

WESTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Weston, CT

Meeting Date: December 17, 2018

Information Only

Action Requested

Agenda Item Subject: AP Government full year new course proposal

Submitted by: Kenneth Crow

Document Summary/Purpose and/or Recommended Action:

New course proposal for Board approval, AP Government full year course proposal

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Weston Public Schools
Weston, CT
Office of the Assistant Superintendent
Curriculum, Staff Development and Technology

New Course Proposal for 2019-2020

This proposal should be submitted to the Assistant Superintendent.

School: **WHS**

Proposal Submitted By: **Christina Conetta**

Department: **Social Studies**

1. **Name Of Course or Program:**

AP Government and Politics (extend course to a full year offering)

2. **Population to be served:**

Juniors and Seniors. Preference will be given to senior based on number of course sections.

3. **Identify and discuss the Need**

Weston High School is one of the few high schools in the area that does not currently run a full year AP Government and Politics course. See attached table for a sample of high schools in DRG A, B and other Fairfield County that currently offer full year AP government courses.

Our current Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics introduces students to key political ideas, institutions, policies, interactions, roles, and behaviors that characterize the political culture of the United States. Offered as a semester course, this class has run since the fall of 2009. After faculty and student feedback, an analysis of exam scores, and a comparison study of other DRG A and B schools, it is the department's strong recommendation that the course extend to a full year.

4. **Impact on Other Courses / Schedules**

As American Government is a requirement for all students, this course will provide opportunities for students who may not have taken an AP course before to take a required course at this level with the necessary time to understand the depth of the content and the rigor that comes with advanced placement. We currently have five semester sections with approximately seventy five students enrolled each semester. The anticipation is that we will have three full year sections at a .1 increase in FTE.

5. **Budget Related Items**

- Staffing (FTE needed) **.1**
- Supplies: **AP Government and Politics textbook**

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**based on the redesign (this is
required for either a semester or
full year course)**

- Equipment: **No additional**
- Other (software)

6. Evaluation for Program Success or Continuation:

The course will be evaluated through Advanced Placement testing results, and through teacher and student feedback. Past and current juniors and seniors have cited that aside from being a state requirement, this course provides a rigorous academic opportunity before going to college. With an extended full year course, this will provide opportunities to hone in on the depth of content, further authentic learning experiences, and personalized learning.

7. Other Information for Consideration (optional):

The AP redesign stresses the importance of skill development and critical content that “offers students the opportunity to see how individual and their ideas can shape the world in which they live” (AP US Government and Politics Course Framework 7). The redesign focusses on five key elements: Command of the Constitution, students as analysts, knowledge matters, challenging/difficult topics, and civic knowledge. Through this new framework, the students’ ability to understand and analyze the content in a rigorous, mature fashion takes time. A year-long course provides the necessary time for the teachers to break down these skills and support the students’ needs.

8. Please attach a description of the course including the units of study.

Please see attached.

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COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course is designed to give students an analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States. This course includes both the study of general concepts used to interpret U.S. government and politics and the analysis of specific examples. It also requires familiarity with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute U.S. government and politics. The course is for all intents and purposes taught on a college level and requires a substantial amount of reading and preparation for each class. The objectives of this course go beyond a basic analysis of how government “works.” Students will develop a critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the American political system, as well as their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Unit 1: FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Discussion Questions:

What is the purpose of government? Who has power in America? Is America a democracy? Is democracy driven by self-interest? Do you subscribe to a Beardsonian view of the founders motives in the summer of 1787? *How did the founders of the U.S. Constitution attempt to protect individual liberty, while also promoting public order and safety? How have theory, debate, and compromise influenced the U.S. Constitutional system? How does the development and interpretation of the Constitution influence policies that impact citizens and residents of the U.S.?*

KEY TERMS: four views of how power is distributed, democracy, checks and balances, separation of powers, habeas corpus, enumerated powers, a bundle of compromises, grants(block, categorical, in aid) devolution, federalism, mandates, revenue sharing, referendum

Unit 2: INTERACTIONS AMONG BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

Discussion Questions: *How do the branches of the national government compete and cooperate in order to govern? To what extent have changes in the powers of each branch affected how responsive and accountable the national government is in the 21st century?*

Unit 3: CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Discussion Questions: What is the difference between civil rights and civil liberties? What constitutes free speech? What limits have been imposed on the Bill of rights? What is procedural due process? Is affirmative action reverse discrimination? What is the “equal protection” of the law clause? What is meant by “selective incorporation?” What impact has 9/11 had on our

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civil liberties? What is the significance of Brown vs. Board of Education today? *To what extent do the U.S. Constitution and its amendments protect against undue government infringement on essential liberties and from invidious discrimination? How have U.S. Supreme Court rulings defined civil liberties and civil rights?*

KEY TERMS: civil rights, civil liberties, prior restraint, selective incorporation, libel, slander, preferred position, exclusionary clause, de jure segregation, equality of opportunity,

Unit 4: AMERICAN POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND BELIEFS

Discussion Questions:

How does public opinion vary by race, gender, region and other factors? What factors contribute to our political “identity?” Why do Americans distrust government and its officials? Who participates in politics? Why? Should voting become mandatory in America? *How are American political beliefs formed and how do they evolve over time? How do political ideology and core values influence government policy making?*

KEY TERMS: political efficacy, public opinion, gender gap, political elites, political socialization, sampling error, poll tax, grandfather clause, registered voters

Unit 5: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Discussion Questions:

Why do we have a two-party system in America? What the pro’s and con’s of the two-party system? What is the difference between a Democrat and a Republican? How do interest groups influence government decisions and policy making? What role do PAC’s, party organizations and money play in campaigns and elections? Is the media biased? How important is the media in determining public policy? Election outcomes? Serving as a check on the branches of government? *How have changes in technology influenced political communication and behavior? Why do levels of participation and influence vary? How effective are the various methods of political participation in shaping public policies?*

KEY TERMS: realignment periods, political machines, solidary incentive, split ticket, superdelegates, 527 organizations, various primaries, gerrymandering, coattails, soft money, public-interest lobby, adversarial press, trial balloon, loaded language