**Course Syllabus:** American Government and Politics

**Year/Semester:** Fall 2012 **Meeting Time:** 2nd hour  **Location:** Room 201

**Instructor:** Alex Funk

**Phone:** 390-0826 **Email:** afunk@seedsofhealth.org

**Course Description:** This course is designed to explore the different facets of the United States government through history and today. We will study the Constitution and amendments, state vs. federal powers, the three branches of government and how a bill becomes a law, citizenship, and political parties. We will also explore the major issues surrounding modern American politic and how governmental decisions affect our everyday lives. Some of the issues we are exploring may be uncomfortable for some students, so everyone in class is expected to show the utmost respect to their classmates and teacher through their words and actions. It is going to be essential that, as a class, we learn the ability to agree to disagree.

**Learning Targets:**

**Knowledge:**

Questions we will strive to answer include:

1. How did our government become what it is today?
2. Are we a democractic society?
3. What is the role of the Constitution and its amendments?
4. What are the different parts of the government and how do they interact?
5. What are the roles of political parties and interest groups? How do they affect government and politics today?
6. What is the role of the citizen? How do the people have power?

**Skills:**

Throughout the course you will be developing a number of skills including:

1. How to do accurate research and identify valid sources
2. Recognizing which parts of the government are interacting in different situations
3. Identifying which parts of the Constitution are relevant in different situations
4. Exploring multiple perspectives and solutions to political issues
5. Formulating and articulating your own opinion on issues
6. How to effectively engage in the political realm to get your opinions heard

**Dispositions:**

By the end of this course, students should understand the important role the people play in the American government and feel they have the ability to be important actors. Students will recognize how complex American government and politics can be and understand how different factors impact the workings of our government.

**Major Course Assignments:**

**Classwork** and **homework** are important parts of this class and both will be checked on a regular basis. You should expect **at least two homework assignments per week**. Additionally, you will be writing a **research report** (project grade), offering a solution, and then taking action on a political issue. This project will be discussed in detail and there will be some worktime in class. In addition to **tests and quizzes** throughout the semester, there will be a **final** exam at the end of the semester.

**Primary Course Materials:**

You will need a notebook and folder for this class. You should bring your own pens/pencils—I have a very limited supply to share! Please only use pencil or easily readable pens. There may be additional readings that should be brought to class throughout the semester.

**Grading Policy: Grading Scale:**

Classwork: 15%90-100% =A

Homework: 10% 80-89% =B

Participation: 20% 70-79% =C

Tests and Quizzes: 20% 60-69% =D

Project(s): 20% <60% =U

Final: 15%

*Please note the importance of participation in this class. Individual participation is worth as much as the project and tests and quizzes!*

**Homework and Late Work Policy:**

Homework is due within the first five minutes of class the day it is due. If you turn it in after it will be late and penalized ten percentage points for each day it is late. Once the unit is completed, no homework assigned during the unit will be accepted.

**Academic Integrity:**

**All work** must be original and all sources must be properly cited. Any plagiarism, copying from other students, or cheating in any other way is UNACCEPTABLE and will result in an automatic zero on the specific assignment.

**Attendance and Tardies:**

You have to be in class to participate! Unexcused absences and tardies will be taken into account in determining your final participation grades. Additionally, getting up to leave before I excuse you will result in a tardy for that day. You must also be awake and alert, sleeping in class will negatively effect your grade.

**Behavior Policy:**

We will talk about behavior expectations together as a class, but when our classroom or school rules are broken there will be consequences, including: verbal warning, see me after class, calls home, detention, and referrals.

**Additional Notes:** BE PROACTIVE- See me before or after school if you need help! I am happy to help and that way we can figure things out before they become major problems.