

## AP UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Advanced Placement (AP) curriculum is designed to give students an analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States. Students will study both general concepts used to interpret U.S. politics and examine specific examples. The AP Government course requires students to learn facts and concepts and understand typical political processes. The course will require students to master historical and analytic skills, including; chronological and spatial thinking, historical research and interpretation. Students will evaluate viewpoints presented through major print and electronic media, understand statistical data and analyze trends related to significant political events. Emphasis is placed on applying problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, interpreting graphs and tables, organizing information, evaluating information, and communicating orally and in writing. The course aims to help the student to participate effectively and democratically in the American political society

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

This course explores the political theory and everyday practice that direct the daily operation of our government and shape our public policies. The express purpose of this course is to prepare students to take the AP Exam for U.S Government and Politics. The course is for all intents and purposes taught on a college level and it requires a substantial amount of reading and preparation for every class. The objectives of this course go beyond a basic analysis of how our government “works.” Students will develop a critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the American political system, as well as their rights and responsibilities as citizens. In addition to described content, the course will also work to refine important skills. They include analyzing data and writing and presenting written and oral arguments. In order to help students master the ability to write a good political science essay the course will concentrate on the instruction of several essential skills:

Effective writing style

The ability to make arguments

The ability to evaluate critically and to compare scholarly works

The ability to synthesize political science data

The ability analyze, interpret, and respond to stimulus-based data including charts, graphs, cartoons, and quotes

The course will cover a large amount of content. The study of American Government is both historical and contemporary. Therefore, it is essential that students remain aware of what is happening in the world. It is suggested that regular reading of newspapers and news magazines as well as the regular viewing of news broadcasts be maintained throughout the course.

**COURSE STANDARDS:**

Students explain the fundamental principles and moral values of American democracy as expressed in the U.S. Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy.

Students evaluate the scope and limits of civil rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured.

Students evaluate the fundamental values and principles of civil society (i.e., the autonomous sphere of voluntary personal, social, and economic relations that are not part of government), their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.

Students analyze the unique roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government as established by the U.S. Constitution.

Students summarize landmark U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments.

Students evaluate issues regarding national, state and local elective offices.

Students analyze and compare the powers and procedures of the national, state, and local governments.

Students evaluate the influence of the media on American political life.

Students analyze the origins, characteristics, and development of different political systems across time, with emphasis on the quest for political democracy, its advances, and its obstacles.

Students formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within our constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the following concepts: majority rule and individual rights; liberty and equality; state and national authority in a federal system; civil disobedience and the rule of law; freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial; the relationship of religion and government.

**TEXTBOOK:**

Janda, Kenneth, Jeffrey M. Berry, and Jerry Goldman. *The Challenge of Democracy*. 6th Edition. Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell/Houghton Mifflin. 2004.

**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS:**

Lowi, Theodore J. et. al. *Readings for American Government*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. WW. Norton & Co.: New York, 1998.

Matthews, Chris. *Hardball. How Politics is Played Told by one who Knows the Game*. Free Press; 1st Touchstone Ed edition (November 2, 1999)  
West, Cornel. *Race Matters*. Vintage, 1994.

Woll, Peter. *American Government: Readings and Cases*. Longman; 14<sup>th</sup> edition 2004.

Diclerico, Robert E. & Hammock, Allan S. *Points of View: Readings in American Government*. McGraw Hill; 9<sup>th</sup> edition.

American Bar Association Division for Public Education. *US Supreme Court Cases*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 2006.

Constitution and Federalist Papers (Online edition)

Primary Source Documents as selected by the instructor from the 100 Milestone Documents collection at the NARA website <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/>

Articles from: NY Times, Congressional Quarterly, Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor and other sources

Collegeboard.com/ap website

CSPAN in the Classroom, [cspan.org](http://cspan.org)

Various test preparation books will be shared at year-end for your review and use.

## **UNIT I: CONSTITUTIONAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT (5 WEEKS)**

### **Objectives:**

What is the purpose of government? What was the founders' view of the purpose of government and the role of the citizen in the American Republic? How does the Constitution underpin the U.S. government? What was the impact of the enlightenment thinkers on the development of the U.S. Constitution? In which ways did the framers deal with the following: pluralism, popular sovereignty, republican ideals and elite theory.

### **Reading:**

Janda Chapters 1-4

West, *Race Matters* excerpts

Declerico, "How Democratic is America?" Howard Zinn and "How Democratic is America, a Response to Howard Zinn." Sidney Hook

Federalist Papers 10 & 51

Federalist #39

The Constitution of the United States of America

### **Topics:**

The problem of liberty; The Constitutional Convention; The plans and compromise; Constitution and Democracy; The Constitution and Liberty; Motives of the Framers; Constitutional Reform; Governmental Structure; The Meaning of Federalism; Federal-State relations; Federal Aid and control; Congress and Federalism

**Assignments and Activities:**

Dialectic Journal and Socratic Seminar on *Race Matters*  
Chapter reading Cornell Notes  
Federalist # 10 Writing Assignment  
Constitutional Convention Simulation  
Constitutional Power Grab  
Marbury v. Madison Analysis worksheet  
Dialectic Journal and Socratic Seminar on Zinn/Hook readings  
CSPAN.org, Power of Government and The Constitution video clip of the week and discussion questions  
Implied vs. Enumerated Powers Comparison worksheet  
McCulloch v. Maryland Analysis worksheet  
US v. Lopez Analysis worksheet

**Assessments:**

Essay Exam  
Multiple Choice Exams

**UNIT II: POLITICAL BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS (2 WEEKS)**

**Objectives:**

Students will understand how political beliefs and behaviors evolve and the processes by which they are transmitted. Understand differing political ideologies and beliefs. Determine why U.S. citizens hold certain beliefs about politics. Explore how families, schools, religion and the media act to perpetuate or change beliefs.

**Reading:**

Janda Chapters 5, 7  
NPR Death Penalty Case Study Readings  
Lowi, *Why Americans Hate Politics and Politicians*, Michael Nelson  
Lowi, *Compulsory Voting is the Best Way to Keep Democracy Strong*, Arend Lijphart

**Topics:**

Political Culture; Comparing American with other Nations;

Sources of Political Culture; Mistrust of Government; Political Efficacy; political Tolerance; Public Opinion; Political Socialization: The Family; Cleavages in Public Opinion; Political Ideology; Political Elites, Opinion and Public Policy

**Assignments and Activities:**

Chapter reading Cornell Notes

IDEALOGUE HMCO website

Dialectic Journal and Socratic Seminar based on Death Penalty/Federalism

Political Socialization diagram

Republican or Democrat worksheet

World's Smallest Political Quiz

Lowi readings analysis questions and discussion

CSPAN.org Election 08 Campaign Trail Clips and discussion questions

**Assessments:**

Essay Exam

Multiple Choice Exams

**UNIT III: THE ELECTORAL PROCESS (2 WEEKS)**

**Objectives:**

Students will analyze political parties with regard to the mechanisms that allow citizens to organize and communicate their interests and concerns. Students will focus is on the historical evolution of the US party system, the functions and structure of political parties, and the effects they have on the political process. Explore the historical evolution of the U.S. party system. Compare the functions and structures of political parties, and their effects on the political process.

**Reading:**

Janda Chapter 9

Buckley v. Valeo Supreme Court Case analysis worksheet

Matthews, Chris. *Hardball. How Politics is Played Told by one who Knows the Game*

Diclerico, PACs: *Cashing in from A-Z*. Center for Responsive Politics

Diclerico, *The Misplaced Obsession with PACs*, Larry J. Sabato

Diclerico, *Not the People's Choice: How to Democratize American Democracy*, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

**Topics:**

Effects on the political process, Electoral laws and systems; the issue of non-voting; Rise of the American electorate; political participation; Rise and decline of political parties; National Party structure; State and Local Parties; The Two Party System; Minor Parties; Nominating a President; Parties and Voters; Presidential

and Congressional campaigns; Primary and General Campaigns; Money; Elections and policy

**Assignments and activities:**

Chapter reading Cornell Notes

*Hardball* Dialectic Journal

Nominations, Primaries, and Elections Simulation

Dialectic Journal and Socratic Seminar based on *Hardball*

Dialectic Journal and Socratic Seminar based on PACs

Analytical Paper, Electoral College Reform

**Assessments**

Essay Exam

Multiple Choice Exams

**UNIT IV: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS (3 WEEKS)**

**Objectives:**

Political parties and elections: Functions, Organization, Development, Interest groups, including political action committees (PACs), The range of interests represented, The activities of interest groups, Activities of Interest Groups; Regulating Interest Groups; The effects of interest groups on the political process, The unique characteristics and roles of PACs in the political process; The mass media; The functions and structures of the media; The impacts of media on politics; Journalism in American Political History; The Structure of the Media; Rules governing the Media; Media Bias; Government and the News

**Readings:**

Janda Chapters 6, 8, 10

Lowi, *Why Americans Hate the Media*, James Fallows

Lowi, *When News Media Go to Grass Roots, Candidates Don't Follow*, Howard Kurtz

Lowi, *Political Association in the United States*, Alexis de Tocqueville

Lowi, *The Conquered Coalition*, Margaret Kriz

Lowi, *All Interests are Special*, Thomas Hale Boggs, Jr.

**Assignments and activities:**

Chapter reading Cornell Notes

Political Party website analysis/oral report

The Living Room Candidate website campaign commercial analysis

Political Party guest panel

Media Ownership comparison grid and reflection

Dialectic Journal and Socratic Seminar on Fallows/Kurtz readings

Video, The War Room-a documentary of James Carville's management of Clinton's 1992 presidential bid-analysis questions and discussion

**Assessment:**

Essay Exam

Multiple Choice Exam

**UNIT V: INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT (7 WEEKS)**

**Objectives:**

Students will become familiar with the Institutions of National Government, the organization and powers of the Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the federal courts. Understand both the formal and informal power arrangements of these institutions. Explain the formal and informal links between these institutions. Explain the selection and confirmation of federal judges. Understand the election and nomination process.

**Readings:**

Janda Chapters 11-14

Woll, *If, as Ralph Nader says, Congress is "The Broken Branch," How Come We Love Our Congressmen So Much?* Richard F. Fenno, Jr.

Woll, *The Presidency-Focus of Leadership*, Clinton Rossiter

Woll, *How the Supreme Court Arrives at Decisions*, William J. Brennan, Jr.

Diclerico, *The Lady in Red Tape*, Sheila A. Moloney

Diclerico, *The Case for (some) Regulation*, Joshua Wolf Shenk

Nixon v. US Supreme Court Case Analysis

**Topics:**

The major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power;  
Relationships among these four institutions and varying balances of power;  
Linkages between institutions and the following: Public opinion and voters, Interest groups, Political parties, The media, Subnational governments. Congress versus Parliament; The Evolution of Congress; Who is Congress?; member representation; Ideology and Civility in Congress; Congressional Organization: Parties and Caucuses; Congressional Committees; Congressional staffing and Specialized offices, How a Bill Becomes a Law; Power and Perks; Presidents and Prime Ministers; Evolution of the Presidency; powers of the Presidency; Office of the Presidency; Presidential Character; The Power to Persuade, Executive Privilege; Presidential Programs; The Transition; The Bureaucracy; Growth of the Bureaucracy; Federal Bureaucracy;; Congressional Oversight; Reforming the Bureaucracy; The Judiciary; Development of the Federal Court System; The Structure of the Federal Courts; Jurisdiction of the Federal Courts; The Supreme Court; Powers of the Federal Courts; Checks on Judicial power.

**Assignments and Activities:**

Janda Chapters Cornell Notes  
Checks and Balances Graphic Organizer  
CSPAN.org Executive Branch and Congress Video Clips of the Week questions and discussion  
Money in Politics assignment OpenSecrets.org  
Congressional Committee/Iron Triangle Simulation  
Bill to Law diagram  
Analysis of Presidential Signing Statements  
Dialectic Journals and Socratic Seminar on effectiveness of government

**Assessment:**

Essay Exam  
Multiple Choice Exam

**UNIT VI: CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES (3 WEEKS)**

**Objectives:**

Students will study the development and defense issues involving civil rights, civil liberties, and their impact on citizens. Understand the development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation. Knowledge of key decisions of the Supreme Court; Marbury v Madison, McCulloch v. Maryland. Learn and understand the First Amendment Freedoms. (First Amendment Cyber-Tribune) Examine the substantive rights and liberties. Know the responsibilities of citizenship. Understand the impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties. Explore the rights of the accused. Research minority-group and women's rights. Examine controversies that have resulted over the changing interpretations of civil rights (Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of Ed, Miranda v. Arizona, etc.). Understand Judicial Activism v. Judicial Restraint and Warren v. Rehnquist courts.

**Readings:**

Janda Chapter 15-16  
Diclerico, *Should Federal Affirmative Action Policies be Continued?* Sheila Jackson Lee  
Diclerico, *Sins of Admission*, James Q. Wilson  
Patriot Act Pro/Con contemporary articles

**Topics:**

Interpreting and Applying the First Amendment; What is Speech?; Church and State; Crime and Due Process; The Black Predicament; Campaign in the Courts; Campaign in Congress; Women and Equal Rights; Affirmative Action; The development of civil liberties and civil rights by Judicial interpretation;

Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties; The impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties.

**Assignments and Activities:**

Janda Readings Cornell Notes

Brown v. Board of Education, Engel v. Vitale, Gideon v. Wainwright, Roe v.

Wade, Shaw v. Reno Analyses Worksheets

Supreme Court Case research and oral reports

Video: With All Deliberate Speed, analysis and discussion questions

Affirmative Action debate

Patriot Act/War on Terror Dialectic Journal and Socratic Seminar

**UNIT SEVEN: PUBLIC POLICY (4 WEEKS)**

**Objectives:**

Students will focus on understanding the Policy-Making Process, multiple processes by which policy is made in a federal context, as well as the kinds of policies that result.

Understand the formation of policy agendas. Understand the multiple processes by which policy is made in a federal context. Explain the role of categorical and block grants in the federal system. Investigate the role of institutions in the enactment of policy.

Explore agenda setting. Explain linkages between policy processes and the various institutions involved in policy making.

**Readings:**

Janda Chapters 17-20

**Topics:**

The formation of policy agendas; The role of institutions in the enactment of policy; The role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation; Linkages between policy processes and the following: Political institutions and federalism, Political parties, Interest groups, Public opinion, Elections, Policy networks; The Policy making Process; Decision making; Majoritarian Politics; Interest Group Politics; Client Politics; Entrepreneurial Politics; Business Regulations; Perceptions, Beliefs, Interests, and Values; Economic Policy; Politics of Taxing and Spending; Economic Theories and Political Need; Machinery of Economic Policy Making; Spending Money; The Budget; Social Welfare; Welfare Politics; Foreign and military Policy; Constitution and Legal Context; The Machinery of Foreign Policy; Foreign policy and Public Opinion; Foreign Policy Elites; Use of Military Force; Defense Budget;

Structure of defense Decision-Making; Environmental Policy; Global Warming; Acid Rain; Agricultural Pesticides; Environmental Uncertainties

**Assignments and Activities:**

Janda Readings Cornell Notes

Current Events Dialectic Journal

Domestic/Foreign Policy Issue Research and Oral Presentation

Federal Budget Analysis

**Assessments:**

Essay Exam

Multiple Choice Exam

**UNIT VIII: AP REVIEW AND SELECTED TOPICS**

Final dates to be determined

In-class exercise: AP released exam multiple choice with immediate discussion and feedback regarding “why this answer?” This will establish a diagnostic baseline for ongoing AP exam review.

Students will Research/Write out Answers to 35 Previous U.S. Government Free Response Questions. Teacher Follow Up with Rubric/ Answer; Discussion; Teacher Created Review Exercises. All year students do current events which they must relate back to the AP outline

65 Question released M/C and Free Response essay

Selected Topics: See Units of Study

**TEACHING STRATEGIES**

This is a large lecture course and, as such, the teaching strategies used focus on giving students opportunities to analyze and respond in class, to write mini-essays of 50 words or so reacting to provocative statements, and to do short role-play simulations.

Instructions are given throughout the course on the following:

Essay organization diagram for free-response questions

Essay tasks for AP Exam free-response questions

List of directive terms used in free-response questions  
Reminders for answering timed essay questions  
Essay frame  
Generic free-response scoring guidelines

## **STUDENT EVALUATION**

Quizzes are given on the reading assignments. Occasional outside-of-class assignments may also count as daily grades.

Test formats are objective (multiple choice); free-response questions (Essay Exams). Most objective tests consist of 60 to 65 multiple-choice questions and a 25-minute essay question, and are timed to approximate the time allowed on the AP Exam.

Homework is accepted before students begin to take the unit exam. The homework consists of unit terms and/or outlines; questions about readings, notations, and/or assigned primary and secondary sources; charts that pertain to the unit and applicable historical maps, diagrams or political cartoons. Well-completed terms and course themes demonstrate a student's effort and most students find this to be indispensable in maintaining a high grade point average.

The unit exams are a requirement of the AP Government and Politics course. A final semester comprehensive exam for all material covered will be given at the end of the term. The AP Government and Politics exam is comprehensive, covering material from the entire semester. Students who are enrolled in the course are expected to take the AP United States Government Exam. Class time and after school reviews are held prior to the AP Exam. In addition, many students participate in informal study group review sessions.