



## SILSA Course Syllabus

**Course Name: AP U.S. Government & Politics**

**Teacher(s): Chad Anderson**

### Course Overview

#### **Introduction to AP U.S. Government and Politics**

AP U.S. Government and Politics is a college-level year-long course that not only seeks to prepare students for success on the AP Exam in May, but also provides students with the political knowledge and reasoning processes to participate meaningfully and thoughtfully in discussions and debates that are currently shaping American politics and society. It is important to note that this course is not a history course; it is a political science course that studies the interconnectedness of the different parts of the American political system and the behaviors and attitudes that shape this system and are the byproducts of this system.

AP U.S. Government and Politics accomplishes these goals by framing the acquisition of political knowledge around essential questions and enduring understandings about American government that can be applied to a set of disciplinary practices through the use of a set of reasoning processes. Through the development of this set of political knowledge, disciplinary practices, and reasoning processes, by the end of the course, students will be able to analyze current and historical political events like a political scientist and develop factually accurate, well-reasoned, thoughtful arguments and opinions that acknowledge and grapple with alternative political perspectives. This year-long course will meet for 80 minutes every other day.

### Essential Questions to Spark Student Inquiry

## **Overarching Course Essential Question:**

*What is the proper role of government in a democracy?*

This question is used iteratively throughout the course. Students return to it in each unit, revising and deepening their responses in light of the concepts they are learning.

## **College Board AP**

### **UNIT 1: Foundations of American Democracy**

- How do founding documents describe how our government should work?
- To what extent should we be faithful to the founders' intentions?

### **UNIT 2: Interactions among Branches of Government (divided into three mini-units)**

- Congress
  - How does the government work together to make laws?
  - To what extent is Congress designed to make laws that reflect the will of the people?
- The President & Federal Bureaucracy
  - What is "Unitary Executive Power?"
  - Why do we have rules and other parts of government that can limit or question what the President can do?
  - To what extent should these limits and challenges exist, and what might happen if there were too few or too many ways to keep the President's power in check in today's world?
- The Federal Judiciary
  - How does the Supreme Court work?
  - How does the Supreme Court balance the rights of the individual and the needs of society?

### **UNIT 3: Civil Liberties & Civil Rights**

- Can there be liberty without equality? Can there be equality without liberty? What is the connection between freedom, equality, and democracy?
- Do you agree with the statement that "All men are created equal"? What kinds of equality are protected by the Constitution, and by what means?
- Are the rights of women and minorities protected adequately under US law?

### **UNIT 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs**

- How does the government work together to implement public policy?
- To what extent is the way the government implements public policy beneficial or detrimental to the people?

**UNIT 5: Political Participation (Linkage Institutions)**

Political Parties; Campaigns & Elections; Interest Groups; the Media

- How are elections run?
- To what extent do elections reflect the will of the people?

**Assessment****Formative**

*What opportunities will students be given to show the development of their understandings and skills? What are the intermediate products and learning tasks that students will create and engage in?*

Students will complete notes, quizzes, and classroom activities that provide me with formative feedback. Students reflect on their formative assessments by using exemplars for corrections. Formative assessment grades are entered after students have revised or improved their work.

**Potential Assignments:**

- Socratic seminars of significant readings
- Observe and evaluate local and state government activities
- Observe and evaluate campaign/election events
- Students will evaluate and compare their sources of political socialization
- Students will evaluate and compare their respective positions on the “political spectrum”
- Read and compare the political perspectives of written and broadcast news editorials and news coverage
- Evaluate political cartoons
- Analyze public opinion polling data and voting history data
- Research and evaluate various types of campaign advertising
- Research and evaluate the legislative records/performance of local legislators
- Compare US political structures and processes to parliamentary political systems and proportional electoral systems
- Evaluate students’ political viewpoints on a range of issues and compare them to the platforms of various political parties
- Research the activities of various interest groups, including PACs and public interest groups, including analysis of records of campaign contributions to selected state and federal candidates
- Research the nature and potential influence of campaign contributions
- Research the nature, viewpoints, and trends of various types of public opinion polls

- Write answers to CB--type free response questions based on unit content
- Analyze and present selected Supreme Court cases

## Summative

*What final, culminating product(s) will students present to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes?*

Students will complete projects and unit tests to demonstrate their acquired proficiencies with AP objectives. Multiple choice tests, short answer, and short essay assessment questions may be reviewed and improved for credit recovery. Generally, projects have opportunities built into their process that afford students revision opportunities before the established due date. This will be true of the Community Action Project (CAP) taught in coordination with Literature II research. Regarding the course final exam, there is no opportunity for students to correct their submitted answers. However, the final exam is a cumulative assessment composed of previous test questions from throughout the units of the course. Students will take the course final exam in preparation for the AP exam.

Students will take the AP US Government and Politics exam administered by the College Board in May 2026.

## Grading

*In alignment with [Board of Education Policy 3400 Evaluation of Student Progress](#), describe the grading scale/weight and how the five principles of grading will be integrated (i.e. accurate; reflects proficiency of academic standards; supports a culture of revision; provides timely and actionable feedback; and distinguishes means of learning (habits of scholarship) from the ends (academic success). Clearly describe your policy around homework, retakes, and revisions.*

A basic point system is applied to calculate grades. Your grade is a percentage of the available points that you have earned. For example, if you earned 186 points out of 200 possible points, your grade is 93. ( $186 / 200 = 0.93$  ...To find your grade percentage (%):  $0.93 * 100 = 93\%$ ) Infinite Campus is the application students and parents should regularly access to discuss grades and reflect on current progress.

### Approximate Point Distributions

~50%+ is formative, including notes, reading responses, quizzes, and classroom activities. Point values will range from 5 to 20 points.

~30% of the coursework consists of summative projects and unit assessments, offering opportunities for revision and demonstrating growth. Point values will range from 30 to 100 points.

20% is a final exam with no revision or retake opportunities.

### Grading Scale:

A = 90–100 | B = 80–89 | C = 70–79 | D = 60–69 | F = below 60

## Attendance

Per [Board of Education Procedure 3420-P](#): Students who exceed the number of absences to earn course credit must attend attendance recovery within two weeks of their last absence.

Per [Board of Education Procedure 4400-P](#): To receive credit for a course, a student must not have more than five (5) unlawful class absences.

When a student must miss school, a written excuse signed by a parent or guardian must be presented to the student's teacher on the day the student returns after an absence. Absences due to extended illnesses may also require a statement from a health care practitioner.

If absent from class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed. First, check Canvas for presentations, materials, and directions. Then, ask at least two students to clarify and explain what you missed. If your questions or confusion persist, you should request specific support from me after school. You are in control of the when and how. As a learning community, our collective success greatly depends on your individual "good faith" effort. A positive, open attitude is a character asset. Please let me know if you become sick, and we will develop a plan together to promote your success.

## Additional/Supplemental Information

### Overview of the AP Exam and Keys to AP Exam Success

The AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam will be comprised of the following sections:

#### Multiple-Choice Questions

Number of Questions: 55

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

- Apply political concepts in real-world scenarios
- Analyze quantitative data
- Compare the decisions and implications of different Supreme Court cases
- Develop an argument using the required foundational documents as evidence

Timing: One hour and 40 minutes

Percentage of *Total Exam*: 50%

As the breakdown of the AP Exam highlights, success in this course and on the AP Exam requires far more than the memorization of political knowledge. Success in this course and on the AP Exam requires connection-making with the aim of being able to analyze political information, regardless of the format in which the information is presented, and develop a factually accurate, thoughtful, and well-reasoned opinion regarding this information.

The different pieces of the course fit together in pursuit of this aim through course content and essential questions, reasoning processes, Universal Intellectual Standards, and disciplinary practices.

### **Success**

Due to the nature of an AP course, much is expected of us all. Each of us is the cornerstone of our learning. You are preparing for a lifetime of complex decision-making in an increasingly complex and integrated world. What you learn in this class, not only in content but also in research and interpersonal skills, productive struggles, and even initial failures, will last you a lifetime and be carried into future endeavors. Make this year count for you and your classmates. Acknowledge and accept the role that you have in your success. It is in your hands. I am here to encourage and support your efforts and welcome those opportunities. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via Gmail. I always strive to respond to your question(s) within 24 hours. Thank you for your curiosity, time, and commitment.

I look forward to a great year together.