Welcome to AP U.S. Government and Politics!

For the summer reading selection, please read the following book:


ISBN: 978-1-250-20579-7

This is the story of Anthony Ray Hinton, a man convicted of capital murder in Alabama in 1985. He spent 30 years on Alabama’s Death Row, including several years after he proved his innocence. This book takes a look not only at the reality of prison life, but some of the ways Mr. Hinton tried to survive his incarceration.

In this course we will look at the government and its role in issues of domestic policy, which includes law enforcement and punishment. We also work on argumentative essay writing, a key component of the AP examination next May. For this assignment, I ask that you read the book, answer the following questions, and be prepared to write an argumentative essay when we begin school in August. It’s not difficult, but you have to articulate a point and support it with evidence from a text. This probably sounds familiar, right?

Please type your responses to the following questions—to turn in the second day of school (Thursday, August 6th). Unless specified below, your responses do not need to be a specific length, but I should be able to tell that you actually read the book.

1. Describe the crime Mr. Hinton is accused of committing. Why do officials believe he is the culprit?
2. Explain why Mr. Hinton observes, “the best chance for my life was to get sentenced to death.”
3. What specific things did Hinton pray for while he was in prison? Why didn’t he simply pray to be released from jail?
4. A big part of our course is the discussion of federalism, the sharing of powers between the state and federal government. In your opinion, what is the role of the state government here? What, if any, is the role of the federal government in the case of law enforcement and potentially erroneous incarceration?
5. Research a recent news story (within the past year) that is similar to the one in the book. Turn in a copy of the news story and a one-paragraph written summary including the facts of the events, how it is similar (or different) to the case in the book, and your thoughts on the issue. We’ll spend a lot of time discussing our thoughts about subjects, always in the context of evidence. Be prepared to share your opinions with support of why you believe this way. Any statistics to back up your argument? Search for some!
6. What are your thoughts on the death penalty? Should it remain, or should we abolish it? Write about 3-4 sentences supporting your position.

I look forward to meeting you in the fall! Have a great summer

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1 Domestic policy is an administrative decision, law, or program that impacts issues within the nation’s borders. Examples include healthcare, education, and police (law enforcement).