

U.S. American Government AP Syllabus/Curriculum Guide

Requirements for Credit:

Course Title: Advanced Placement- U.S. Government

Periods per week: 5

Clock Hours per year: 120

Grade Level: 10-12

Length of Period: 80 minutes

Length of course: 90 days

Unit of credit: 1

Course Description:

This course is designed to explore the inner workings of our governmental system. The course will take a theoretical approach to the creation and workings of our government and how it works in the real world. The purpose of this course is to prepare students to take the AP Government exam and is taught at a college level. Students should leave the class knowing the important people, places and ideas of our government but also to view our governmental system through a critical eye. Students will be able to also become responsible citizens by understanding and discussing current American governmental issues.

Learning Outcomes: Performance Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

1. Apply knowledge of primary sources as well as graphs, charts and maps.
2. Take notes from both printed materials and lectures.
3. Write critical examination essays.
4. Write analytical papers.
5. Express themselves with clarity and know how to cite resources and credit the ideas of others.
6. Discuss past and current governmental trends.
7. Demonstrate knowledge of informed citizenship by participating in state and local governmental activities and elections.

Academic Expectations:

Tests- Multiple Choice and Essay:

Tests will be given after every AP Government essential topic. The tests will vary in point totals but will consist of college level multiple choice and essay questions. As often as possible, testing scenarios will mirror the Advanced Placement Exam in terms of format and level of difficulty. Students will take three practice exams the week before the AP Exam.

Quizzes- Chapter assessments:

There will be one quiz for each chapter covered in the text book. The quizzes will be multiple choice format in the AP Style. A section on each quiz will also cover current governmental issues.

Analytical Essays:

Students will be responsible for writing one essay a week in a free response format. These essays will be on current governmental issues with analysis of past governmental trends as well as supreme court cases and important ideas covered in the readings. Essays will be a minimum of two pages with emphasis on thesis writing.

Homework:

There will be daily homework assignments in this class. Students will be given a study guide for each chapter that must be completed. Other items will be map/graph work and analysis, Supreme Court cases, term identification and supplemental readings.

Participatory Democracy:

Students will be expected to volunteer the minimum of five hours during the course. Items that can be done for the five hours would include: Shadowing or interviewing governmental officials, attend local governmental or school board meetings, Senator for a Day program and County Government days. Students will also be required to keep a journal to describe what they have done, questions they have and what they have learned.

Current Events:

Students are expected to bring in five governmental articles each week. These articles may come from print or internet sources. They should be categorized according to which of the six main ideas of the course it pertains to. Class discussions and writings will coincide with these articles.

Content:

Method of Instruction:

During the course, the instructor will use a variety of methods including lecture, class discussion, group work, oral reports and audio/video/internet aides where appropriate. We also will use field trips to governmental offices and guest speakers to supplement the material.

Textbook:

O'Connor, Karen & Sabato, Larry. American Government: Roots and Reform. New York: Pearson Education Publishers, 2009

Supreme Court Case Studies. New York: Glencoe Publishers, 1999

Content Outline:

- I. Constitutional Foundation of the Constitution
 - A. Political Landscape (chapter 1)
 - i. Roots and philosophical origins of American government.
 - ii. Tenets of American Democracy
 - iii. Additional readings
 - 1. John Locke article
 - 2. Baron Montesquieu article
 - B. Constitution (chapter 2)
 - i. Declaration of Independence
 - ii. Articles of Confederation
 - iii. Constitutional Convention and compromise
 - iv. Basic Principles (separations of powers and checks & balances)
 - v. Structural Framework
 - vi. Amendment process
 - vii. Additional readings/activities
 - 1. Federalist Papers
 - 2. Articles of Confederation
 - 3. Constitutional Cooking activity
 - 4. Mock Constitutional convention
 - C. Federalism (chapter 3)
 - i. Expressed Powers
 - ii. Reserved Powers
 - iii. Interstate Relations
 - iv. History of Federalism
 - v. Additional readings
 - 1. Political cartoon evaluation
- II. Political Beliefs, Political Behaviors and Elections (chapter 11,13,14)
 - A. Political labels and spectrum
 - B. Political socialization
 - C. Public opinion and polling
 - D. Voting Behavior and trends
 - E. The Electoral Process
 - F. Primary and General Elections
 - G. Initiative, Referendum and Recall
 - H. Presidential Elections
 - I. Congressional Elections
 - J. Additional readings/activities
 - i. Bush vs. Gore (2000)
 - ii. Evaluation of Living Room Candidate website of election commercials.
 - iii. Articles on 1960, 1968 and 2000 elections.
 - iv. School wide election
 - 1. Creating parties and platforms
 - 2. Creating political commercials, slogans and posters
 - 3. Campaigning in primaries (classrooms)
 - 4. Election with popular and electoral votes.
- III. Political Parties (chapter 12)
 - A. Functions
 - B. Organization
 - C. Development of political parties
 - D. Effects on the political process
 - E. Electoral laws and systems
 - F. Additional readings

- IV. Interest Groups/Mass Media (chapter 15-16)
 - A. Range of interests represented
 - B. Activities of interest groups
 - C. Effects of interest groups on the electoral process
 - D. Characteristics and roles of PAC's in the political process
 - E. Functions and structures of the media
 - F. Impact of media on politics
 - G. Additional readings
 - H. Activities
 - i. Create a poll to judge important issues for the school election
- V. Congress and the Legislative Branch (chapter 7)
 - A. Organization and powers
 - B. Members of Congress
 - C. Committee system
 - D. Lawmaking
 - E. Relationships between branches of government
 - F. Links with public opinion, voters, interest groups, political parties and the media.
 - G. Additional Readings
 - i. Congress.org evaluation
 - ii. Mock law making activity
- VI. Executive Branch and the Presidency (chapter 8-9)
 - A. Qualifications
 - B. Powers
 - C. Development and expansion of presidential powers
 - D. Executive bureaucracy
 - E. Relationships between branches of government
 - F. Links with public opinion, voters, interest groups, political parties and the media.
 - i. Additional readings
 - 1. Watergate articles
 - 2. Impeachment of Bill Clinton
 - 3. Machiavelli (The Prince), Sun Tzu (Art of War), Clausewitz (On War)
- VII. Judicial Branch and Court System (chapter 10)
 - A. Development and expansion of judicial powers
 - B. Organization of federal and state court systems
 - C. Nomination and confirmation process
 - D. Roles of the judicial system
 - E. Supreme Court
 - F. Judicial activism vs. judicial restraint
 - G. Supreme Court cases
 - H. Relationships between branches of government
 - I. Links with public opinion, voters, interest groups, political parties and the media.
 - J. Additional Readings
 - i. Marbury vs. Madison
 - ii. McCulloch v. Maryland
- VIII. Public Policy (chapter 17-19)
 - A. Policy making in a federal system
 - B. Domestic policy
 - C. Foreign policy
 - D. Formation of political agendas
 - E. Role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation.
 - F. Role of institutions in the enactment of policy.
 - G. Links with public opinion, voters, interest groups, political parties and the media.

- IX. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (chapter 5-6)
 - A. Development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation.
 - B. Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
 - C. Impact of the fourteenth amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties.
 - D. Civil Rights movement
 - E. Women's movement
 - F. Other relevant movements for rights.
 - G. Relevant Supreme Court cases.
 - i. Wallace vs. Jaffree
 - ii. Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke
 - iii. Gregg vs. Georgia
 - iv. Roe vs. Wade
 - v. New York Times vs. United States
- X. State and Local Governments (chapter 4)
 - A. State Government
 - i. State constitutions
 - ii. Governors
 - iii. State legislatures
 - iv. State courts
 - B. Local Government
 - i. Charters
 - ii. Types of local governments
 - iii. Executives and legislatures