

A.P. U.S. Government & Politics

Course Syllabus, 2022 – 2023



We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. . . .

-The U.S. Declaration of Independence

Mr. Sean McAtee

Iroquois High School, Elma, New York

Course Description

AP U.S. Government and Politics provides a college-level, nonpartisan introduction to key political concepts, ideas, institutions, policies, interactions, roles, and behaviors that characterize the constitutional system and political culture of the United States. Students will study U.S. foundational documents, Supreme Court decisions, and other texts and visuals to gain an understanding of the relationships and interactions among political institutions, processes, and behaviors. They will also engage in disciplinary practices that require them to read and interpret data, make comparisons and applications, and develop evidence-based arguments. In addition, they will complete a political science research or applied civics project.

Big Ideas in AP U.S. Government and Politics

Big Idea 1: Constitutionalism

The U.S. Constitution established a system of checks and balances among branches of government and allocates power between the federal and state governments. This system is based on the rule of law and minority rights.

Big Idea 2: Liberty and Order

Governmental laws and policies balancing order and liberty are based on the U.S. Constitution and have been interpreted differently over time

Big Idea 3: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy

Popular sovereignty, individualism, and republicanism are important considerations of U.S. laws and policy making and assume citizens will engage and participate.

Big Idea 4: Competing Policy-Making Interests

Multiple actors and institutions interact to produce and implement possible policies

Big Idea 5: Methods of Political Analysis

Using various types of analyses, political scientists measure how U.S. political behavior, attitudes, ideologies, and institutions are shaped by a number of factors over time

Units Studied in AP U.S. Government and Politics

Unit	Exam Weighting
Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy	15% - 22%
Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of Government	25% - 36%
Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights	13% - 18%
Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs	10% - 15%
Unit 5: Political Participation	20% - 27%

Disciplinary Practices

The AP U.S. Government and Politics course provides disciplinary practices that describe what a student should be able to do while exploring course concepts. These practices and skills will be developed throughout the course.

Practice 1: Concept Application

Apply political concepts and processes to scenarios in context

Practice 2: SCOTUS Application

Apply Supreme Court decisions

Practice 3: Data Analysis

Analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics

Practice 4: Source Analysis

Read, analyze, and interpret foundational documents and other text-based and visual sources.

Practice 5: Argumentation

Develop an argument in essay format

Reasoning Processes

Reasoning processes describe the cognitive operations that students will be required to apply when engaging with disciplinary practices on the AP Exam. The reasoning process ultimately represent the way practitioners think in the discipline.

Reasoning Process 1: Definition / Clarification

When demonstrating their knowledge of course concepts, students should:

- Describe characteristics, attributes, traits and elements in defining terms and concepts
- Classify concepts
- Describe structures and functions
- Describe patterns and/or trends
- Describe the perspective of a source or author
- Describe assumptions and/or reasoning of a source or author

Reasoning Process 2: Process

When explaining political processes, students should:

- Identify steps and/or stages in a process
- Explain how steps or stages in a process relate to each other
- Explain challenges with processes and/or interactions
- Explain the relevance or significance of process and/or interactions

Reasoning Process 3: Causation

When explaining causes and effects of political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors, students should:

- Identify causes and/or effects
- Explain the reasons for causes and/or effects
- Explain the significance of causes and/or effects
- Explain the implications of change over time

Reasoning Process 4: Comparison

When explaining similarities and differences among political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors, students should:

- Identify relevant categories of comparison
- Identify similarities and/or differences
- Explain the reasons for similarities and/or differences
- Explain the relevance, implications, and/or significance of similarities and differences

Textbook and Supplemental Readings

Primary Textbook

Abernathy, Scott F. and Karen Waples. *American Government: Stories of a Nation for the AP Course. Presidential Election Update*. Boston: Bedford, Freeman & Worth. 2021.

Required Foundational Documents

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| • The Articles of Confederation | • Federalist No. 10 |
| • The Declaration of Independence | • Federalist No. 51 |
| • The U.S. Constitution (and Amendments) | • Federalist No. 70 |
| • Brutus No. 1 | • Federalist No. 78 |
| | • Letter From a Birmingham Jail |

Required Supreme Court Cases

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| • McCulloch v. Maryland (1819) | • Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972) |
| • United States v. Lopez (1995) | • Tinker v. Des Moines Schools (1969) |
| • Engel v. Vitale (1962) | |

- New York Times Co. v. United States (1971)
- Schenck v. United States (1919)
- Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)
- Roe v. Wade (1973)
- McDonald v. Chicago (2010)
- Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
- Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)
- Baker v. Carr (1962)
- Shaw v. Reno (1993)
- Marbury v. Madison (1803)

Pacing Guide, 2022-2023

Unit 1 (Foundations of American Democracy), September 12 – October 6

Unit 4 (American Political Ideologies and Beliefs), October 12 – November 18

Unit 5 (Political Participation), November 22 – December 22

Unit 2 (Interactions Between Branches of Government), January 3 – February 15

Unit 3 (Civil Liberties and Civil Rights), March 3 – April 20

*** AP EXAM – MONDAY, MAY 1 at 8:00 AM

Required Class Materials

- School-issued laptop computer
- Notebook paper
- Notebook (spiral bound or composition) – Approximately 100 pages, depending on the size of student's handwriting. This will be used for weekly assignments
- Blue or black pens / # 2 pencils / highlighter and/or colored pencils

Assignments and Grades

Students will be asked to complete a variety of tasks throughout the year – including tests and quizzes, writing tasks and answering questions based on assigned readings. Each task will be assigned a specific number of points based on the difficulty and/or time required to complete the task.

All work is to be completed and submitted by the due date. Work submitted beyond the due date will be accepted. However, *the grade on late assignments will be reduced by 10% for each day that an assignment is late. Work submitted more than five days late will earn no more than 50% of the total points possible.*

General Expectations

I. Assignments

- Unless otherwise directed, assignments must be written by-hand, using blue or black ink

II. Absences

- Students are responsible for making-up work that was missed while absent. Assignments are generally posted in Teams. However, it is always best to check with the instructor – either in-person or via email – to get missed work. Due to the pace of this class, please try to limit absences.
- Missed work due to an extended absence will be discussed on an individual basis.

III. Class Participation

- All students are expected to be attentive during class, and to participate in class activities and discussions.
- Please always be respectful in all that you say and do in class!