students the opportunity to correct past errors, or apply hard work effort to improve their grade through extra credit. These opportunities are rare, so if you feel you need them, please take advantage of them when presented. Extra credit awarded is based on a total percentage of your overall grade, so it is not for large point amounts (for example, if an extra credit assignment is said to be worth 5 points, that is 5% of your overall grade.) The maximum amount of extra credit a student can earn is 7 pts. This is enough to bring your grade up one full letter in most cases.

Currently I am offering the following extra credit opportunities:
• I will give one point of extra credit for submitting electronically, the classroom rules distributed on Monday, August 18th . *This must be signed by both you and a parent or guardian.* This will be due by Friday, August 29th. You will have this signed by your parents electronically through the assignment in CANVAS.
• I will give one point of extra credit for completing the class census.
• I will give one point of extra credit for each of the following (up to a maximum of two)
○ Paper Towel Rolls
○ Hand Sanitizer
○ Clorox Wipes

The following are your first homework assignments:
• You will need to complete your first quiz on Canvas prior to 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, August 20th, 2025. This quiz is titled **"ORIENTATION QUIZ"** and covers information contained in the syllabus and classroom rules
• Returning, or electronically completing, the parent and student rules acknowledgement, due Friday August 29th.

Grading Scale: 90-100- A 80-89-B 70-79-C 60-69-D 60↓-F

I do have a reputation as a "hard" teacher, and that is in part true. However, some things you should know about me, particularly if you have never had me in class before:

- I am a naturally loud and excitable person, and a story teller, but that is not me yelling at students. I am actually a harmless teddy bear despite me being loud.

- If you are only concerned about passing the class, I am a very *easy* teacher. If you are present in class, and miss only three days all semester, at the most, for any reason, I will pass you with a 60% D as I feel you will have learned enough from just being in class to justify your passage.

- If you would like a "C", do your best and turn in work, and I can about guarantee you can easily achieve this.

- If you want a "B" or an "A", that is where my reputation holds true. I am short, old, and ugly, but I have spent a lifetime becoming an expert in the areas I teach, so my mind is about the only asset I have. I am not going to compare your knowledge level to mine by certifying that you did excellent (A) or good (B) when, even considering a high school level of knowledge, you are average or below. I have expectations of people in order to be compared to me and my hard work. You should as well. If you had worked hard to become good at something, would you want someone who can barely do what you do, and do poorly with it at that, to be able to say they were taught by you, and were a top student?

I look forward to a fun and enriching semester of Civics studies with you!