

Welcome to AP American Government.

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This course is much more interesting when you are aware of current issues, as they provide “real life” demonstrations of the ideas and principles we study in class. Your summer assignment is to use internet sources to become familiar with the language of some of the issues, to read articles from credible news sources, and to learn about issues and candidates.

There are multiple levels of government. These tasks will expose you to current issues at the federal, state, and local levels.

**This assignment is due the first day in class.** Please be neat. If this assignment is not completed on your computer word processor, then it should be written neatly.

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#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Read everything.
2. Answer all the questions in the **Your Task** boxes in complete sentences (or paragraphs as needed).
3. Where you are instructed to find a news article, do the following **summary and analysis**:
  - Provide a full MLA citation for the article.
  - Summarize the article (Who, what where, when, why?) - a summary is a retelling in fewer words, not a description of the topic, not an analysis or evaluation.

Analysis (So what? What are the implications?) - an analysis breaks something into its component parts in order to study it.

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#### I. Federal Government.

##### A. The Presidency.

The summer of 2019 is the official start of the 18-month presidential election cycle. More than 20 Democrats have announced their candidacy. The first debate is set for this month, the second for July. Because of the large number of candidates (like for Republicans in 2016), the Democrats have set rules for eligibility to participate in the debates and broken the candidates into two groups for the first debate.

One Republican, so far, has declared a challenge to the president.

Ballotpedia has a website with resources on candidates running for president in 2020:

[https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential\\_candidates,\\_2020](https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_candidates,_2020) (yes, there's a comma in that URL)

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#### Your Task.

1. Read “How Does the Presidential Primary Process Work?” at VoteSmart.org (<https://votesmart.org/education/presidential-primary>)
    - a. What's the difference between a caucus and a primary?
    - b. What are the different kinds of primaries?
  2. What are the Democrats' eligibility rules for participation in the debates?
  3. Who is the one Republican challenging Trump, and why?
  4. Find an article related to the Democratic debates, or to one of the candidates. Then complete the **summary and analysis** as directed in the Instructions.
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B. Congress.

One of Congress's primary implied powers is that of oversight, the ability to monitor the work of the executive branch. Recently the White House has directed current and former staff to refuse to comply with congressional subpoenas to appear; this includes Attorney General William Barr. The President has declared that he will fight all subpoenas. As a result, the chairs of various House committees have declared an intent to file Contempt of Congress charges.

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**Your Task.**

1. What is a subpoena, and when can Congress issue one?
  2. What is Contempt of Congress, and what are the procedures around enforcing a declaration that someone is in contempt of Congress?
  3. Find an article related to the White House refusal to comply, and any action taken by the House. Then complete the **summary and analysis** as directed in the Instructions.
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C. Russia & Obstruction of Justice Investigations.

The FBI recently completed an investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election, and possible obstruction of justice by the president.

Based on the Mueller Report, the House of Representatives has been holding hearings in various committees. Mueller's comments about his report included that if he had found enough evidence to declare that the president had not obstructed justice, he would have said so.

The Mueller Report and recent comments by the president (that he would accept, and not report to the FBI, "dirt" against an opponent provided by a foreign government) have again raised calls for impeachment proceedings.

Overshadowed by the impeachment debate are the details of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, and evidence that they are already engaged in interfering with the 2020 election.

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**Your Task.**

1. Answer the following questions:
    - a. What is "obstruction of justice"?
    - b. What are the constitutional grounds for impeachment?
    - c. What are "high crimes and misdemeanors"?
  2. Watch for and read a news article regarding one of the following: (1) calls for impeachment; (2) the House hearings/investigations; or (3) about concerns about Russian interference in the 2020 election. Then complete the summary and analysis as directed in the Instructions.
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D. The Supreme Court

The U.S. Supreme Court's session is from October through June. While the cases are argued at various times throughout the session, the last and often most complex decisions are announced in June. Among those still to be decided are several high-profile cases, on topics such as

- a. political and racial gerrymandering (Virginia House of Delegates v. Bethune-Hill [decided 6/17], Lamone v. Benisek, Rucho v. Common Cause),
  - b. adding a citizenship question to the 2020 census (Department of Commerce v. New York),
  - c. separation of church and state/religious symbols on government property (The American Legion v. American Humanist Association),
  - d. racial bias in jury selection (Flowers v. Mississippi),
  - e. Indian tribal rights (Herrera v. Wyoming, Carpenter v. Murphy), and
  - f. whether the First Amendment applies to public-access channels (Manhattan Community Access Corp. v. Halleck).
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**Your Task.**

1. Familiarize yourself with background of the case(s) that raised one of these issues (try [www.scotusblog.com](http://www.scotusblog.com) or [www.oyez.org](http://www.oyez.org) (pronounced OH-yay).
  2. Find and read a news article about the decision. Then complete the summary and analysis as directed in the Instructions.
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**II. Washington State.**A. Washington State Ballot Measures.

The Washington State Constitution provides for citizen legislation by initiative. Go to the Secretary of State web page on initiatives (<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/initiatives/>) and answer the following:

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**Your Task.**

1. Click on the link to the Circulating Petitions FAQ. What is the process - all the steps/requirements - for getting an initiative on the ballot?
  2. What happens if an initiative passes?
  3. **AFTER JULY 6** (the deadline for submitting signatures), go back to the site and click on the link to Initiatives to the People filed in 2019. Choose ONE initiative of interest to you.
    - a. Summarize the intent of the initiative.
    - b. Identify the arguments in favor of and against this initiative.
    - c. Identify the supporters and opponents of this initiative.
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**III. City of Seattle.**A. City Council.

The city council is divided into seven districts, plus two at-large positions (the result of a charter amendment approved by voters in 2013). The seven district seats' terms all expire this year. The primary is August 6. Ballard is in District 6, and 14 candidates are running to replace retiring Mike O'Brien.

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**Your Task.**

1. Read "[Seattle's business lobby sees opportunity to unseat the City Council's progressive majority](#)" from the Seattle Times for some context and complete the **summary and analysis** as directed in the Instructions.
  2. **AFTER AUGUST 6** (the primary), identify the two finalists for District 6, and one other. Using their web sites, identify 3 issues of importance to you, and create a table comparing their positions on those issues.
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B. School Board.

The Seattle Public Schools Board of Directors consists of seven members elected in geographic districts to four-year terms, on a staggered basis. This year four seats are up for election (Districts 1,2,3 & 6). Ballard is in District 4, and draws mainly from there, but also draws students from Districts 1 and 2. Members run within their districts during primaries and citywide during general elections.

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**Your Task.**

1. **AFTER AUGUST 6** (the primary), identify the two finalists for District 1 or 2, and one other. Using their web sites, identify 3 issues of importance to you, and create a table comparing their positions on those issues.
  2. Find and read a news article about the school board elections. Then complete the **summary and analysis** as directed in the Instructions.
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Have a restful summer. You'll need it.

Mr. Locklin

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*I will begin checking email in mid-August. Feel free to contact me with questions regarding this assignment or the class at that time - or, expect an answer to earlier questions then.*

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### Other Notes

- News Sources: I expect that you become familiar with the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Seattle Times*, *Economist*, *Wall Street Journal*, and other media sites that will provide many resources for our course of study together. The public radio program, *On the Media*, explores how the media is reporting current topics. *Politico* covers political news. Also, whenever political issues are being discussed in the media, it's prudent to check the facts. [Politifact.com](http://Politifact.com) or [factcheck.org](http://factcheck.org) of interest.
- Keeping Informed: You are encouraged to subscribe to podcasts, download smartphone apps, or subscribe to RSS feeds for these and other news outlets. *You are expected to keep up with the news headlines and the activities of the different branches and levels of government*, and to observe how social media impacts citizen awareness and participation. One way to do that is by signing up and following one of the social media feeds from government agencies or elected officials, or from political advocacy groups such as the ACLU or the American Constitution Society, CATO Institute, among many others.
- Registering to Vote: If you will be 18 by primary election day (**August 6**), you should register to vote, and can do so online at <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/register.aspx>. You will need one of the following:
  - a current Washington State driver license or a current Washington State ID card
  - If you do not have either of these, you may still register by mail or in person.
  - New Voter Registration Deadlines, effective July 2019:
    - 8 days before Election Day: To register by mail or online, your application must be received no later than 8 days before Election Day.
    - Election Day: Visit a local voting center to register or update your address in person no later than 8 p.m. on Election Day
  - All of this also applies for the general election, which will be **November 5**.