

## AP U.S. Government and Politics

### American Government & Politics AP

The American Government and Politics AP course is a full year class that will give students an analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States. This course includes both the study of general concepts used to interpret U.S. politics and the analysis of specific examples. It also requires a familiarity with various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute U.S. politics. Topics to be covered include constitutional arrangements, policy-making institutions, public opinion and the media, political parties, interest groups, civil liberties and civil rights, and budget making. Recommended prerequisite: American History AP and/or English AP.

CREDIT: 1

LENGTH: FULL YEAR

### The American System

*Study of American Government, The Constitution, Federalism, American Political Culture, and Civil Liberties/Civil Rights*

1. Analyze the Constitutional underpinnings of the United States Government.
2. Identify considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the constitution.
3. Explain the concept of separation of powers and its significance to the United States Government.
4. Identify the characteristics of federalism.
5. Explain and analyze the theories of democratic government.
6. Explain the development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation.
7. Explain the impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties.

### Institutions of Government

*Congress, The Presidency, The Bureaucracy, and The Judiciary*

1. Explain the major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power.
2. Analyze and explain the relationships among these four institutions and varying balances of power.
3. Identify linkages between institutions and the following:
  - a. Public opinion and voters
  - b. Interest Groups
  - c. Political Parties
  - d. The media
  - e. Subnational governments

## Opinions, Interests, and Organizations

*Public Opinion,  
Political  
Participation,  
Political Parties,  
Elections and  
Campaigns, Interest  
Groups, and The  
Media*

1. Analyze beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders.
2. Identify the processes by which citizens learn about politics.
3. Identify the nature, sources, and consequences of public opinion.
4. Explain the ways in which citizens vote and otherwise participate in political life.
5. Identify factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors.
6. Explain the following as they pertain to political parties and elections:
  - a. Functions
  - b. Organization
  - c. Development
  - d. Effects on the political process
  - e. Electoral laws and systems
7. Explain the following concerning interest groups, including PAC's:
  - a. The range of interest represented
  - b. The activities of interest groups
  - c. The effects of interest groups on the political process
  - d. The unique characteristics and roles of PACs in the political process
8. Explain the functions and structures of the media and its impact on politics.

## The Politics of Public Policy

*The Policy-Making  
Process*

1. Analyze policy-making in a federal system of government.
2. Explain the formation of policy agendas.
3. Identify and analyze the role of institutions in the enactment of policy.
4. Explain the role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation.
5. Identify linkages between policy processes and the following:
  - a. Political institutions and federalism
  - b. Political parties
  - c. Interest groups
  - d. Public opinion
  - e. Elections
  - f. Policy networks

## Civil Ideals and Practices

1. Practice forms of civic discussion and participation consistent with the ideals of citizens in a democratic republic.
2. Evaluate various means for citizens to take action on a particular issue.
3. Distinguish among local, state, and national government and identify representative leaders at these levels such as congressional representatives, senators, congressional leadership, etc.
4. Become involved in volunteer work by working with a local election campaign, kids voting, etc.

## Inquiry, Research, and Analysis

1. Prepare a public policy paper and present and defend it through gathering, recording, evaluating, and interpreting relevant data.
2. Construct a policy statement and an action plan to achieve one or more goals related to an issue of public concern.
3. Locate, access, analyze, evaluate, and apply information about a selected public issue- identifying, describing, and evaluating multiple points of view.

## Communication

### 1. *In Writing All Papers*

- a. Present a coherent thesis.
- b. Support the thesis with appropriate evidence.
- c. Organize ideas to achieve coherence in communication.
- d. Use correct grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.
- e. Synthesize information into logical sequence.
- f. Present a concise, clear closing when making an argument.

### 2. *Group Work*

- a. Analyze political and governmental issues in the U.S. today.
- b. Build a consensus within the group by finding points of agreement, making sure that all voices are heard, and attempting to understand the view of others.
- c. Research decisions by: identifying the problem; analyzing the interest, values and points of view; identifying the causes of the problem or dilemma; proposing alternative solutions; formulating a position; and evaluating the consequences of taking that position.

## Impact of Technology

1. Examine the ethical considerations of a governmental technology policy that affects the physical characteristics of a place or region.
2. Compare and evaluate alternate public policies for technology deployment and the use of natural resources.
3. Evaluate national and international policies that have been proposed as ways of dealing with social changes resulting from new technologies (e.g. censorship of the media, intellectual property rights).
4. Forecast changes in laws and legislation that might result from the exponential growth of technology.

## Technology and Information Literacy

1. *Determine and apply an evaluative process to all information sources chosen for a project*
  - a. Evaluate information collected to answer both personal and curricular needs to determine its accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency and coverage.
  - b. Acknowledge intellectual property in using information sources.
  - c. Determine and apply an evaluative process to all information sources chosen for a project.
2. *Apply a research process model to conduct research and meet information needs*
  - a. Derive a personally developed research model to conduct independent research.
  - b. Refine the information question to focus the research process, modifying the question as necessary to broaden or narrow the inquiry.
  - c. Critique information sources to determine if different points of view are included.
  - d. Integrate multiple information sources in the research process.
  - e. Create a product to communicate information, representing a personal point of view based on findings.
  - f. Adhere to copyright and intellectual property laws and guidelines when creating new products (e.g., standard bibliographic format, permissions to use information created by others).
  - g. Monitor progress and evaluate actions during the process, revising and incorporating new information as indicated by personal evaluation
  - h. Archive the final product in a format that will be accessible in the future.

*3. Formulate advanced search strategies, demonstrating an understanding of the strengths and limitations of the Internet and evaluate the quality and appropriate use of Internet resources*

*4. Evaluate choices of electronic resources and determine their strengths and limitations*

- a. Incorporate defined field searching by initiating a search string identifying the desired field of information to be retrieved (e.g., search author or title).
  - b. Create a stand-alone system for tracking Internet resources for personal and academic needs (e.g., postsecondary institutions of interest).
  - c. Synthesize search results retrieved from a variety of Internet resources to create an information product for a targeted audience.
  - d. Critique research retrieved through the Internet for authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency, coverage and relevancy.
- 
- a. Research information from electronic archives (e.g., online database, Web-based index).
  - b. Use a variety of technology resources for curriculum and personal information needs (e.g., streaming video, CD/DVD, subscription database).
  - c. Evaluate technology resources and determine strengths and weaknesses for curricular or personal needs.
  - d. Select an appropriate tool, online resource or Website based on the information need.