

## AP U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS Summer Preparation, 2021

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Welcome to AP U.S. Government and Politics! This course is equivalent to an introductory-level college political science course. There is a great deal of material to cover this year. Familiarity with basic concepts will give you a running start prior to the start of the new school year.

*\*You will always be expected to read the appropriate textbook chapters, take your own notes, and read supplementary readings before we cover the material in class.\**



### Assignment for the Entire Summer

Students who follow news and politics are more successful in this class. You can learn a great deal about politics and the workings of our government by being informed.

- Keep up with the daily news. I cannot over emphasize the importance of current events.
- Read a daily reliable source: the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal* are the most comprehensive newspapers in the country. On-line subscriptions and student subscriptions are reasonably priced.
- Along with “hard” news, read editorials and opinion columnists. See the range of political ideology and varied viewpoints.

### Preparations and Assignments Prior to the First Day of Class

1. Read “Easy in the Harness” by Gerry Spence (pp 2-4 of this document). Mr. Spence, a trial attorney and prolific author from Wyoming, began his law practice in the early 1950s. He has handled many high profile cases. To find out more, you can google his name.

- Answer questions 1-3 in proper paragraph form. Use quotes to support your points.
- *Be prepared to turn in this assignment on the first day of class.*

2. In the reader for this course, *The Enduring Debate* edited by David T. Canon, John J. Coleman, and Kenneth R. Mayer, read pp 34-44 (reading 4 by Jones, Cox et al. & reading 5 by Warshawsky).

- Respond to questions 1-4 on page 44 in proper paragraphs. Use quotes to support your points.
- *Be prepared to submit this assignment on the first day of class.*

3. Familiarize yourself with the textbook: *American Government: Stories of Nation (For the AP Course)* by Scott F. Abernathy and Karen Waples. The book is divided into units that conform to major topics of the AP Exam.

- Examine the “geography” of the book.
  - Read “To the Student” on page viii.
  - Read “Tips for Taking the AP Exam” on page xix.
  - Notice that there are two tables of contents: Brief Contents and Detailed Contents.
  - Read “How to Use This book” on p. 17.
- Read chapter 1, sections 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3., pp 2-21. Follow the directions listed below. We will discuss in class; you do not have to write.
  - Read the AP Political Science Practices section (p.7 and p. 11). What do these tell you about the work of political scientists?
  - Read the AP Required Documents section (p. 11).
  - Find the Section Review (p.8, p.12, p.15, and p.16)
  - Find AP Key Concepts (vocabulary terms) (p. 17).

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Gerry Spence  
*Easy in the Harness:  
The Tyranny of Freedom*

“What is freedom?” an enlightened teacher asked her class.

“It’s when you can leave home and go wherever you want, and do whatever you want, and your parents can’t tell you what to do,” a child replied.

“But what if you get hungry? Are you now free to starve?”

“I would go home,” the child says.

We are not free. Nor have we ever been. Perfect freedom demands a perfect vision of reality, one too painful for the healthy to endure. It requires that we be alive, alert, and exquisitely aware of our raw being. Faced with the pain of freedom, man begs for his shackles. Afraid of death, he seeks the stultifying boundaries of religion. Afraid of loneliness, he imprisons himself in relationships. Afraid of want, he accepts the bondage of employment. Afraid of rejection, he conforms to the commands of society. If our knowledge of freedom were perfect we would not choose it. Pure freedom is pure terror.

Freedom is like a blank, white canvas when no commitments, no relationships, no plans, no values, no moral restraints have been painted on the free soul. A state of perfect freedom is a state of nothingness. When we care for another, when we make room for another’s wants and needs, we have lost an equal portion of our freedom, but in the bargain we are freed of loneliness. When we take on marriage and a family, we are bound by our vows, the law, and our moral commitments to spouse and child, but our bargain frees us of detachment and meaninglessness. When we live in the country we can drive our trucks across the prairies, but when we join a community we cannot drive our cars across our neighbor’s lawns. We can belong to no clubs without agreeing to their rules, or to a neighborhood without recognizing the rights of our

neighbors. When we become residents of a village, a state, or a nation, we must obey its laws. In short, when we join into any relationship our dues are always paid in freedom.

Robert Frost, understood freedom and expressed its essence in a typical Frostian metaphor: “Freedom is when you are easy in the harness.” Easy in the harness. I used to sit behind a team of good horses, Star and Spiffy, and together we mowed the meadow hay. Their flanks foamed with sweat and after struggling for weeks at their tugs, sores developed on their necks from their rubbing collars. I remember a deep, sad look in the eyes of the horses. I liked to touch the horses, to feel their softer-than-velvet noses against my cheek. I liked their smell. I loved old Star and Spiffy.

I suppose that team of horses was mostly “easy in the harness.” Willingly they would trudge up and down the field all day, their heads down, their tugs tight, their flanks digging like the pistons of engines, and at the end of the day when I lifted the wet harnesses from their backs they would run for the corral and lie down in the deep dust and roll, and role again. Then they would get up and shake the dust from their backs and wait for me to open the corral gate to the pasture.

One spring when I returned to the ranch I found Star and Spiffy gone. Nobody wanted to talk about it. “They’re just gone,” the old rancher said.

“But where?” I asked

“Gone,” was all he would say, and the way he said it with such finality made it clear that was to be the end of it. Later I learned that each fall a horse buyer visited the neighboring ranches to buy the ranchers’ worn-out nags. They bought a few cents a pound for dog meat. Some claimed the meat was shipped to Europe where horse meat was allegedly a delicacy, especially with the French, but I never confirmed it.

As I look back on it the horses were as easy in their harnesses as we. And their deaths were perhaps better than our own. I could see in my mind’s eye the old team being shipped off, the eyes of the old horses as sad as ever. But it was only another ride to them. They were not being trucked to their execution. Their bellies were not gripped with fear. There was no sadness, no regrets. And as the truck rumbled down the highway toward the slaughterhouse, the fall air must have blown through their manes and made their old tired eyes water, and they must have felt joy.

Every day we spend our freedom like careless children with too many pennies. In exchange for acceptance by our friends we give up the right to say what we think. Being socially proper is more important than possessing a fresh, uncompromised soul. Being acceptable to our neighbors is often more important than being acceptable to ourselves. For nearly two hundred years slavery thrived in America over the silent protestations of decent citizens enslaved themselves by the tyranny of convention. The price of freedom is often rejection, even banishment. . .

. . . The notion of “being American” is heavily laden with ideas of freedom. Being American and being free are often thought synonymous. As Americans we envision Washington’s battered patriots marching to the beat of the boy drummer. We see Washington crossing the Delaware. We think of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and remember the Civil War, Lincoln and the Gettysburg Address, the freeing of the slaves, the great world wars “to keep America free.” We see the billowing smoke of the ships sinking at Pearl Harbor and our American heroes raising the flag at Iwo Jima. And we remember the marches of Martin Luther King, Jr. We believe we are free in the same way we believe in God. Freedom is an article of faith, not a fact, not a condition. True, the freedom we enjoy in America, when set against the freedom of people in other lands, is emblazoned like a single candle lighting the gloom.

Laws and order and rules, although antithetical to freedom, provide us with safeguards by which we are free to live with reasonable safety among those who are stronger. But the strong impose themselves upon us nevertheless. Although our younger, stronger neighbor is not free to

force us out of our homes, the banks can do so if we fail to pay it its tribute of green flesh. Although we argue we are free to labor where we please for whomever we please, unless we show up in the morning, unless like old Star and Spiffy, we take our places in our stanchions and consent to the harness, we will be free to join the depressed and desperate masses of the unemployed who become harnessed to yet another master – fear.

And so I also think of old Star and Spiffy, and of their freedom. Were I as successful, as free. Were I able to know the meadows of my life and live by my own work as well. Were I able to remove the harness from within- such is freedom. And when finally the legs have given out, when the bones are old and brittle and crooked, and at least the shoulders too crippled to pull the load, I should hope that on the way to wherever it is that old horses and old men go I feel the wind through my hair, and that my eyes do not water from tears, but from having felt the joy of the trip, the trip to the last and only freedom.

### Questions

1. What, according to Spence, is perfect freedom, and why is it so hard to bear?
2. Explain the point of the story Spence tells about Star and Spiffy. What does their story say about freedom?
3. Spence says that each American wears a “harness” within. What forces and institutions, according to Spence, impose this invisible harness? What other social forces or institutions would you add to this list? To what extent do you agree with Spence that “we long for a more successful domestication of the human species”?