

## A.P. U.S. Government and Politics Summer Assignment 2021-22

AP U.S. Government and Politics requires different thinking and writing skills than you have used in your history classes in the past. Writing for government requires the understanding and analysis of abstract concepts and principles. You will depend less on recitation of facts than on your interpretation of the facts. Throughout the year you will become aware of politics in general and specifically, have an opportunity to explore your political self and where you fit into our political world. This summer assignment is designed to help you transition from thinking historically to thinking and writing from a political perspective.

During the first week of school you will be tested on your understanding of ONE of two books of your choice. The format will be an individual conference with the teacher since being able to formulate an argument orally is an important skill for this course and as a student generally.

Individual Conference Format:

1. **5 minutes:** the timer will begin once I finish reading the first question. Once the timer goes off, time is up. The timer will be visible to every student.
2. **5 questions:** every student will be provided a unique series of questions. The amount of time you choose to spend on each question is entirely up to you.
3. **Individual:** students will privately conference with their teacher away from earshot of their classmates.

Questions will be categorized in the following ways:

1. **Interpretation:** describe, analyze and evaluate the author's various claims about the United States Constitution.
2. **Synthesis:** make meaningful and persuasive connections between the arguments of the text and various historical and current political developments.
3. **Argument Development, *Selecting Relevant Evidence*:** utilize specific examples of evidence to fully and effectively answer the stated question.

What you may bring to the oral assessment:

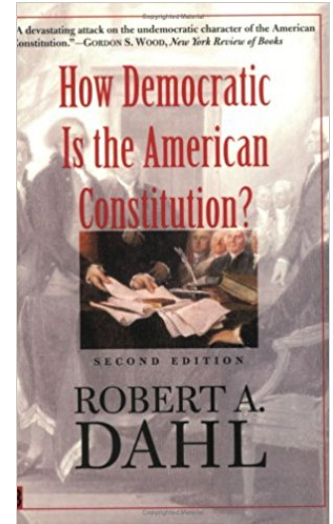
1. **Handwritten notes** with your name written in ink on the top right corner of every page
2. Your copy of *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* Or *How to Read the Constitution and Why*
3. Pen/Pencil

Laptops, cellphones and tablets will **NOT** be permitted during the conference period.

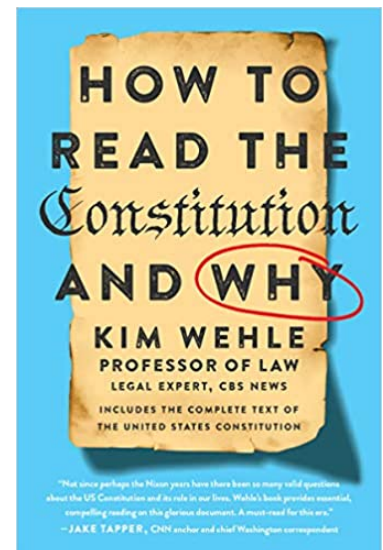
## Book Choices:

1. Robert Dahl's *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* Written by a preeminent political scientist, it is an analysis of our U.S. Constitution. It will provide you with insight into the document and force you to think critically about a document that is largely venerated by the American population. Although *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* is a short book, it is a dense, in-depth analysis of the Constitution, which will require focus, research and time. It is very important for you to actively read the book by taking meaningful notes and making annotations throughout the text. **It is our recommendation that you select this text if you have a high degree of priorknowledge of the course content.** You have three choices for accessing the book:

- Order a hard copy from a local bookstore or one online on Amazon or Barnes and Noble. ***We highly recommend this option so that you can freely write in it and mark it up.***
- Visit the Social Studies department and check-out a copy.
- Access the book online.
  - Click on this link to reach the book within JSTOR: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nptxi>
  - Click **Login** at the top right of the JSTOR screen and use this logon: Username: stapleshs Password: wreckers
  - Click the blue **Log in** button.



2. Kim Wehle's *How to Read the Constitution and Why*. This contemporary text and new addition to our summer assignment comes from a professor of law and frequent legal commentator for CNN, MSNBC, and NPR. The structure of this text provides ample background into the function of government and your rights as a citizen. Like *How Democratic is the US Constitution?*, it is an in-depth read that will require you to heavily annotate the text and at times conduct your own research. Unlike the previous offering, the author infuses helpful analogies to convey her point and frequently references contemporary political issues. **It is our recommendation that you select this text if you are coming into the course with limited background knowledge.** Furthermore, you may consult this [resource](#) for guiding questions and organization purposes if you select this option. We do not have school copies of this book. If you choose to read this book you must purchase it yourself.



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Note about current events: The beauty of this course is that everything we study in the textbook connects directly to what is happening in the news on a daily basis. If you do not do so already, start following U.S. government and politics-related news stories. Look for daily news stories that portray the national government in action and highlight the issues/crises it must deal with everyday. And do not limit your newly-formed current events habit to just one publication or even type of media -- vary your sources. Being knowledgeable about current events is a key to success in the course.