



ADVANCED PLACEMENT UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
SUMMER INSTITUTE @ WOODWARD ACADEMY, 2010

I am Paul Levy a College Board consultant. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the AP Government and Politics Summer Institute at the Woodward Academy. In an effort to make this summer's work a practical experience, **PLEASE BRING THE MATERIALS CITED BELOW EACH DAY.**

If you are new to this program and worried about teaching the course for the first time, try to relax as this is not nearly as daunting a task as it seems; as Alphonso Bedoya would say, "government ain't no stinking physics." (Or was it badges?) If you are experienced, and are returning to seek new ideas and invigoration, the institute should help you accomplish these goals. I hope you will share your knowledge, experiences and techniques.

It is my intention to prepare teachers to plan and execute a successful AP government program by giving teachers ideas on how to elevate high school classroom instruction to the level of a freshman college course, and as a result, give students a better chance of succeeding on the AP examination. In a one-week summer institute these objectives can be difficult to achieve because of the differences in teachers' knowledge base, learning styles, formal teacher training and personal educational philosophy. Two of the many determiners of success are the experience of the teacher, and their talent and skill in using the appropriate teaching strategies, with the time problems inherent with AP level classes taught in high school. Hopefully, after a one week cooperative effort, participants will feel more comfortable with the content of the course, become familiar with some of the teaching methodologies that can be employed, and be aware of the vast amounts of resources that are available. Remember that it is very difficult to prove that a specific teaching methodology is superior in outcomes to any other.

Students often complain that government is boring. Because of the breadth of content that teachers have to choose from and the freedom to use almost any example, no student should suffer from boredom. Picking interesting and relevant content is the key to holding student interest. If students leave your class without some degree of anxiety from the content ask yourself, "Was the material interesting and were they engaged?"

Students also claim that government is easy, but the exam results indicate otherwise. In the past few years, nearly 50% have failed to receive a grade of 3 or better, and the truth is that students who don't get 3's really don't know very much. In the early years of the program an exam grade of 3 or better was achieved by over 65% of the participants. It seems that the longer we teach the course the lower the scores, but remember that the reason for lower scores is because the numbers of students participating in the program has nearly tripled since the beginning; the larger the sample the lower the average scores. Unsuccessful exam results can be depressing and humiliating for students and teachers and unfortunately the greater the commitment, the greater the humiliation. But, as in politics, the definition of success is a complicated issue. Consider that the experience of taking the course, regardless of the grade, might be the most important factor for success, although school administrators might not agree. Students need to understand from the very beginning that the course is an academic discipline, not a senior year political recreation, or as my students described it, "a senior year rite of passage".

Many teachers, including those with much experience, complain that they don't know what content to teach because there is so much of it, and given the time restraints on the course, that is probably true. The time-content issue can be mitigated with careful planning, strict time management, and instructional discipline. Another complicating factor is that some teachers have 180 hours to teach the course while others only have 90. For some classes, the actual student-teacher instructional time for the content could be as low as 50 actual clock hours. In schools that use block scheduling, some AP courses are taught in the fall and students go to another teacher/subject for months before the government exam is given. It is difficult to motivate yourself and your former students to prep for an exam 5 months after the course was taught. The AP exam is only administered in May. These factors tend to result in systemic caused depression of exam grades. These issues and suggestions for working around them will be discussed during the week.

WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU TO THE INSTITUTE

Syllabuses for new teachers and courses are supposed to be submitted to the College Board by June 1, 2010, for next year's AP course (academic year 2010-2011). If you have not completed it don't panic. Be prepared to write the syllabus during the week so that you will have a finished document ready to electronically submit to the College Board by the end of the institute and to hand to your students on the first day of class. If you have written and submitted your syllabus to the College Board **bring a copy of the syllabus** to the institute. You will probably want to make some changes. If you have not written your syllabus, it is possible that a submission made during the week will be reviewed before the end of the institute. We can then address any changes that are needed and resubmit it.

The motivation of the College Board and its reviewers and the purposes of an author submitting a syllabus can be very different. What you submit to the Board might not be exactly what you want to use with your students. As long as you address the general content and themes of what you submit to the College Board the details of your student syllabus are not important. It is the freedom you have to use almost any appropriate exemplar, and student-teacher spontaneity that makes the course challenging, fun and interesting to teach. Always be careful because that freedom and spontaneity can get you in big trouble, and remember that you and your principal have attested to your class covering the material which you delineated in your syllabus through the processes you have described.

You will need to **bring a copy of the textbook and reader** that you are planning to use and **a list of web sites and other potentially useful materials**. Textbook publishers are going to send a selection of sample texts to the institute. If you are about to order new books for next year, or are going to make a textbook adoption, I suggest that you **wait until the institute has concluded** so that you can make a more informed decision **for an appropriate book choice**. I deal with books and scheduling on the first day. There is plenty of time to order books for your classes after the institute. If your school has already received new books, *don't* stamp them. As a result of what you learn, you might want to send them back to the publisher and pick something more appropriate for your circumstances. Perhaps the worse thing that can happen is to get saddled with someone else's uninformed textbook choice. Caution: McGruder's American Government is a *high school textbook and inappropriate* for college level A.P. U.S. government. If the syllabus review process operates as intended no reviewer should certify a course (syllabus) using a high school textbook. A high school text could be used as a supplementary remedial device, but never as the basic textbook. If you are going to remediate, *don't* include the process in the syllabus that is submitted to the College Board.

IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO OR OWN A LAPTOP AND A MEMORY CHIP YOU SHOULD BRING IT.

I will try to arrange for usernames and passwords so you can gain access to the Internet with your laptop during class. Arranging the connection might be beyond my control, so I cannot guarantee it. If we cannot arrange classroom access, I hope to have time for the class to work in a computer classroom.

BRING to the APSI:

- **YOUR SYLLABUS**
 - **A LAPTOP AND MEMORY**
 - **YOUR TEXTBOOK & READER**
 - **ANY RESOURCES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE**
 - **YOUR FAVORITE LESSON TO SHARE**
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