

AP United States Government and Politics

2013-2014
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Course Overview:

AP U.S. Government and Politics is offered as a yearlong course. Selection is based on current student performance, teacher recommendation, and student interest. This course is designed to study contemporary government and politics; however, a brief study of the framework of American traditions is also included.

It is imperative that students understand that there is extensive reading involved in this class. Students should also be aware that knowledge of current events will enhance their understanding of the curriculum.

Required Texts:

There is one required text for this course:

Wilson, James Q., and John J. DiLulio Jr. *American Government: Institutions and Policies*. 9th Edition, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2004

Additional Reading:

The Federalist Papers, The Constitution of the United States, Newsweek Magazine, and government websites for Congress, the Presidency, Supreme Court, and political parties.

These readings will be supplemented with classroom handouts

Class Format:

Lecture/Discussion, issue analysis, critical writing, debates, quizzes, tests, projects, and essays

Grading:

- 50 % Tests, Essays, and Unit Projects
 - Chapter Tests may include multiple choice questions, data analysis (Political Cartoon interpretation, charts/graphs analysis), and written responses.
 - Essays will be assigned twice per semester. Students will be expected to write extensive persuasive and informational essays on given topics.
 - Students will complete a unit project on each of the six sections of the course.
- 30% Quizzes
 - Quizzes will be given periodically to assess comprehension and completion of assignments.
 - Students can expect at least one free-response quiz per week.
- 20% Homework, and Class Assignments
 - Students will be expected to complete nightly reading assignments, take notes on the assignments, come to class prepared to ask questions, and add notes during lecture.
 - In class activities will include discussions, debates, primary source analysis and the interpretation of statistics, images, and other sources.

Curricular Extensions

- **Current Events Journal** – It is imperative that students are able to form connections between current events and the material covered throughout the course. Students will be expected to independently locate articles from highly credible national sources such as the Washington Post and Washington Times. For each journal entry, students will need to prepare a summary and include an analysis that demonstrates understanding of the topic, various viewpoints that need to be considered, and the complexity of the issue.
- **Graphs, Charts, and Maps** – Students will be tested on their understanding of quantitative and visually presented information. Assessments will include objective questions and written responses. In order to practice, teacher directed activities will focus on these skills.
- **Primary Sources** – In order to gain deeper understanding, it will be essential to analyze the documents, speeches, or other relevant sources from the time period that pertain to whatever issue or topic we are studying. Particular attention will be given to the conclusions that the author of the source has drawn, biases that may be apparent, and connections to the information that we have studied.

Course Outline:

Unit I: Constitutional Framework (4-5 weeks)

Students should be able to:

- Explain “consent of the governed”
- List and explain the deficiencies of the Articles of Confederation
- Describe delegates to the Constitutional Convention
- Explain the principal features of the American system of government
- Explain the ratification procedure and arguments for and against the ratification of the Constitution
- Explain the concept of Federalism and how it has changed over time
- Explain in detail how Federalism works

Assigned Readings: Wilson Chapters 2 and 3
Federalist Papers Numbers 37-40

Unit II: Political Beliefs and Behaviors (2-3 weeks)

Students should be able to:

- Explain how political beliefs are formed
- Explain how political beliefs effect voter participation
- List and describe alternate forms of participation other than voting
- Describe the factors that effect voting behavior including socioeconomic status, demographics, and the mass media

Assigned Readings: Wilson Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 8

Unit III: Political Parties, Interest Groups and Mass Media (2-3 weeks)

Students should be able to:

- Define political parties, their functions and characteristics
- Define Interest Groups, PACs and their effects on elections
- Explain the effect of mass media on elections and political participation

Assigned Readings: Wilson Chapters 7, 9, and 10

Unit IV: Institutions of National Government (10-12 weeks)

Students should be able to:

- Explain the organization and powers of the Congress, the Presidency, the Federal Courts and the Bureaucracy
- Describe the evolution of the powers of each branch of government and the interrelationship of each

Assigned Readings: Wilson Chapters 11, 12, 13, and 114
Federalist Papers Numbers 52-83

Unit V: Public Policy (2-3 Weeks)

Students should be able to:

- Define public policy
- Making public policy: identification, formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation
- Explain the impact of federalism, interest groups, parties and elections on policy making
- Focusing on the following: Foreign, Defense, Health, Economic, Environmental, and Social Welfare Policies.

Assigned Readings: Wilson Chapters 15, 16, 17, and 20

Unit VI: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (3-4 weeks)

Students should be able to:

- Explain the development of civil liberties and civil rights through Judicial Interpretation
- Explain the impact of the 14th Amendment on civil rights
- Discuss the political implications of civil rights

Assigned Readings: Wilson Chapters 18 and 19