

Advanced Placement Government and Politics

Course Description:

Advanced Placement Government and Politics is a year long course dedicated to the teachings of the United States government and political structure. This senior level course meets daily for forty-eight minute sessions and gives the students an overview of the United States system and provides lessons to analyze and evaluate the governmental structure. Students will become familiar with the Constitutional underpinnings, political beliefs and behaviors, political parties, interest groups, impact of the media, public policy, civil rights and liberties and the national institutions that constitute the American political system using various resources including but not limited to: text, appropriate internet sites, worksheets, the media, Supreme Court cases, primary sources, and political writings. The philosophical bases, structure and application of the United States government will be evaluated by analytical essays, Supreme Court synopses, political cartoon analysis, journal entries and discussions on current affairs, critical thinking assignments, political position papers, study of graphs and charts, free response questions and AP tests.

Instructional Materials:

Text: Wilson, James Q. and John J. DiIulio, Jr. *American Government, 8th Edition.*
Houghton Mifflin; Boston: 2001.

Supplemental Materials:

Serow, Ann G. and Everett C. Ladd.
The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity, 2nd Edition.
Lanahan Publishers; Baltimore: 2000.

This publication provides primary sources and political writings which focus on essential readings on the constitutional system, political institutions, public opinion, political competition, and debate.

Brudney, Kent M. and Mark E. Weber.
Critical Thinking and American Government, 3rd Edition.
Thomson Publishers; California: 2007.

Analytical worksheets which explore current political issues including but not exclusive to the presidential election of 2004, McCain-Feingold, the president's war power, civil rights for gays and lesbians. Students use graphs, charts, key legislative pieces, primary sources, and Court cases to answer analytical questions on current political issues.

Lasser, William. *Perspectives on American Politics, 4th Edition*.
Houghton Mifflin; Boston: 2004.

This publication reflects the new realities of American political life that mirror various perspectives to include but not exclusive of: American foundations, politics today, international context and an inside view.

Madison, James, *Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay*.
The Federalist. Phoenix Press; London: 2000.

Wilson, James Q. and John J. DiIulio Jr.
American Government, Student Handbook.
Houghton Mifflin; Boston: 2004.

Used as a study tool to focus students and to create an in-depth outline for future study.

Internet Sites:

www.supremecourtus.gov
www.whitehouse.gov
www.senate.gov
www.house.gov
www.loc.gov
www.supreme.findlaw.com
www.newyorktimes.com
www.washingtonpost.com
www.msnbc.com
www.cspan.org
www.cnn.com
www.foxnews.com
www.pbs.org

Long term assignments:

The assignments below are given to the students over the year. Each assignment requires the student to use multiple political sources to answer the question(s). Each individual research project is given approximately two (2) months to complete.

1. Analysis of Illegal Immigration

Your task: Research the current issue of Immigration using news media, Congressional opinions, state and local legislation, Court decisions and Congressional legislation (even pending bills) to write an in-depth research paper on Illegal Immigration

Parameters:

This paper is a detailed look at the political, social, and economic problems of Illegal immigration in the 21st century. You are to research the topic in depth and write a paper on the issue.

- ✚ Use at least five primary sources from governmental offices
- ✚ Use two to three secondary news sources
- ✚ There are current books on the issue, if you need on

2. Analysis of the Media

Your task: Select one newspaper or news magazine AND a television news station and compare how each covers a particular news item or news in general over a five week period.

Parameters:

- a. How do the two news sources you picked differ in the way they cover the same stories? Do they report the same facts, or do they emphasize different issue? How does each source differ or agree in defining the lead story on the news?
- b. Is there any particular or consistent political orientation in the way the news item is covered? For example, is there a liberal or conservative bias?
- c. How do the two news sources differ in defining what is news? Are news acts of violence, human drama, etc.?
- d. How important is video film or visual presentation to the television station in presenting the news? Is much news presented without film/visuals?
- e. What role does the news anchor have on the news? How does she/he act, and how might she/he influence you or the presentation of the news? How might his or her role on television compare to the role of editorials in a newspaper or magazine?
- f. Look at the ads during the news or in the newspaper/magazine you have selected. To who are the ads directed, and do you think the ads give you a clue as to whom the news is being written for or how it may be slanted? For example, if the ads are “yuppie,” do you think the news is being written with a yuppie slant

3. Analysis of Representative Democracy

Your task: Evaluate the character of representative democracy in American today. This five-page paper is to focus on the operation of interest groups, political parties, and election campaigns as parts of the United States system of representative democracy.

Parameters:

The character of representative democracy: first develop a description of representative democracy and establish a set of standards that can be used to evaluate the quality of representative democracy. In other words, what standards (valid) would you use to determine whether a system, which claims to be a representative democracy, is operating in a “good” or “bad” manner?

Evaluation: After you establish the valid standards, you must apply them to evaluate the governmental organizations of interest groups, and political parties and the processes of elections and campaigns (presidential and congressional), which connect the public to the government. In other words, apply your standards to the topics given.

4. The Constitution Today

Review the Constitution and use a recent, controversial issue to analyze the following:

Does the Constitution give Congress the right to legislate morality?

Format for specific assignments:

1. Political Cartoon Analysis

Locate a political cartoon from any newspaper or news magazine. Answer the questions below as you analyzed what the cartoonist is trying to say and how you feel about that message.

1. What do you see: Describe those elements listed below that are present in your chosen cartoon:
Symbols
Historical images
Stereotypes
Caricature: Is the cartoonist using extreme features and distorted images for his/her people? Describe them.
Captions
Humor
2. What is happening in the cartoon? Are the components of the cartoon related to each other? If so, how?
3. Explain what you think the cartoonist is trying to say. What does the cartoon mean?

Can you think of another setting, period or person in time to which this cartoon could apply? Explain

2. Supreme Court Case Brief

This assignment is given to analyze major Supreme Court case in US History. This format allows the student to understand the facts and law relevant to each case. Each brief should be approximately one single-spaced page.

1. *Case Title*: Standard citation form should be reported. This provides important information on the appellant/petitioner (usually listed first) and the year given provides historic context.
2. *The Law*: “This case involves the commerce clause, New Mexico law...” Cases involve constitutional issues, the meaning of federal statutes, whether a state statute conflicts with a federal law or the Constitution, whether law, et al, authorized the actions of a government officer. The briefer must identify exactly what provisions of the Constitution or what statutes are involved. It is often not enough to know that the First or Fourth Amendment is involved, for example. Crucial decisions may turn on whether it is the free exercise clause, the establishment clause, the equal protection clause, or the due process clause that is at issue. The Court often obscures as much as it clarifies in its opinions. Thus, it is not sufficient to list all of the constitutional provisions and statutes that are mentioned in the opinion. The briefer must determine which ones, used in which combinations, have been challenged or questioned in the case.
3. *The Facts of the Case*: “At issue was...” Legal arguments are combinations of law and facts. The briefer must identify the facts that a judge or justice used to construct his/her opinion. A good brief notes which facts a justice/judge ignores, de-emphasizes or distorts. In addition to the facts immediately relevant to the decision, the broader political, social, and economic setting should be taken into account. The parties to a case, for instance, should not be treated as faceless, abstract contestants. They are real people or organizations with real interests, and they frequently represent broad and powerful interests in the society. Some attention should be paid to what consequences for the real world a decision one way or the other would have. Some historical research may thus be necessary.
4. *The Holding*: “The justices/judges held...” It should be stated who won and who lost and the basis in terms of the legal rule or doctrine. That burglar Smith won may be far less important (to everyone except Smith) than that he won because the Court held that wiretap evidence gathered without a warrant is not admissible evidence in criminal trials.
5. *The Arguments*: The Central Part of Any Brief: “the reasons for the holding are...” A court opinion is a map, often obscure, of how the judge got from the law and the facts to the holding. There may be one main route or several alternatives. He/she may have use arguments from precedent (following and distinguishing earlier cases), appeals to common sense, the “plain meaning” of the words of the law, the divined intent of the framers, historical experience, Aristotelian logic, consideration of practical consequences, political philosophy, or any combination of these to get from start to finish. This stage of briefing is the most difficult because it requires the reader to lay bare the logical structure (or lack of one)

underlying pages of argumentation which may ramble unintentionally or which may desperately seek to disguise fundamental weaknesses. Students should try to outline the arguments in the best possible fashion despite this problem.

6. *Rules, Maxims, Doctrines: The Results and Impact of a Case:* “The effect of this case was...” Because the Supreme Court uses its own past decisions as authority for future ones, and expects the lower courts to be guided by them as well, the principle importance of any given opinion may be the general legal formulations or doctrines that enunciate judicial policy for the future. “The clear and present danger rule,” the maxim that “the power to tax is the power to destroy,” and the “selective incorporation” doctrine can each be traced to a specific case or set of cases.

The world (and this assignment) would be easier if opinion writers neatly labeled their law, facts, holdings, and rules, and put them in the “right” sequence, and neatly placed each argument in the proper gap between its particular facts and law and its holding. They do not. It is not possible to brief by reading the first two paragraphs of an opinion for the law, the next two for the facts and so on until reaching a neat list of wisdom for the ages at the end. Briefing is generally made easier by rapidly reading through the whole case to see generally where the judge/justice is going and then settling back to sort out how he/she gets there.

7. *Dissenting Opinions/Concurring Opinions:* “Dissenting from the Court’s judgment was...because...” Dissents are usually criticisms of the majority opinion. They are important because they often influence future Court actions. Dissenting opinions should be thoroughly scrutinized and summarized to illustrate points of disagreement. The same should be done with concurring opinions, which are partial disagreements with the majority of Court opinions.

4. **Current Issues Journal**

For this course you are to keep a detailed journal highlighting current events, and readings from Perspectives on American Politics and American Polity. The readings will be assigned, and you will monitor current events. Use legitimate media sources for weekly issues such as: *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *Time Magazine*, *U.S. News and World Report* or another print media source. In addition, watch nightly news shows (CBS, NBC, ABC, Fox, PBS), cable news channels (CNN, Fox, MSNBC), or Sunday morning political shows (*Meet the Press*, *This Week with George Stephanopoulos*, *Face the Nation*, *The Late Edition*), refer to them in your entry. The format for the journal entries is as follows:

1. Each week you are to select one major current event issue involving American government and politics. In your entry, provide the source(s), and the who, where, when, what, why, or how of the issue selected and the impact on the political system.
2. Political writings are assigned for each chapter. Write a detailed summary of the article, note any political bias and analyze the context of the article in relationship to the unit.

5. Position Papers

After reading select articles a specific topic, write a two-three page paper explaining your position on the issue, and what political ideas, court cases, or legislation defends your claim.

Unit 1: The American System (Timeframe: 5 weeks)

Text: Chapter 1: *The Study of Government* and Chapter 2: *The Constitution*—read and complete worksheets as a guide to class discussions and lectures.

Critical Thinking and American Government

- 1.1: Reading the Constitution
- 1.2: The Framers of the Constitution and Republicanism
- 1.3: Contemporary American Political Ideologies
- 1.4: Direct Democracy: Electronically

Perspectives on American Politics:

- 1.1: *Federalist #10* by James Madison
- 1.2: *Federalist #47* by James Madison
- 1.3: *Federalist #48* by James Madison
- 1.4: *Federalist #51* by James Madison

American Polity

- # 12: *The Power Elite* by C. Wright Mills

Supreme Court Brief: *McCullough v. Maryland*

Test on both chapters, with a free response on the Constitution.

Text: Chapter 3: ***Federalism***—read and worksheets as a basis for class lecture and discussion

Critical Thinking and American Government

- 2.1: Creating Federalism
- 2.2: Federal Education Aid to State and Local Governments
- 2.3: The Amendment Process
- 2.4: Who's in Charge of the Minimum Drinking Age

Perspectives on American Politics:

- 2.2: *Federalist #39* by James Madison
- 2.3: *Federalist #45* by James Madison
- 2.6: *The Man Behind the Mayor* by Amanda Griscom

American Polity

- # 23: *United States v. Lopez*

Political Cartoon Analysis

Journal

Position Paper: Religion in Schools

Chapter test with free response question

Text: Chapter 4: ***American Political Culture***—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Perspectives on American Politics:

- 5.1: *Democracy in America* by Alexis deTocqueville
- 5.2: *One Nation, Slightly Divisible* by David Brooks
- 5.4: *The Other War Room* by Joshua Green

Journal

Supreme Court Brief: *Dred Scott v. Sanford*

Unit test (multiple choice) with free response question

Unit Two: Opinions, Interests, and Organizations (Timeframe: 7 weeks)

Text: Chapter 5: **Public Opinion**—read and complete worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Critical Thinking and American Government

3.1: Public Confidence in American Institutions

American Polity

48: *The Phantom Public* by Walter Lippmann

#49: *Public Opinion and American Democracy*
by V.O. Key

#50: *Coming to Public Judgment* by Daniel Yankelovich

Position Paper: Free Speech and the Internet

Journal

Political Cartoon Analysis

Chapter Quiz

Text: Chapter 6: **Political Participation**—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Perspectives in American Government—

8.1: Towards a More Responsible Two-Party System
Thomas

Supreme Court Brief: *Ex Parte Milligan*

Journal

Chapter Quiz with free response

Text: Chapter 7: ***Political Parties***—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Perspectives in American Government—

8.2: *The Crabgrass Wars* by James A. Barnes

8.3: *Why There's Nothing the Democrats Could Have Done* by John B. Judis

American Polity-

#66: *The Party's Over* by David Broder

#68: *They Only Look Dead* by E.J. Dionne

#70: *I Ain't Got Time to Bleed* by Jesse Ventura

Position Paper: Flag Burning

Political Cartoon Analysis

Journal

Multiple Choice test on Public Opinion, Political Participation, and Political Parties with free response question

Text: Chapter 8: ***Election and Campaigns***—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Critical Thinking and American Government:

4.1: The Presidential Election of 2004: Why It Wasn't the Economy

4.3: To Vote or Not to Vote

4.4: Alternative Voting Systems

Perspectives in American Government—

8.4: *Breaking the Two Party Monopoly* by Douglas J. Amy

8.5: *Oh Waiter, One Order of Crow!* By Jeff Greenfield

American Polity-

#60: *The Tyranny of the Majority* by Lani Guinier

#61: *Dirty Politics* by Kathleen Hall Jamieson

#62: *Dirty Little Secrets* by Larry Sabato/Glenn

Supreme Court Brief: *Bush v. Gore*

Journal

Chapter Quiz

Text: Chapter 9: ***Interest Groups***—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Critical Thinking and American Government:

5.1: AARP v. Generation X

5.2: The Discreet Charm of Pork-Barrel Spending

5.3: Campaign Finance (527s)

Perspectives in American Government:

6.1: *The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System*

by EE. Schattschneider

6.2: *Always Involved, Rarely Central:*

by Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis

American Polity:

#54: *The End of Liberalism* by Theodore Lowi

#58: *Storming the Gates* by Dan Balz and Ronald Brownstein

Political Cartoon Analysis

Position Paper: Affirmative Action

Journal

Chapter Quiz with free response

Text: Chapter 10: ***The Media***—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Critical Thinking and American Government—

3.2: Bias and Accuracy in the News Media

3.3: How do you want your News: Hard or Soft

Perspectives in American Government—

7.1: *New York Times V. United States*

7.2: *Bias* by Bernie Goldberg

7.3: *Victim Politics* by J. Chait

7.4: *Inside Al Jazeera* by R. Zednik

7.5: *Keeper of Secrets* by H. Kurtz

Supreme Court Brief: *Engel v. Vitale*

Journal

Unit test on Elections and Campaigns, Interest Groups and the Media with a free response question

Unit Three: Institutions of Government (Timeframe 10 weeks)

Text: Chapter 11: **The Congress**—read and worksheets for class discussions and lectures

Critical Thinking and American Government:

- 6.1: What is the Proper Role of the Representative?
- 6.2: Why we Hate Congress but Love our Member of Congress?
- 6.3: Blacks in Congress
- 6.4: Legislative Apportionment

Perspectives in American Government:

- 9.1: *Federalist #55* by James Madison
- 9.2: *Federalists #57* by James Madison
- 9.3: *What the American Public wants Congress to Be* by Hibbing and Smith

American Polity:

- # 30: *In Praise of Pork* by Ellwood and Patashnik
- #32: *The Freshmen* by Linda Killian

Position Paper: School Dropouts

Journal

Political Cartoon Analysis

Chapter test with free response questions

Text: Chapter 12: **The Presidency**--read and worksheets for class discussions and lectures

Critical Thinking and American Government:

- 7.1: The Electoral College
- 7.2: Evaluating Presidential Performance
- 7.3: The Power of the Sword
- 7.4: Distinguishing Fact from Opinion in an American Presidential Campaign

Perspectives in American Government:

- 10.1: *Federalist # 68* by Alexander Hamilton
- 10.2: *Federalist #70* by Alexander Hamilton
- 10.3: *Presidential Power* by Richard Neustadt
- 10.4: *The Changing Leadership of George W. Bush*
by Fred Greenstein
- 10.6: *September 11, 2006* by David Frum

American Polity:

- # 34: *The Imperial Presidency* by Arthur Schlesinger
- #39: *Governing America* by Joseph Califano

Position Paper—Welfare Reform
Supreme Court Brief: *United States v. Nixon*
Journal
Chapter test with free response question

Text: Chapter 13: **The Bureaucracy**—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Critical Thinking and American Government—
8.1: The Fourth Branch
8.2: The National Security State
8.3: How much regulation is enough? How much is too much?

Perspectives in American Government—
11.1: *Bureaucracy* by Max Weber
11.4: *Descent into Evil* by Evan Thomas

Position Paper—Legalizing Drugs
Supreme Court Brief—*West Virginia Board of Ed v. Barnette*
Journal
Political Cartoon Analysis

Chapter test with free response question

Text: Chapter 14: **The Judiciary**—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Critical Thinking and American Government—
9.1: Establishing Judicial Review
9.2: Judicial Activism
9.3: What role should the Senate play in appointments?
9.4: Beating the Odds on Judicial Appointments

Perspectives in American Government—
12.1: *Federalist #78* by Alexander Hamilton
12.2: *Marbury v. Madison*
12.3: *Beyond Bush v. Gore* by L. Greenhouse
12.5: *The “Accidental President”* by D.A. Kaplan

Position Paper—Flag Burning
Supreme Court Brief: *Near v. Minnesota*
Journal

Chapter test with free response question

Unit 4: The Politics of Public Policy (Timeframe: 7 weeks)

Text: Chapter 15: **Policy Making**—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Perspectives in American Government—

13.1: *Domestic Policy Making* by Davidson and Oleszek

13.2: *Nine Misconceptions about Social Security*
by Dean Baker

13.3: *America and the World* by Michael Hirsh

13.4: *Taking the Initiative, or Risk Taking Inside
the Government* by Kenneth Ashworth

Supreme Court Brief: *Tinker v. Des Moines*

Journal

Chapter Quiz with free response

Text: Chapter 16: **Economics**—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

American Polity

#84: *The Affluent Society* by John Kenneth Galbraith

#85: *Free to Choose* by Milton Friedman

#86: *The Judas Economy* by Wollman and Colamosca

Position Paper: Death Penalty

Journal

Political Cartoon Analysis

Chapter Quiz

Text: Chapter 17: **Social Welfare**—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

American Polity

#87: *The Other America* by M. Harrington

#88: *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* By T. Sowell

#89: *Joint Center for Political Studies*

#90: *Tyranny of Kindness* by T. Funicello

Supreme Court Brief: *Mapp v. Ohio*

Journal

Multiple choice test on Policy Making, Economics, and Social Welfare with free response question

Text: Chapter 18: **Civil Liberties**—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Critical Thinking and American Government

11.1 The Tension between Civil Liberties advocates
and Civil Rights advocates

11.2: Random Drug Testing in Schools

11.3: Homosexuals and the Right to Privacy

11.4: Jerry Falwell and Hustler Magazine

American Polity

#75: *Gideon's Trumpet* by Anthony Lewis

#76: *Miranda v. Arizona*

#77: *Simple Justice* by Richard Kluger

Position Paper: Gun Control

Political Cartoon Analysis

Journal

Chapter Quiz

Text: Chapter 19: **Civil Rights**—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Critical Thinking and American Government

10.1 Mandating Racial Segregation by State Law

10.2: Same-sex Marriage: The New Civil Right?

10.3: The Gender Wage Gap

10.4: The End of Affirmative Action

Perspectives on American Politics

4.1: *Plessy v. Ferguson*

4.2: *Brown v. Board of Education*

4.3: *Bolling v. Sharpe*

4.5: *Multicultural Citizenship* by Will Kymlicks

4.6: *Women in the Barracks* by Philippa Strum

Supreme Court Briefs: *Bakke v. Regent*; *Roe v. Wade*; *Webster v. Reproductive
Health Services*

Journal

Multiple choice test on Civil Liberties and Civil Rights with free response
question.

Text: Chapter 20: **Foreign and Military Policy**—read and worksheets for class discussion

American Polity

#91: *The Unipolar Moment* by C. Krauthammer

#92: *Who Speaks for America?* by E. Alterman

#93: *Around the Cragged Hill* by George Kennan

Position Paper—Global Warming

Political Cartoon Analysis

Chapter Quiz

Text: Chapter 21: **The Environment**—read and worksheets for class discussion and lecture

Position Paper: Global Warming

Supreme Court Brief: *Escobedo v. Illinois*

Chapter Quiz

Unit 5: The Nature of American Democracy (Timeframe 2 weeks)

Text: Chapter 22: **Who Governs?**—read and worksheets for class discussion on the four kinds of politics (Majoritarian, Interest Group, Client, and Entrepreneurial) and the competing theories of political power (Marxist, Elitist, Bureaucratic, and Pluralist).

Text: Chapter 23: **To What Ends?**—read and worksheets for discussion on competing interests, restraints on the government. In addition, students will learn of the consequences regarding activism and analyze how the government has evolved over the course of time.

Final Preparation for AP Exam (Timeframe 3 weeks)

Students will take a series of practice AP exams with free response questions. After each examination, the class will hold study discussions reviewing the examination and discussing key concepts and weak areas of the class.

