

AP® U.S. Government and Politics Syllabus

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Course Overview:

AP US Government and Politics is a year long course designed for students with a strong interest in political philosophies, processes, and the structure of government in the United States. Students will be expected to keep up with a heavy load of reading assignments from several sources. The class will cover a number of topics and the percentage of time spent on each topic will be roughly equal to the weight the concepts carry on the AP exam. Throughout the course, current political events will be tied into discussion and assignments to enhance student understanding of class material. The primary purpose of the course is to prepare students for the AP exam and assignments and tests are designed based on AP requirements and format.

Primary Text:

Wilson, James Q., and John J. Dilulio Jr. *American Government: Institutions and Policies*, 10th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Supplementary Text:

Cigler, Allan J., and Burdett A Loomis. *American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 6th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

*Other materials used in the course will come from sources such as newspapers, magazines, and the internet.

Grading:

Grades will be determined by a number of assignments including tests, quizzes, papers, projects, and homework.

The following grading scale will be used for the course.

A	100 - 91.5%
B	91.4 - 82.5%
C	82.4 - 73.5%
D	73.4 - 64.5%
E	64.4 - 0%

Assignments:

The following is a sampling of the types of assignments that will be given throughout the course and not an extensive list.

Reading Responses – Students will be given many reading assignments throughout the course. A frequent assignment will be to give a written response to the reading as prompted by the teacher. This will typically include summarizing, checks for understanding, and personal thought and analysis of the reading.

Timed Writings – Students will be given a time limit to discuss a topic that has been covered in class. These will be designed based on the format used on the AP exam and similar questions will also be found on the unit tests.

Current Political Events Analysis – Students will be assigned to read newspapers and watch television programs dealing with current political events. Assignments will be given to discuss and give opinions on the events as well as make connections with class material.

Project/Presentation – Students will write a research paper based on a government/politics topic of their choice. The class will spend several days in the library for research and will receive specific instructions on what the paper should include. Students will also be required to give a brief presentation on their topic.

Election Assignments – Students will do assignments based on elections depending on the year and the real elections taking place. This will include taking sides on candidates and issues, debating, and voting.

Graphs, Charts and Maps – Students will frequently receive statistical information in the form of graphs, charts, and maps. Assignments and tests will ask students to interpret the information.

Topics Covered:

- I. Constitutional Underpinnings
- II. Civil Liberties/Civil Rights
- III. Political beliefs and behaviors
- IV. Political Parties, Elections, and Campaigns
- V. Interest Groups and the Media
- VI. Institutions of Government
- VII. Public Policy

Course Plan:

Unit I: Constitutional Underpinnings

Readings:

Wilson – Ch. 2 The Constitution, Ch. 3 Federalism

Cigler – 1.1 A Tradition Born in Strife, 1.2 The Founding Fathers: An Age of Realism, 1.3 The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action, 1.4 Federalist No. 51, 2.1 Federalist No. 39, 2.2 McCulloch v. Maryland, 2.3 The Devil in Devolution, 2.4 Health and Welfare: Contagious Confusion.

Key Concepts: History of the Constitution, Separation of Powers, Federalism, Democratic Theories.

Unit II: Civil Liberties/Civil Rights

Readings:

Wilson – Ch. 5 Civil Liberties, Ch. 6 Civil Rights

Cigler – 3.1 Near v. Minnesota, 3.2 From the Saturday Press to the New York Times, 3.3 Gideon v. Wainwright, 3.4 Griswold v. Connecticut, 3.5 Lawrence and Garner v. Texas, 3.6 Rights, Liberties and Security: Recalibrating the Balance after September 11, 3.7 Brown v. Board of Education, 3.8 Affirmative Action: Don't Mend it or End it – Bend it, 3.9 Reaffirming Diversity: A Legal Analysis of the University of Michigan Affirmative Action Cases.

Key Concepts: Development and Interpretation of Rights and Liberties, Supreme Court Decisions and Workings.

Unit III: Political Beliefs and Behaviors

Readings:

Wilson – Ch. 4 American Political Culture, Ch. 7 Public Opinion, Ch. 8 Political Participation

Cigler – 4.1 Polling and the Transformation of Public Opinion, 4.2 Is “Popular Rule” Possible?, 4.3 Can We Trust the Polls?, 5.1 Finding the Lost Voters, 5.2 Voting Rites: Why We Need a a New Concept of Citizenship, 5.3 Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital, 5.4 Bowling Together: The United State of America.

Key Concepts: Beliefs, Factors in Beliefs, Voting Habits.

Unit IV: Political Parties, Elections, and Campaigns

Readings:

Wilson – Ch. 9 Political Parties, Ch. 10 Elections and Campaigns

Cigler – 6.1 The Case for the Importance of Political Parties, 6.2 The Great Election Grab, 6.3 A Tale of Two Electorates: The Changing American Party Coalitions, 7.1 The Long Campaign: The Politics of Tedium, 7.2 *McCConnell v. The Federal Election Commission*, 7.3 The Stagnation of Congressional Elections, 7.4 Weaving the Tangled Web into Political Action.

Key Concepts: Functions and Organization of Parties, Electoral Processes, Campaign Organization.

Unit V: Interest Groups and the Media

Readings:

Wilson – Ch. 11 Interest Groups, Ch. 12 The Media

Cigler – 8.1 Lowering the Political Hero to Our Level, 8.2 American News Consumption During Times of National Crisis, 8.3 The Pentagon Is Fighting – and Winning – the Public Relations War, 9.1 Federalist No. 10, 9.2 Lobbyists – Why the Bad Rap?, 9.3 Associations Without Members, 9.4 From Big Bird to Bill Gates: Organized Interests and the Emergence of Hyperpolitics.

Key Concepts: Specific Interests, Role of Interest Groups, Function and Impact of Media.

Unit VI: Institutions of Government

Readings:

Wilson – Ch. 13 Congress, Ch. 14 The Presidency, Ch. 15 The Bureaucracy, Ch. 16 The Judiciary

Cigler – 10.1 The Changing Textbook Congress, 10.2 Going Nowhere: A Gridlocked Congress?, 10.3 The Evolution of Tom DeLay, 10.4 The Student: How Hilary Clinton Set Out to Master the Senate, 11.1 The Power to Persuade, 11.2 Myth of the Presidential Mandate, 11.3 Rating the Presidents: Purpose, Criteria, Consequences, 11.4 Inside the Bush Presidency: Reflections of an Academic Interloper, 12.1 “Political Hacks” Versus “Bureaucrats”, 12.2 From Ouagadougou to Cape Canaveral: Why Bad News Doesn’t Travel Up, 13.1 Federalist No. 78, 13.2 *Marbury v. Madison*.

Key Concepts: Congress, Bureaucracy, Presidency, The Courts.

Unit VII: Public Policy

Readings:

Wilson – Ch. 17 The Policy-Making Process, Ch. 18 Economic Policy, Ch. 19 Social Welfare, Ch. 20 Foreign and Military Policy, Ch. 21 Environmental Policy

Cigler – 14.1 Stories, 14.2 Regulation: The New Pork Barrel, 14.3 Liberal Lessons from Welfare Reform, 14.4 Safe Deposit: The Case for Foreign Aid, 14.5 America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy.

Key Concepts: Policy Making, Enactment of Policy, Role of Bureaucracy/Courts.