

AP UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - SYLLABUS

COURSE OVERVIEW

The AP U.S. Government is an in-depth look at the government of the United States that includes a study and evaluation of the political system that runs it. The course is designed to help students develop an understanding and appreciation for how the political system works and how it influences and touches the lives of every American. Also, it is designed to help students understand how their participation in the system is important to its survival. It requires an interest and willingness to work on an accelerated level. The test, supplemental readings and assignments are mostly on a college level and require the students' best efforts.

READING: In order to be successful in a college level course of this type, it is essential that students maximize their time and complete all assigned reading prior to class discussions. The required reading, along with the lectures and class discussions figure prominently in their formal evaluation on quizzes and examinations. The required reading will be substantial, but not overly burdensome if students organize and plan accordingly (see syllabus)

CURRENT EVENTS: Knowledge of contemporary political events is essential for the analytical focus that must be exhibited in the writing required in the course.; It is also highly recommended for success on the National Exam given by the College Board in May. It is important that students expose themselves to the national political news found in some of the following. *The Houston Chronicle, U.S.A. Today, The New York Time.* news magazines such as *Time Magazine, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Reports*, any nightly television news program or other programs such as CNN Reports and Meet the Press. A current event for each branch of the Government will be turned in as we study that branch. Students will write a brief summary, give their opinion of what action is being taken and give reasons for their opinion

GROUP PRESENTATIONS: Students will work in groups to lead discussion and present interpretations on selected reading assignments. The format and type of presentation will be left to the group presenting.

DATA AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS: Throughout the course of the semester students will be required to analyze various political statistical data. This will include charts, graphs, political cartoons, and other data distributed in class. From time to time students will respond to a series of questions with respect to the data presented.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING: In addition to your text students will be issued American Government, Reading and Cases by Peter Woll. Assignments will be made in this book as well as the regular text. Other reading assignments from other sources will also be assigned at times. (see syllabus)

SPECIAL PROJECTS: Students will be assigned a project at the beginning of each semester that usually requires them to follow a national, state or local election or the state legislature's work during a session. They are given the assignment instruction sheet by the third week of school and it is due three weeks before final exams. It requires research on candidates, party platforms, the accumulation of newspaper and magazine articles, political cartoons and other pertinent information depending on what type of election or legislative work they are following.

COURSE SYLLABUS AND OBJECTIVES

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Students will:

- * Master a broad body of historical and political knowledge
- * Use historical data to support an argument or position
- * Interpret and apply data from original documents, including cartoons, graphs, letter, etc.
- * Effectively use analytical skills of evaluation, cause and effect, compare and contrast.
- * Work effectively with others to produce products and solve problems.
- * Learn and apply various study strategies to promote academic success

TEXTBOOK; GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA; PEOPLE, POLITICS AND POLICY by George C. Edwards III, Martin P. Wattenburg, Robert L. Lineberry, 10th edition, Longman, 2002.

UNIT I: INTRODUCTION TO GOVERNMENT AND CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS (2 WEEKS)

Required reading : Text Chapter 2 & 3

John Locke, "Second Treatise on Civil Government" Woll pp 4 - 5

Woll: "How Not to Read the Constitution" pp. 47-49

Woll: Chapter 2 'Federalism" pp 50-64

Handouts: "Principles of the Constitution

Federalist Papers Worksheet

Comparison of Philosophies (A comparison of Hobbes, Rousseau and Locke)

Evaluations: Vocabulary quiz

Reading quizzes

Unit Exam with essay, fill in the blank, multiple choice and free response questions.

Origins of the American Republic, Principles of the Constitution, struggle over ratification of the Constitution and origins of political parties, structure of American Federalism,

UNIT II: LEGISLATIVE BRANCH (3 WEEKS)

Required reading: Text – Chapter 12

Sections of Chapter 11 - Influence of lobbyists and interest groups on Congress

Sections of Chapter 7 (The media and Congress)

R. Fenno, “If, as Ralph Nader, Says, Congress is “The Broken Branch,” How came we love our Congressmen so Much?”384–391

Constitution – Article 1, Text pp. 703 – 705

Handouts: “Congress Structure and Organization Scavenger Hunt”
“How a Bill Becomes a Law”

Example of a Bill

Evaluations : Vocabulary quiz
Current event assignment (Summary and opinion of an article on Congress from a current periodical).

Notes and reading quiz

Unit Test –Essay and total recall questions. Free response questions

Structure, organization and work of Congress. How a bill becomes a law. Leadership, Committee system and powers of Congress, election of members of Congress. (Group presentations on various Congressional topics)

UNIT III: THE EXECUIVE BRANCH (2 WEEKS)

Required reading: Text – Chapter 13

Sections of Chapters 9&10 on Presidential elections

Richard Neustadt, “Presidential Power”, Woll pp. 284 – 287

James Barber “Four Types of Presidential Character, Woll pp. 291 – 301 (Group Presentations)

Constitution – Article II, Text pp. 705 – 706

Handouts “Presidential Trivia”

Copies of articles from periodicals about the Presidency.

Evaluations: Vocabulary quiz

Reading and notes quiz

Current event assignment (summary and opinion of article on the Executive Branch)

Unit Test – Essay, multiple choice, fill in the blank and Free response questions

Development of presidential power, roles of the President, support staff, election of a President.

UNIT IV: JUDICIAL BRANCH (2 WEEKS)

Required reading: Text – Chapter 16

“Marbury v. Madison (1803)” – Woll pp. 423 – 426

A variety of supreme Court cases (Group Presentations)

William J. Brennan, Jr. “How the Supreme Court arrives at Decisions”, Woll pp. 437

Constitution – Article III, Text pp. 706

Handouts: Landmark cases

Avenues of Appeal – “Routes to the Supreme Court”

Evaluations: Vocabulary quiz

Reading and Notes quiz
Current Event assignment
Unit Test – Essay, fill in the blank, multiple choice and free response questions.

Courts interpretation of the Constitution, history, organization and role of the Judicial Branch.

UNIT V: (2 WEEK) CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Required reading: Text: Chapters 4 & 5
Woll: Chapter 3 –“ Gideon v. Wainwright” pp 93
“ Brown v. Board pp 125 & 128
“ Roe v. Wade” pp 144

Handouts: Political Cartoons (Interpretations of cartoons pertaining to Civil right and liberties)
Issues questionnaire (Students respond with their thoughts on current issues e.g. affirmative action, abortion, capital punishment, etc.)

Evaluations: Vocabulary quiz
Reading quizzes
Unit exam - Essay, fill in the blank, multiple choice and free response questions

Guarantees to political and civil rights granted under the Constitution, the impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on civil rights.

UNIT VI: POLITICAL PARTIES (2 week)

Required reading: Text Chapters 8
Woll; “Divided We Govern” Pg 189 –197
Woll “The Governmental Process” Pg. 241–246

Handouts: 2000 Presidential election – Exercise on popular vote v. electoral vote.
Charts on voter turn-out
“Where do you fit? – Political Attitude Activity”
Political Platform Activity

Evaluations: Vocabulary quiz
Reading and Notes Quiz
Unit Major test – Essay, fill in the blank, multiple choice and Free response questions

History of political parties, third parties, impact of parties on government, function of parties

UNIT VII: POLICY MAKING: (2 WEEK)

Required reading: Text – Chapter 8

Handouts: “Characteristics of Policymaking”
Charts:
a. Sources of Federal Revenue
b. Federal expenditure
Instructions for “Policy Making Activity” (group presentation)

Evaluation Unit Test – Multiple choice and free response questions.

The making of public policy, the roles of the bureaucracy and courts in policymaking, measuring public opinion (polls), media influence, how foreign policy is made.

