

Advanced Placement U.S. Government and Politics
Course Syllabus

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I. Objectives and Themes of the Course:

This college level course will give the student an analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States. The course includes both a study of general concepts used to interpret U.S. politics and the analysis of specific examples. It also develops familiarity with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute U.S. politics and acquaints the student with theoretical perspectives and explanations for various behaviors and outcomes.

Each thematic unit involves both the study of general concepts and analysis of specific case studies. Students will develop a more sophisticated understanding of majority-rule democracy, constitutionalism, and civil liberties as well as the relationship and distinctions in and among the institutions and the public policies of those who govern. The following six major topics will be covered:

- a. Constitutional Underpinnings: 5-15%
 - Considerations influencing formulation and adoption of the Constitution
 - Federalism
 - Separation of Powers
 - Theories of Democratic government
- b. Political Beliefs and Behaviors: 10-20%
 - Beliefs citizens have about government and its leaders
 - Processes by which citizens learn about politics
 - The nature, sources and consequences of public opinion
 - Citizen voting, political participation and protest
 - Factors that lead to differing political beliefs and behaviors
- c. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media: 10-20%
 - Political parties and elections
 - Interest groups, lobbies, and PACs
 - Functions, structures, and impacts of media
- d. Institutions of National Government: Congress, Presidency, Bureaucracy, Courts: 35-45%
 - Formal and informal institutional arrangements of powers
 - Relationships among the four institutions
 - Relationships with parties, interest groups, media, subnational governments, and public opinion
- e. Public Policy: 5-15%
 - Formation of policy agendas
 - Policy processes, linkages, and outputs in a federal system
- f. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties: 5-15%
 - Development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation
 - Substantive rights and liberties
 - Impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties

II. Guidelines for the Course:

Students are responsible for note-taking, as well as for individual and collective research assignments, discussions, essay explanations, the reading of pertinent political science journals, and informed knowledge of current events. Students should be able to express themselves with clarity and precision, know how to cite sources using MLA format, and credit the phrases and ideas of others.

III. Survey and Seminar Methods of Teaching:

Weekly topics will be covered with readings necessary for information and analysis of the themes and topics being studied. Each new topic will be introduced and explained through a one or two period lecture. The remaining working days will consist of seminars in which individual students discuss questions and views related to the lecture topic. In this college atmosphere, the student is expected to have completed the assignments before the relevant seminar. Most seminar discussions will be assigned to specific students to lead on a rotating basis.

IV. Grading

The student is expected to display daily preparation by volunteering information, by questioning, by participating in the seminar classes and by responding to questions from the instructor and fellow students. The grade scale is as follows:

- a. Unit Tests, Quizzes and Essays 70%:
 - i. Tests usually span 2 periods: 1 objective and 1 free response.
 - ii. Weekly quizzes are on current event knowledge based upon *Face the Nation/Fox News Sunday*. (10% of a test grade)
 - iii. Essays are either standard essays or free responses.
- b. Homework 10%: Most often, analysis of articles from the American Polity Reader that are completed on 5x8 notecards. Polity cards are graded ✓ +=100%, ✓ =80%, ✓ -=60%.
- c. Participation 20%: Class discussion on the readings assigned and *FTNP/FNS*. See Absences and Assignments.

V. Absences and Assignments

The student is responsible for all missed assignments caused by any absence and for scheduling make-ups. If the student fails to make up an assignment, it will be recorded as a ZERO. Most assignments will be given in advance; thus, students will be aware of what will be missed. Make-up tests or quizzes will only be given during lunch or option periods.

Tardiness to class is not acceptable, including lateness to school. I have a strict policy of allowing two unexcused latenesses each marking period. Any more will result in a 5% deduction in your participation grade per occurrence. If you come to class habitually late, you are either not participating or disturbing the discussion.

All work turned in late will result in a 25% reduction in grade per day.

VI. Communication

Students: The student is responsible for addressing any class related questions in person, either before/after class or office hours. Please use email only as a last resort.

Parents: Please allow your child to advocate for himself or herself first, in person.

VII. A Statement on Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is:

1. Copying without quotation marks or paraphrasing without the acknowledgment from another's writing.
2. Using someone else's facts or ideas without acknowledgment.
3. Handing in work for one course that you handed in for credit for another course without the permission of both instructors.

Therefore, if one commits plagiarism, even unintentional plagiarism, the student will fail and appropriate individuals, institutions and organizations will be notified.

VII. Text and Supplementary Sources:

1. Wilson, Dilulio, Bose, *American Government*, 14th ed., New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2015.
login.cengage.com
2. Serow and Ladd, *The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity*, 6th ed., Baltimore, Lanahan, 2016.
3. Ruckman, P.S., *American Government: Student Study Guide*, New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2006.
(Online)
4. Lader, Curt, *Barron's: How to Prepare for the AP US Government and Politics Examination*, 7th Edition, New York, Barron's, 2012. (Required purchase)
5. Hamilton, Lee, *How Congress Works and Why You Should Care*, Indiana University Press (February 26, 2004)
6. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The New York Times* www.nytimes.com, *The Washington Post*
www.washingtonpost.com
7. *Face The Nation* and *Fox News Sunday*. Transcripts and podcasts are available the Sunday afternoon online at cbsnews.com, or foxnews.com.
8. Websites that each student must register for: www.factcheck.org, www.realclearpolitics.com,
www.politico.com
9. Each student will be issued a pocket Constitution that must be carried on their person at all times!

***Students are required to have an AP GOV folder and notebook.