



**Units of Study:** Over the course of the semester we will be covering the following topics:

Unit 1 Political Parties and Ideologies

Unit 4 The Legislative Branch

Unit 2 Constitution/Founding  
Principles/Civil Rights

Unit 5 The Executive Branch

Unit 3 The Judicial Branch

Unit 6 Foreign and Domestic Policy

In addition, you will be participating in a semester long study of citizenship and what it means to be an active participant in democratic life. We will frequently discuss controversial current events in order to better understand American politics, while also striving to develop essential, life-long skills such as the arts of critical thinking, diplomatic discussion, and respectful listening.

**Absences, Tardies, Late Work and Cell Phones:**

- 1) Please try to attend class every day and complete all work on time.
- 2) You will be considered tardy if you are not in your seat at the bell. Let me know in advance if you are facing serious challenges with the five-minute passing period. See BHS Tardy Policy for more info.
- 3) Work that is due or missed on the day of an unexcused or Gold Card-excused absence cannot be made up. Work that is turned in late because of a tardy will be considered late work (see below). **NOTE: As per BHS stipulations, Gold/Silver Cards cannot be utilized to excuse absences on days when assignments, exams, or presentations are due.**
- 4) Make-up work is your responsibility. **Please contact Mr. Strahn the day you return from an excused absence (or before) to establish a schedule for completing missed work (including homework, quizzes, tests, presentations, essays and projects).**
- 5) Unless prior arrangements are made, work is due the day that it is assigned and must be turned in when requested to receive full credit. E-mailed work submitted on time will **always** be accepted for full credit. Unless prior arrangements have been made, late work (with the exception of exams) will be accepted for **up to one week's time** after the due date and will receive 50% of the grade assigned. Exams can be made up without this penalty. **IMPORTANT:** You must contact Mr. Strahn **in advance** (see contact info above) if you are going to be absent during individual or group presentations. Otherwise, you may not be able to receive credit for these activities.
- 6) I expect the hall pass to be used for emergencies only. Students abusing the hall pass privilege will be denied access to the pass.
- 7) Because cell phones are frequently a distraction, my expectation is that they will not be seen or used (unless part of an approved activity or prior arrangements have been made with me). **Students disregarding this policy will have their cell phones confiscated and their class participation score impacted.**
- 8) ***Academic integrity is critical to character development and the educational process. Students found to have engaged in cheating or plagiarism shall be subject to district and school disciplinary policies (BHS Handbook).***

(OVER)

September 2, 2019

Dear Government Student:

Welcome! Thank you for signing up for this engaging required class. I am hopeful that it will help to instill in you a lifelong interest in American politics, current events, and civic engagement.

And what about me? Believe it or not, I'm a BHS graduate from way back in 1983! Ronald Reagan was President, Michael Jackson was on MTV way too much, and mullets were (sadly) quite popular. After high school, I went to MSU, where I received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and, later, a Master of Arts in American History. After grad school I enjoyed a nine-year career as Bozeman's City Historic Preservation Officer. I've also taught US history and architecture at MSU. I am the author of books on Montana's history and architecture. I also research, write, and record a weekly Montana history radio piece for KGLT called the Montana Medicine Show.

Of all these professional interests, though, teaching is perhaps my greatest passion. I love working with high school students. This is my 17th year teaching at BHS. In my spare time I enjoy playing music, fly-fishing, and spending time with my family. My wife, Katy Paynich, also teaches English here at BHS. We have a twenty-four-year-old son, Ian, as well as twin boys, Alex and Noah, who are now fifteen.

This promises to be an exciting and enriching semester, and I am very much looking forward to getting to know you. Please let me know how I can make your experience in this course as rewarding as possible.

Derek Strahn

**Now that you know some of my history, it's your turn to tell me about yourself. So, using my letter as an example, write a typed, one-page letter of introduction about yourself, your family, and your interests, academic and otherwise. What do you like? Dislike? What do you think I should know about you that would help me do a better job as your teacher?**

**Please have this typed 10-point assignment completed on or before  
Friday, September 6, 2019.**