

AP U.S. Government & Politics

2018-2019 Course Syllabus

Course Content

Advanced Placement United States Government & Politics is a college-level, in-depth look at both the history and current workings of the United States government. The course content consists of the essential political knowledge that will be synthesized in the construction of enduring understandings and big ideas about American government and politics.

The course is made up of 5 units of study, including Foundations of American Democracy, Interaction among Branches of Government, Civil Liberties and Civil Rights, American Political Beliefs and Behaviors, and Political Participation. The “big ideas” of the AP Government curriculum are woven through each unit of study, creating cohesion in the course and ultimately leading students to see how all concepts of government are interconnected through Constitutionalism, Liberty and Order, Civic Participation, Competing Policy-Making Interests, and Methods of Political Analysis.

Units of Study

1. Foundations of American Democracy (15%)
2. Interactions among branches of government (35%)
3. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (15%)
4. American Political Ideologies & Beliefs (10%)
5. Political Participation (25%)

Big Ideas

1. Constitutionalism (CON)
2. Liberty and Order (LOR)
3. Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD)
4. Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI)
5. Methods of Political Analysis (MPA)

Required Supreme Court Cases

- This course will incorporate the analysis of the following 15 required Supreme Court cases. We will study more than just these cases, but these 15 could show up on the test. You will be responsible for knowing the constitutional question(s) involved, facts of the case, majority opinion, precedent set or overturned, and significance.
- *Marbury v. Madison* (1803)
- *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819)
- *Schenck v. United States* (1919)
- *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)

- *Baker v. Carr* (1961)
- *Engel v. Vitale* (1962)
- *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963)
- *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969)
- *New York Times Company v. United States* (1971)
- *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972)
- *Roe v. Wade* (1973)
- *Shaw v. Reno* (1993)
- *United States v. Lopez* (1995)
- *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010)
- *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (FEC)* (2010)

Required Foundational Documents

This course will incorporate the analysis and discussion of nine required foundational documents to help understand the context and beliefs of the founders and their critics and the debates surrounding the writing and ratification of the U.S. Constitution:

- The Declaration of Independence
- The Articles of Confederation
- Federalist No. 10
- Brutus No. 1
- Federalist No. 51
- The Constitution of the United States
- Federalist No. 70
- Federalist No. 78
- "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

AP Exam Information & Format

The AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam will take place at **8:00 am on Monday, May 6**. Those who take the AP test will be exempt from the course final exam.

The exam will be comprised of the following sections:

Multiple-Choice

Number of Questions: 55

Structure – The questions on multiple choice section will ask students to:

- Analyze and compare political concepts
- Analyze and interpret quantitative, text-based, and visual sources
- Apply course concepts, foundational documents, and Supreme Court decisions in a variety of hypothetical and real-world scenarios

Timing: One hour and 20 minutes

Percentage of Total Exam: 50%

Free-Response Questions

Number of Questions: 4

Structure – The four questions on the free response section will ask students to:

- Apply political concepts in real-world scenarios

- Compare the decisions and implications of different Supreme Court cases
- Analyze quantitative data
- Develop an argument using required foundational documents as evidence

Timing: One hour and 40 minutes

Percentage of Total Exam: 50%

Required Civic Engagement Project

College Board is requiring a Civic Engagement project as part of the redesigned curriculum. Our class project will be an online Election Information Guide that will focus on local, state, and federal level races in the 2018 midterm election. Election Day is Tuesday, November 6th. You will begin work on this project 2 weeks into the school year and the guide will be due on October 19th so that it can be distributed in time to inform voters.

Unit Order

Due to this being an election year, we are moving some units around. We will focus first on American Political Ideology & Beliefs (Unit 4) and Political Participation (Unit 5). This will take us through Election Day, at which point we will go back in time and look at Foundations of American Democracy (Unit 1) for the balance of the first semester. Unit 2 (Interaction Among Branches of Government) and Unit 3 (Civil Liberties and Civil Rights) will be covered in second semester. You will be given a calendar at the beginning of each unit that I will *try my best* to stick to. 😊

Course Grading

Your grade in this course will be based on assessments, projects, and assignments. Unit tests, vocabulary tests, and the Civic Engagement Project will be weighted at 65%, while all other assignments (including notes, daily work, and reading quizzes) will be weighted at 35%.

Types of Assessments

Unit tests

These will typically be taken over 2 days and will cover multiple chapters in the textbook. The first day will be the multiple choice portion and the second day will be free response. The test questions will as closely mirror AP questions as possible so that you get used to seeing that type of question. Test corrections can be done on unit tests.

Vocab tests

For each chapter we study, you will receive a vocab list on the day the chapter is introduced. All vocab is on Quizlet and linked to my course website. Some chapters will be combined. You will have a vocab quiz (matching) 3 school days after you are given the list. You may not do test corrections on vocab tests.

Reading Quizzes

When assigned sections of the text, you should expect a reading quiz the following day. It is in your best interest to take notes (I have found that Cornell-style notes

work best), because you may use your notes on the reading quiz. Reading quizzes are 35% weight, with each question (or part of question) being worth 1 point. These quizzes cover mostly the main ideas of the sections. They are *not* designed to trick you (“What is the 3rd word in the 2nd paragraph on page 48?” will not be the type of question. “What are the 4 main types of federal grants?” will be the type of question). You may not do corrections on reading quizzes.

Participation

Participation in class will be graded at 4 points per day. On “lecture” days, your participation is paying attention, taking notes, and discussing a concept when asked. During a discussion day or work day, participation is actively engaging in the discussion or project. Points will be lost for lack of involvement, or involvement that discourages the involvement of others (rudeness, trying to take over a discussion, etc.)

Respectful discourse

Anything you contribute in class must be respectful. This course lends itself to a wide variety of beliefs, which is great. You will discuss your beliefs and the beliefs of those around you with respect. When you disagree, you may attack the issue, not the person, and you must be able to back up your opinion with facts from relevant sources. Off-the-wall left or right sources will not be given credence. We will do in this class what many adults cannot do: have reasonable, thought-provoking discussions with one another and disagree with someone politically without deciding to detest everything about that person.

Absences and make up work

Late work will not accepted for credit.

If you are absent, you have as many days to make up an assignment as you were gone, provided the absence is excused. If you know in advance you will be absent from class, please try to get work prior to class. If you will be a “school business” absence, you must get your work in advance. You will not be given extra time to do it. If you miss class the day before a test (and only the day before a test), you will be expected to take the test on test day with everyone else. If you miss class on the day of a test, you need to come into FIT *the following day* (or the next day you are in school) to take the test. Class time will not be given for test makeups.

Questions

Ask now!