

Rutherford High School
AP Government Summer Assignments
2023-2024 School Year

This college-level course is a challenging course that is meant to be the equivalent of a freshman college course and can earn students' college credit. Solid reading and writing skills, along with a willingness to devote time to homework and study, are necessary to succeed. Emphasis is placed on critical and evaluative thinking skills and essay writing.

I am asking that you complete the following summer assignments to help prepare you for the class. This assignments will enhance your knowledge of American Government and will enable us to begin the course as soon as school begins. Remember, your success will depend upon your willingness to prepare for it.

Below is the link for a summer program through the Gilder Lehrman Institute for American History. This course will review content from two units of the AP US Government and Politics Curriculum: Unit 4 on American Political Ideologies and Beliefs and Unit 5 on Political Participation. This is optional, but it will be very helpful in your preparation for this class as well as the exam!

[AP US Government and Politics: American Government and You](#)

Assignment Directions: Read *The Bill of Obligations: The Ten Habits of Good Citizens* by Richard Haas. Read the preface which will help provide some context and introduce the author. Then read the rest of the book and address the prompts below. There are two parts of this assignment, so read the directions for each carefully. Any evidence of plagiarism will result in an automatic zero for the assignment. This assignment should be printed out and handed to me by the end of the day Friday, September 8th.

Part 1

The first portion of your writing response should address the major themes of the piece. Haas is placing the future of American democracy on its citizens, and challenging them to sacrifice and cooperate to ensure its survival.

Your response should be written in MLA format, addressing and answering each of the questions below. This is an overall synopsis of the major arguments of the book, as well as your thoughts on the arguments presented. This response should be 3-5 pages.

American Democracy in Trouble

1. What are the causes of democratic deterioration in the United States?
2. What do you believe are the most worrying signs of “democratic backsliding”?
3. How did rights come to occupy such a central role in American democracy?
4. What do you think should be done to fix the flaws in American democracy?
5. How can obligations help uphold American democracy?

Part 2: The Ten Obligations

Using the text, answer the questions in 1-2 paragraphs.

1. Be informed

- a. Why is it important for citizens in democracies to be informed?
 - b. What does it mean to be informed?
 - c. What can you do to become/remain informed?
2. Get involved
- a. What evidence is there that U.S. citizens are not active enough in American democracy? What are the causes of this growing apathy?
 - b. Why do you think citizens should be involved in politics?
 - c. What is one way that you think Americans should be more involved?
3. Stay open to compromise
- a. What are the advantages of agreements that are reached through compromise?
 - b. When is it right to choose compromise and when is it better to stand firm?
4. Remain civil
- a. How do you define civility?
 - b. What is the link between civility and democracy?
 - c. How can civility be promoted?
5. Reject violence
- a. Some argue that certain political objectives are so important that violence is permissible. Do you think any causes justify violence?
 - b. What are the alternatives to using violence to achieve political objectives? What are the advantages of these other approaches?
 - c. How does the Supreme Court mark the difference between free speech and inciting violence? Is the definition too narrow, too loose, or appropriate?
6. Value norms
- a. What is the difference between a norm and a law and what are some examples of norms?
 - b. What norm do you think is particularly important for democracy?
 - c. What evidence is there that important norms have eroded in the United States?
7. Promote the common good
- a. Why should we care about others?
 - b. At some point, one's obligations to fellow citizens will come into conflict with individual rights. How do you think the government should balance promoting the common good over individual rights?
 - c. Do you believe it is ever appropriate to curtail individual rights in order to promote the common good? Use specific examples to illustrate your points.
8. Respect government service
- a. Why is government important and what role does it play in the United States?
 - b. What is the connection between respecting government service and improving the quality of a democracy?
 - c. Should the United States do more to incentivize that its citizens perform a period of public service? Should public service be mandatory?
9. Support the teaching of civics
- a. Why do some argue that the United States is particularly vulnerable to a failure to educate its citizens about the country's history?
 - b. Should civics education be required for all students and why?
 - c. What should a civics education entail?

10. Put country first

- a. What does the phrase “loyal opposition” mean?
- b. Can you name examples in American history when a political leader put country ahead of his or her personal or party interests?
- c. Why is it important to put country first?