

# AP U.S. Government & Politics

## Themes of the Course

This is a one-year course that will stress the following:

Students will analyze and interpret data on a variety of subjects including

- Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government
- Political Beliefs and Political Behaviors
- Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media
- Institutions of National Government
- Public Policy
- Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

The students will write an in class essay every two weeks. These free response essays will be used in conjunction with lecture notes, PowerPoint presentations, role playing and discussion groups in order to analyze and interpret the role of government on American society.

In this class, you will develop a more sophisticated understanding of majority-rule democracy, constitutionalism, and civil liberties. You will be able to perceive relationships and distinctions in and among the institutions and public policies of those who govern.

## Guidelines

Attendance is extremely important, as the class will move quickly.

Homework will be given nightly, and it is an expectation that all assignments are turned in on time.

In order to be successful in this class, it is important for each student to read various periodicals including The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and various news magazines. These are located in the school library. There will be newspaper assignments weekly. These will apply that week's chapter to a current event piece. All students must dedicate time to watch the BBC news each night on our local cable channel. There will be numerous class discussions and activities that will refer to these media resources.

## Grading Procedures

Students must participate by continually volunteering information, asking relevant questions and participating in seminar-type activities. You will be graded on the quality and quantity of your participation. You will also be graded on the following:

Tests

Free Response Essays

Projects

Quizzes

Graded discussions

**\*\*\* Your quizzes and tests will mirror the Advanced Placement Exam. They will incorporate both multiple choice and free response questions.**

## **Text and supplemental readings**

Text

David B. Magelby/ Paul C. Light, Government by the People, \_23rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall,

Supplemental readings:

Woll, Peter American Government (fourteenth Ed.) New York: Longman Press, 2002

New York Times, The Week, The Wall Street Journal, BBC

## **Course Plan**

1. Constitutional Democracy Text pages 2-28  
Define government, politics, politicians, political science and constitutional democracy
  - Differentiate democracy from other forms of government
  - Identify the conditions that help democracy flourish and explain why they do so.
  - Explain the importance to successful democracy of values, political processes and political structures.
  - Show how politics before 1787 shaped the Constitution
  - Identify the most important compromises achieved by the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787.
  - Assess the arguments for and against the ratification of the Constitution.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 1
- Federalist #10
- Federalist #51
- Free- Response writing guide
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- “The American Heritage: The Heirs and the Disinherited.” *Journal of American History*, December 1987
- Woll, 1.5 How Not to Read the Constitution by Laurence H. Tribe and Michael c. Dorf

## 2. The Living Constitution

Text 28-48

- Describe the basic structure of the Constitution and its Bill of Rights.
- Summarize the basic principles of government established by the Constitution.
- Compare and contrast the three main branches of the U.S. government.
- Show how the system of checks and balances operates among the three branches of the U.S. government.
- Show how the use of judicial review strengthens the courts in a separation-of-powers system.
- Analyze the effect of Marbury v. Madison on the role of the judiciary.
- Explain how the meaning of the Constitution has evolved over time.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 2
- Free- Response writing guide
- Second Treatise on Government by Locke
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Discussion formal and informal changes to the Constitution
- Create chart of the formal and informal changes to the Constitution

## 3. American Federalism

Text 62-85

- Compare and contrast the different interpretations of federalism.
- Show how federalism protects citizens.
- Differentiate between the types of national and state powers.
- Describe and compare the constitutional pillars of national power.
- Analyze the role of the national courts in regulating federalism.
- Compare and contrast the arguments of decentralists and centralists.
- Analyze the differences between grants and mandates.
- Establish the link between the growth of the national government and federalism.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 3
- Test Unit 1
- Cornell University School of Law. U.S. Constitution online.
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- "Demographic Federalism." Spectrum fall 1996
- Free Response Essay- Analyze the role of Federalism
- Woll 2.9 McCulloch v. Maryland (Gibbons v. Ogden)
- NCLB (the funding of mandates)

#### 4. Political Culture and Ideology

Text 90-109

- Identify the most important elements of the U.S. political culture and how we learn them.
- Assess the importance of “the American dream” in the context of economic change.
- Compare and contrast different ideological assumptions about government.
- Analyze the importance of political ideology in light of competing ideas such as pragmatism, practicality, and the changing agenda of U.S. politics.

#### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 4
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- “The Origins and Meaning of Liberal-Conservative Self-Identifications” by Pamela J. Conover
- Discussion - “Bowling Alone” by Robert Putnam

#### 5. The American Political Landscape

Text 114-142

- Understand the opportunities and challenges posed by the diversity of the U.S. population.
- Explain the influence of geography on politics, with particular attention to the changing politics of the South and West, and the shift in population from cities to suburbs.
- Assess the role of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and changing family demographics in U.S. politics.
- Develop an understanding of the roles of education, income, class, and age as influences in U.S. politics.

#### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 5
- “Racial Orders in American Political Development by Desmond S. King and M. Smith Rogers
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Analyze charts political socialization

## 6. Interest Groups

Text 146-173

- Define and discuss the different types of interest groups in the U.S.
- How do interest groups gain and exert influence in American government and politics?
- What do lobbyists do to influence policy?
- How do interest groups use money to advance their agendas?
- What alternatives exist for interests with little money or access to policy makers?

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 6
- Chart effect of interest groups on political process
- Discussion Interest Groups and money
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Free response essay Analyze the role of money in politics
- Woll 5.43 Interest Groups and the American Political System by Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox

## 7. Political Parties

Text 178-200

- Explain the primary functions of political parties in democratic governance.
- Discuss the differences between the American political party system and political parties in other countries.
- Analyze the major sources of money for the two major political parties.
- Evaluate the role political parties play in elections and in governance.
- Based on history and contemporary experience, evaluate the long-term prospects for the current party system and the major parties in the U.S.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 7
- PowerPoint The future of political parties
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Woll 4.32 Perspectives on American Political Parties by Martin P. Wattenberg

## 8. Public Opinion, Participation, and Voting

Text 206-235

- Explain how public opinion is measured, and why it is important.
- Discuss the primary influences on individual political attitudes.

- Analyze the relationship between public opinion and public policy.
- Assess the positive and negative effects on voter turnout.
- Discuss the problems involved in running elections and how these are being addressed.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 8
- Free Response essay- Analyze Political Parties and Voting
- Create, administer and analyze a local public opinion poll
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Create and analyze chart of several public opinion polls (Marist, Rasmussen, ABC, Gallup etc.)

## 9. Campaigns and elections

Text 238-270

- Explain how elections are conducted in the U.S.
- Describe the rules of the Electoral College and its impact on presidential elections.
- Discuss the circumstances that contribute to competitive Congressional elections and high incumbent reelection rates
- Assess the stages of the presidential election cycle and how campaigning changes at each stage.
- Assess the influence of money in elections and evaluate the approaches to campaign finance reform.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 9
- *The War Room* (film/1994) Documentary of the 1992 Clinton presidential campaign.
- *Create a graph showing the trends in voter turnout for National, State and local elections.*
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- *Use census data (graphs) to interpret trends in past and future elections*
- Woll 4.37 The Responsible Electorate by V.O. Key Jr.

## 10. The Media and US Politics

Text 274-294

- Define the contemporary news media and its evolution from the time of the framers until today, with attention to the affects of changing technologies such as the internet

- Evaluate the media's influence on public opinion.
- Identify the influences of the media on elections, and the areas where there might be problems.
- Assess the media's relationship to governance in the U.S.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 10
- Graded discussion- Bias in the Media
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Free Response Essay- Interpret the causes and effects of bias in the Media
- Test Unit 2
- Using "I-Movie" create a political campaign commercial

## 11. Congress

Text 298-315

- Describe the election process for Congress and show how it protects incumbents.
- Detail the powers of Congress.
- Compare and contrast the structure and powers of the House and the Senate.
- Examine the leadership and committee structure of Congress.
- Identify the steps needed for a bill to become law, and where it could be blocked.
- Assess the ways in which Congresspersons serve their constituents.
- Understand why the public tends to have a more positive opinion about their individual representatives than about the Congress as an institution.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 11
- Discussion - Term Limits
- Charts and graphs The power of Congressional Committees
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- *Woll 7.60 Congress and the Quest for Power by Timothy E. Cook*
- "How to Make Congress More Representative." *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, October 26, 1991.

## 12. The Presidency

Text 326-315

- Describe the formal and informal powers of the president.
- Analyze the roles of the White House staff, the Executive Office of the President, the Cabinet, and the Vice-President.
- Discuss the interactions of presidents and Congress, and where there is often conflict.
- Describe the president's job, and what is needed to be a great president.
- Evaluate the evolution of presidential power, including controversial assertions of executive power.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 12
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Graded discussion- Imperial Presidency
- "Assessing Presidential Character." *World Politics*, January 1974.
- Woll 6.49 Presidential Power by Richard E. Neustadt

## 13. Federal Bureaucracy

Text 356-378

- What is a bureaucracy?
- Why do bureaucracies have such a bad reputation?
- How is the federal bureaucracy organized?
- How much control does the president have over the organization and operation of the federal bureaucracy?
- What are the most important responsibilities of the federal bureaucracy?
- How are positions in the federal bureaucracy filled?
- What role do political leaders play in staffing the federal bureaucracy?
- To whom is the federal bureaucracy accountable?
- How do political pressures shape the organization, actions, and policies of the federal bureaucracy?
- How do bureaucratic realities shape the policy choices of political leaders?
- How have the responsibilities of the federal bureaucracy changed in recent years.
- What constraints are there on the actions and policies of the federal bureaucracy?

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 13
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)

- Free Response Essay Bureaucracy
- Woll 7.57 The Rise of the Bureaucratic State by James Q. Wilson

#### 14. The Judiciary

Text 382-402

- What role does the federal judicial system play in contemporary American government?
- What is “judicial activism”?
- How is the federal judicial system organized?
- What limits are there on the interpretation of the law and the Constitution by federal judges?
- What powers do judges have to ensure that their rulings are enforced?
- Has the process of selecting federal judges become too “politicized”?
- How are federal judges selected?
- What role does the Supreme Court play in contemporary American government?

#### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 14
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Test Unit 3
- Woll 7.71 Judicial Self Restraint by John P. Roche

#### 15. Civil Liberties

Text 409-434

- What did the framers hope to achieve by spelling out the basic rights of American citizens?
- Why did the framers of the Constitution believe a Bill of Rights was necessary?
- Which two clauses in the Constitution deal with freedom of religion?
- What does the Constitution guarantee in regard to religion?
- What kinds of speech are protected under the Constitution?
- How has the definition of protected speech changed over the course of American history?
- What kinds of speech are not protected under the Constitution?
- Why aren't some forms of speech protected under the Constitution?
- Why is a free press so important to the maintenance of democracy?
- Are there limits on the freedom of the press?
- If there are limits on the freedom of the press, what are these limits?
- What is the relationship between the freedom of assembly and petition and American forms of political organization and behavior?

**Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 15
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Create chart of significant Warren court rulings
- Create and analyze a timeline of civil liberties
- Woll 2.17 Dambrot v. Central Michigan University

## 16. Civil Rights

Text 438-464

- What arguments have been made for and against a constitutional right to privacy?
- What kinds of behavior are covered by a constitutional right to privacy?
- What rights do the accused have in an American court of law?
- How is U.S. citizenship acquired and retained?
- In what ways does the Constitution protect the property rights of U.S. citizens?
- What powers and responsibilities are associated with U.S. citizenship?
- Why are there limitations on the practical ability of the Supreme Court to define the meaning of the Bill of Rights?

**Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 16
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Test Unit 4
- Excerpts from movie "Mississippi Burning"
- NAACP (<http://www.naacp.org/>)
- NOW (<http://www.now.org/>)
- Free Response essay- How has the Civil Rights movement changed over time

## 17. Public Policy

Text 468-484

- Compare politics and public policy and show how each affects the other.
- Analyze the three types of public policy.
- Evaluate the eight steps in making public policy.
- Compare and contrast the tools of public policy.
- Identify how citizens can influence each step of the public policy process.

**Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 17

- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)

## 18. Economic Policy

Text 488-511

- Identify the two most important measures of economic performance and show how they interact.
- Evaluate the role of fiscal policy in keeping the economy stable.
- Outline the steps in the federal budget process.
- Evaluate the role of monetary policy in keeping the economy stable.
- Analyze the federal government's role in promoting and regulating the economy, including the push for de-regulation
- Explain government trade policy and its effects on the economy.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 18
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Excerpts from the book "Freakonomics"
- DebtClock.org (<http://www.debtclock.org/>)
- "Guns versus Butter: A Disaggregated Analysis" American Political Science Review, December 1989.
- Socratic seminar- The future of American capitalism

## 19. Social Policy

Text 514-536

- Explain at least two types of social policy practiced in the United States.
- Identify the major contributions of the New Deal and the Great Society to social policy.
- Evaluate the impact of welfare reform.
- Analyze the problem of insufficient health care insurance in the United States.
- Assess the tools of federal education and crime policy.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 19
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Free Response essay "The future of Social Policy"
- "The Social Security Explosion". Public Interest, Fall 1995
- Graphs/Charts The future of Social Security

## 20. Foreign and Defense Policy

Text 538-559

- Analyze the questions that shape positions on U.S. foreign policy and defense.
- Compare the dynamics of hard and soft power.
- Evaluate the issues that dominate the contemporary foreign policy and defense agenda.
- Explain the components of the foreign policy and defense bureaucracies.
- Analyze the options for achieving foreign policy and defense goals.

### **Assessment/Reading/Activities**

- Vocabulary quiz chapter 20
- Graded homework Newspaper article (if applicable)
- Create class PowerPoint on defense policy
- Selected articles from [Stratfor.com](http://Stratfor.com)
- Prepare for Advanced Placement Exam
- Final Exam