

## A.P. US Government and Politics

Dickinson High School

Introduction and Summer Assignment for 2017-2018 School Year

*Welcome to the exciting world of politics!*

**AP United States Government and Politics** is designed to provide students with the analytical skills, factual knowledge, and enduring understandings necessary to deal critically with problems and issues in U.S. Government. It also develops familiarity with various institutions, groups, beliefs and ideas that constitute U.S. Government and politics.

The program prepares students for college courses by making demands upon them equivalent to those made by semester-long introductory college courses. These demands include, but are not limited to, the amount of reading, the complexity of the material, and the degree of engagement with the class and subject matter. AP Government will require a significant reading and writing in order to help you prepare for the AP exam in May.

To help you get started on learning about American politics your summer reading assignment is Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates that Define and Inspire Our Country, by Howard Fineman (2009).

As you read the book do the following:

- **Pay attention to discussions about the Constitution.** Make notes on (i) what arguments took place among those who drafted the Constitution, and (ii) how those issues continue to be contentious today.
- **Note the political figures discussed** – how do public figures and leaders such as Washington, Jefferson, Kennedy etc fit into the 13 arguments
- **Know what the chapter titles mean** – What are the basic issues raised? Be able to discuss at least one important issue that is mentioned in each chapter. What are the arguments on both sides?
- **Respond to Questions on the Thirteen American Arguments handout. (next page)**

*I look forward to working with each of you in the fall. I will be travelling this summer, but I will check my e-mail occasionally. Please contact me if you have any questions.*

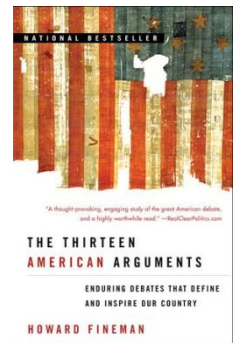
[eterrell@dickinsonisd.org](mailto:eterrell@dickinsonisd.org)

*Here's to a great school year,*

*Regards,*

*Elaine Terrell*

# The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates that Define and Inspire Our Country



**As you read the Fineman book, complete EIGHT out of the 12 questions. Please respond fully and in complete sentences. I am interested in your opinions – so all work should be original. This is due the first week of school.**

1. What is an argument according to Fineman? How and why is Howard Fineman qualified to make the arguments he makes? Explain, the six goals of the author.
2. How has our definition of a “person” changed over time?
3. *“We were, and are different. We are founded on ideas, not genetics; on aspirations, not the accidents of geography. We do not trace our nationhood to a tribal history, but to a concept of liberty and constitutional order that was unique in the world when it was first officially proclaimed in 1776. In theory, anybody could be become an American – and most of the world has tried.”* What does Fineman say about this? What are your thoughts?
4. How does Fineman use Senator Bill Frist as an example? What does this say about the role of faith and its traditions in society today? How, historically, has it been *“our destiny to argue about faith in public life?”* What examples exist of how faith and politics are intertwined? Cite examples from the text.
5. How does Fineman argue that 9/11 changed journalism and the protection that journalists’ writings had? What is the difference between *“personal privacy”* and *“governmental secrecy”*? How is/was that changed by other media, war, and history? Consider the Espionage and Sedition Acts in your answer.
6. Considering Fineman’s discussion of the work of Hamilton and Madison, how can words be given such power (as in our United States Constitution)? How and why are judges entrusted with interpretation of those words? How did *Marbury v Madison* establish all future interpretations?
7. How can Hurricane Katrina be used as evidence in the debate between local v national authority? What does this say about the strengths and weaknesses of federalism? How do the three colonial subcultures contribute to the issue of sovereignty and power?
8. *“In 2001, Osama bin Laden did more to centralize governmental power in America than anyone since FDR.”* Still *“states’ rights isn’t just a Southern idea: it is an American one.”* How does the author resolve both ideas? Use specific evidence from the book in your response.
9. Why has presidential leadership (or lack thereof) come to dominate the discourse of American public life? Consider the founding fathers, events like the Civil War and the great Depression, controversies like Watergate and Vietnam, and elections in your response.

10. What is the argument over foreign policy about and not about? How did it begin and where have we, as a nation gone from there? (Suggestion: Consider only hitting the high points as mentioned by the author.) How has politics and the economy shaped our decisions about diplomacy?

11. *"We need elites, even admire them. We designed a meritocracy to produce them in what we regard as a democratic way. But we never fully trust them."* While considering the "American character," explain this idea from both a political and economic viewpoint.

12. How did the 2016 campaign reflect the architecture of the American argument? Respond considering two of the following (A) the limits of individualism, (B) A Fair "More Perfect " Union, (C) Who is a person, (D) War and Diplomacy.