

ADVANCED PLACEMENT GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How much homework should students expect on average per day/night?

This tends to vary. Due to the level of content and the fact that many of the students in the course are 9th graders taking their first AP course, a large percentage of the reading from texts is done while in class so that assistance from the teacher is readily available. There are some instances where there is a large amount of homework assigned because of time constraints on in-class time and the amount of material that needs to be covered. Giving a daily/nightly average is tough to do as many nights there is no homework but other nights there may be up to 1.5 hours. On a weekly basis, a best guess estimate may be a total of 5 hours of homework.

2. Can a 9th grader handle an AP course?

Yes, but it will be more challenging than other courses they took at the middle school. Many of the 9th graders that take the course are used to getting all “A’s” and close to 100% with little effort. That is rarely the case in APGOPO and that is okay. Many of the students will need to learn how to study, take notes, and put forth some extra effort for the first time in their academic careers to succeed in this course. Again, that is a positive!! If they can learn how they best need to study and prepare for a challenging course as a 9th grader, they will be equipping themselves with the skills to be successful in more difficult classes in their future courses.

3. Is it true that most of the students in APGOPO are either 9th graders (freshmen) or 12th graders (seniors)?

Yes. Most classes are close to 50/50 in terms of the make-up of freshmen and seniors. This is often intimidating to the freshmen at the beginning of the year and from an outsider’s perspective may be a negative. In reality, this has been a positive. It is made well aware to both the freshmen and seniors that there are no class labels in this course and that they are all in the course together as high school students. No, and let it be repeated, no bullying is permitted in the class. The freshmen have actually outperformed the seniors in many of the years that the course has been offered and most of the seniors who take the course are some of Zeeland East and West’s best students. They provide a priceless model to the freshmen in the course about how the best students take notes, read, ask questions, study, and participate in class. Due to the way the course is structured and managed, within a few days of the beginning of the school year, many friendships between freshmen and seniors have already developed and many freshmen have felt more comfortable socially in the school knowing that they know some of the seniors in the hallways, cafeteria, etc.

4. What 9th graders should take the course?

Students who want to be challenged academically and/or have a high interest in the course subject and who are not afraid to fail. It is essentially a college level course so 9th graders, in a sense, skipped high school social studies by going from 8th grade U.S. History to APGOPO (what many would consider the equivalent of a 100 level college course). Yes, most of the 9th grade students will struggle early on in the year with the level of reading and some of the assessments but eventually, through pure experience and the teaching of note taking and study skills, almost all of them “figure it out” and succeed in the class.

5. Why should a 9th grader take APGOPO?

If an 8th grade student is thinking about taking AP courses at the high school level, APGOPO is a great place to test that out. Many of the AP offerings at the high school are more difficult than APGOPO so it can be used as a course to see if the challenge of a higher level course is something a student is capable of and wants to pursue more of in the future. It allows students to dip their toes in the “AP Water” to see if they want to jump in!! Also, as a “bonus”, students get credit for the state required semester of Civics by taking APGOPO.

6. Are students required to take the College Board Advanced Placement exam in May if they take the course?

No. Students do not need to take the exam in May that is administered by the College Board, although if they choose to do so and score well on the exam, they may receive credit at many colleges and universities which could equal a savings of hundreds or thousands of dollars, depending on the institution they may potentially attend. The cost of the exams for this 2018 school year is \$94.

If you have any further questions, comments, or concerns about AP Government & Politics, please do not hesitate to contact your school counseling department or Mr. Jeff Carlson (AP Government & Politics teacher).

jcarlson@zps.org