

Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics (4490)

Course Syllabus

Hamburg Area School District

Course Overview

The AP government and politics course focuses on key concepts and institutions of the political system and culture of the United States. Students will read, analyze, and discuss the U.S. Constitution and other documents as well as complete a research or applied civics project. Students will learn how to connect political concepts to real-life situations; explain the impact and implications of certain U.S. Supreme Court decisions; analyze data to find patterns and trends and draw conclusions; read and analyze text and visual sources; develop a claim or thesis and support it in an essay.

College Course Equivalency

AP Government and Politics is intended to be the equivalent of a one-semester introductory college course in U.S. government.

Curricular Requirements

CR1 The teacher and students have access to a college-level U.S. government and politics textbook and news media sources from multiple perspectives.

CR2 The course includes the 9 required foundational documents and 15 required Supreme Court cases as described in the AP Course and Exam Description.

CR3 The course is structured to incorporate the big ideas and required content outlined in each of the units described in the AP Course and Exam Description.

CR4 The course provides opportunities for students to develop the skills in Disciplinary Practice 1: Concept Application—apply political concepts and processes to scenarios in context and make connections to at least one big idea.

CR5 The course provides opportunities for students to develop the skills in Disciplinary Practice 2: SCOTUS Application—apply Supreme Court decisions and make connections to at least one big idea.

CR6 The course provides opportunities for students to develop the skills in Disciplinary Practice 3: Data Analysis—analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics and make connections to at least one big idea.

CR7 The course provides opportunities for students to develop the text-based analysis skills in Disciplinary Practice 4: Source Analysis—read, analyze, and interpret foundational documents and other text-based sources and make connections to at least one big idea.

CR8 The course provides opportunities for students to develop the visual source analysis skills in Disciplinary Practice 4: Source Analysis—read, analyze, and interpret visual sources and make connections to at least one big idea

CR9 The course provides opportunities for students to develop the skills in Disciplinary Practice 5: Argumentation—develop an argument in essay format and make connections to at least one big idea.

CR10 Students are provided with an opportunity to engage in a political science research or applied civics project tied to the AP Course and Exam Description that culminates in a presentation of findings.

Section 1: Overview of the Course and the AP Exam Introduction to AP U.S. Government and Politics AP®

U.S. Government and Politics is a college-level year-long course that not only seeks to prepare students for success on the AP Exam in May, but also provide students with the political knowledge and reasoning processes to participate meaningfully and thoughtfully in discussions and debates that are currently shaping American politics and society. It is important to note that this course is not a history course; it is a political science course that studies the interconnectedness of the different parts of the American political system as well as the behaviors and attitudes that shape this system and are the byproduct of this system. AP U.S. Government and Politics accomplishes these goals by framing the acquisition of political knowledge around enduring understandings and big ideas about American government and politics that can be applied to a set of disciplinary practices by using a set of reasoning processes. Through the development of this set of political knowledge, disciplinary practices, and reasoning processes, students will be able to analyze current and historical political events like a political scientist and develop factually accurate, well-reasoned, thoughtful arguments and opinions that acknowledge and grapple with alternative political perspectives. This year-long course will meet for 45 minutes daily.

The course will be organized around the following units of study:

Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy

(big ideas: Constitutionalism, Liberty and Order, Methods of Political Analysis)

Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of Government

(big ideas: Competing Policy-Making Interests, Methods of Political Analysis)

Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

(big ideas: Liberty and Order, Methods of Political Analysis)

Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs

(big ideas: Civic Participation in Representative Democracy, Methods of political Analysis)

Unit 5: Political Participation

(big ideas: Civic Participation in Representative Democracy, Methods of Political Analysis)

The political knowledge, enduring understandings, and big ideas acquired and developed in each unit will be applied to the disciplinary practices using the reasoning processes outlined below. Throughout each unit, Topic Questions will be provided to help students check their understanding. The Topic Questions are especially useful for confirming understanding of difficult or foundational topics before moving on to new content or skills that build upon prior topics. Topic Questions can be assigned before, during, or after a lesson, and as in-class work or homework. Students will get rationales for each Topic Question that will help them understand why an answer is correct or incorrect, and their results will reveal misunderstandings to help them target the content and skills needed for additional practice. At the end of each unit or at key points within a unit, Personal Progress Checks will be provided in class or as homework assignments in AP Classroom. Students will get a personal report with feedback on every topic, skill, and question that they can use to chart their progress, and their results will come with rationales that explain every question's answer. One to two class periods are set aside to re-teach skills based on the results of the Personal Progress Checks.

The course also consists of:

- Unit reviews based on data gathered from Personal Progress Checks in the AP Classroom and other methods of formative assessment.
- A unit exam at the end of each unit that administered over two class periods.
- Applied civics project through Inspire2Vote that will span the school year and culminate in the planning and execution of voter registration assembly before the May primary registration deadline. A fall peer-to-peer registration drive will target students eligible to vote in the November general election.
- Two weeks of review for the AP Exam at the end of the course.

Overview of the AP Exam and Keys to AP Exam Success

AP Examination

The AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam will test your understanding of the political concepts covered in the course units, including your ability to analyze the foundational documents and to apply Supreme Court decisions you studied in the course to real-life scenarios.

Exam Duration – 3 Hours

The AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam will be comprised of the following sections:

Multiple-Choice Questions:

Number of Questions: 55

Structure – The questions on the multiple-choice section will ask students to:

- Analyze and compare political concepts
- Analyze and interpret quantitative, text-based, and visual sources

- Apply course concepts, foundational documents, and Supreme Court decisions in a variety of contexts and to real-world scenarios.

Timing: 1 hour and 20 minutes Percentage of Total Exam: 50%

Free-Response Questions:

Number of Questions: 4

Structure – The four questions on the free-response section will ask students to:

- Apply political concepts in real-world scenarios
- Compare the decisions and implications of different Supreme Court cases
- Analyze quantitative data and the implications of that data
- Develop an argument using required foundational documents as evidence

Timing: 1 hour and 40 minutes

Percentage of Total Exam: 50%

As the breakdown of the AP Exam highlights, success in this course and on the AP Exam requires far more than the memorization of political knowledge. Success in this course and on the AP Exam requires connection-making with the aim of being able to analyze political information regardless of the format in which the information is presented, and develop a factually accurate, thoughtful, and well-reasoned opinion regarding this information. These skills are scaffolded throughout the course through teacher modeling, explicit instruction, and multiple opportunities for practice in reading and writing that reflects the work that political scientists do. The different pieces of the course fit together in pursuit of this aim through course content and big ideas, reasoning processes, and disciplinary practices.

Course Content and Big Ideas

The course content consists of the essential political knowledge that will be synthesized in the construction of enduring understandings and big ideas about American government and politics. The big ideas that connect the content in the course units include:

- Constitutionalism (CON)
- Liberty and Order (LOR)
- Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD)
- Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI)
- Methods of Political Analysis (MPA)

It should be noted that the big ideas are not relegated to one unit of study but woven throughout the course. Students will be tasked with utilizing and then internalizing this paradigm of five big organizing ideas as they move throughout our year of study.

Reasoning Processes

The reasoning processes are the thought processes that will facilitate connection-making and analysis in the pursuit of effectively executing the disciplinary practices in the course. In other words, the reasoning processes form the cognitive bridge between the course content/big ideas and the disciplinary practices. The reasoning processes in this course include:

- Definition/Classification: Demonstrating knowledge of course concepts
- Process: Explaining political processes
- Causation: Explaining causes and effects of political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors
- Comparison: Explaining similarities and differences among political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors

Disciplinary Practices

The disciplinary practices are the tasks students will apply to the course content using the reasoning processes. Becoming proficient in these disciplinary practices gives students the tools to analyze political information regardless of the format, and develop a factually accurate, thoughtful, and well-reasoned argument or opinion about an issue related to American government and politics. The disciplinary practices in this course include:

- Practice 1: Concept Application—apply political concepts and processes to scenarios in context.
- Practice 2: SCOTUS Application—apply Supreme Court decisions.
- Practice 3: Data Analysis—analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics.
- Practice 4: Source Analysis—read, analyze, and interpret foundational documents and other text-based and visual sources.
- Practice 5: Argument—develop an argument in essay format.

Every AP Exam question fuses course content, reasoning processes, and disciplinary practices. Thus, in-class and outside of class assignments will focus on the acquisition of course content and the application of course content to disciplinary practices using reasoning skills.

Overview of Required Course Texts and Additional Resources Textbook and Ancillary Resources Course

Text: Bianco, William, David Canon, Kimberly Owens, James Wehrli, and Julie Strong. *American Politics and Government Today*. 1st AP edition. New York: W. W. Norton, 2022.

Additionally, students will have access to the following free online resources:

- AP Classroom is a free resource available to all students. Students will complete, as homework or in class, Personal Progress Checks for each of the five units. Both multiple choice and free response prompts are available to measure student progress.
- AP U.S. Government and Politics: Analytical Reading Activities—This resource contains all of the required foundational documents, along with close reading and discussion prompts/questions and activities. Most of the foundational documents are paired with a non-required text so students can engage in building source analysis and other critical skills like evaluating arguments. This resource is also available on the AP Classroom.
- Oyez – This online database provides succinct and accessible overviews for all Supreme Court cases.

- The National Constitution Center’s Interactive Constitution This online resource is an annotated U.S. Constitution that includes “Matters of Debate” essays that include the common understanding and opposing perspectives of key clauses and provisions of the U.S. Constitution. The National Constitution Center also has a blog that applies constitutional principles to current events.
- The National Constitution Center also has lesson plans for use in Unit 1 (“Federalism, the Commerce Clause, and the Tenth Amendment”) and in Unit 3 (“The Development and Application of the First Amendment”)
- Pew Research Center This non-partisan website will be accessed frequently by students for multiple uses including analyzing and interpreting public opinion polling and practicing analyzing and interpreting quantitative data in tables, charts, and graphs.
- Political cartoon, maps, and infographics websites—Students will need instruction and practice in analyzing qualitative visual resources like political cartoons, maps, and infographics.
- A variety of news sources and websites across the political spectrum will also be accessed throughout the course often with the aim of building the skill of concept application while deepening content knowledge. *These sources include but are not limited to: Fox News, CNN News, ABC News, MSNBC News, Reuters, BBC, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Washington Post.* Public policy and current events are woven throughout the course, especially as they reflect the course concepts in a given unit. CR1

Required Supreme Court Cases CR2

This course will incorporate the analysis of the following 15 required Supreme Court cases:

- *Marbury v. Madison* (1803)
- *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819)
- *Schenck v. United States* (1919)
- *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)
- *Baker v. Carr* (1961)
- *Engel v. Vitale* (1962)
- *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963)
- *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969)
- *New York Times Company v. United States* (1971)
- *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972)
- *Roe v. Wade* (1973)
- *Shaw v. Reno* (1993)
- *United States v. Lopez* (1995)
- *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010)
- *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (FEC)* (2010)

For each of these cases, lessons are available on the Street Law website. Additionally, the facts, issues, holdings, and reasoning underlying the majority opinions can also be found through the Oyez database online. Students will be required to complete multiple assignments analyzing and comparing these cases with other non-required cases (Practice 2: SCOTUS Application). Examples of paired cases for comparison include but are not limited to:

- *Gonzales v. Raich* (2005) to go along with the analysis of *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819)

- *Heart of Atlanta Motels v. United States* (1964) to go along with the analysis of *United States v. Lopez* (1995)
- *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002) to go along with the analysis of *Engel v. Vitale* (1962)
- *Morse v. Frederick* (2007) to go along with the analysis of *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969)

Students may also analyze cases that illustrate concepts in foundational documents or that highlight other course concepts. For example, *Marbury v. Madison* is used as a companion piece to *Federalist No. 51* in the Analytical Reading Activities found on the AP Classroom (Practice 2: SCOTUS Application and Big Idea 1: Constitutionalism) CR5

Required Foundational Documents CR2

This course will incorporate the analysis and discussion of nine required foundational documents to help understand the context and beliefs of the founders and their critics and the debates surrounding the writing and ratification of the U.S. Constitution:

- The Declaration of Independence
- The Articles of Confederation
- *Federalist No. 10*
- *Brutus No. 1*
- *Federalist No. 51*
- The Constitution of the United States
- *Federalist No. 70*
- *Federalist No. 78*
- “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

To aid in the analysis of these foundational documents, students will also have access to the AP United States Government and Politics Analytical Reading Activities. This online reader contains strategies for analyzing the required foundational documents and a sampling of related readings, including:

- Excerpts from Locke’s *Second Treatise of Civil Government* to go along with the analysis of the Declaration of Independence
- “Letters from the Federal Farmer to the Republican I” to go along with the analysis of the Articles of Confederation
- Essays from the National Constitution Center’s “Matters of Debate” series (Interactive Constitution resource) to go along with the analysis of the Tenth Amendment

To help students see the connections of the nine foundational documents and the required Supreme Court cases, students will construct an interactive notebook containing these 24 items. In effect, students will create another course text for them to add to as each document or case is introduced and when connections are made in other units or companion texts assigned. These connections may also come in the form of current event articles on public policy and politics. Students can refer to their interactive notebook in preparation for unit tests and the AP Exam.

Section 2: Course Outline

This section provides a breakdown of each of the course's five units. Included in each breakdown are the essential questions, connections to the required foundational documents, and required Supreme Court cases and sample activities that align to the learning objectives.

Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy

(Big Ideas: Constitutionalism, Liberty and Order, Methods of Political Analysis) – 19 instructional days

Essential Questions:

- How did the founders of the U.S. Constitution attempt to protect individual liberty while also promoting public order and safety?
- How have theory, debate, and compromise influenced the U.S. Constitutional system?
- How does the development and interpretation of the Constitution influence policies that impact citizens and residents of the U.S.?

Foundational Documents: The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, excerpts from *Federalist No. 10*, excerpts from *Brutus No. 1*, excerpts from the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution of the United States, and excerpts from *Federalist No. 51*

Required Cases: *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819), *United States v. Lopez* (1995)

Topics and Skills

- 1.1 Ideals of Democracy - Skill 1.D 1.2
- 1.2 Types of Democracy - Skill 4.A 1.3
- 1.3 Government Power and Individual Rights - Skill 1.A 1.4
- 1.4 Challenges of the Articles of Confederation - Skill 4.B 1.5
- 1.5 Ratification of the United States Constitution - Skill 1.E 1.6
- 1.6 Principles of American Government - Skill 4.B 1.7
- 1.7 Relationship Between States and the Federal Government - Skill 5.A 1.8
- 1.8 Constitutional Interpretations of Federalism - Skill 2.A 1.9
- 1.9 Federalism in Action - Skill 5.B

Skills

In this unit, we will be introducing Skills of Concept Application, Source Analysis, SCOTUS Comparison, and Argumentation. These skills will be assessed in both the topic questions and the end of unit PPC questions. The questions increase in difficulty with each unit; be sure you address the skill and knowledge targets for each topic in order to most successfully prepare for the end of unit PPC questions and the final summative assessment.

Note:

Topic 1.7 can be especially challenging because skill 5.A requires students to articulate a defensible claim or thesis. This is the first time they will encounter this skill. Assigning the corresponding Topic Questions can reveal misunderstandings and guide student practice. Topic 1.8 can be especially difficult because skill 2.A requires students to describe the facts, reasoning, decision, and majority opinion of required Supreme Court Cases. Assigning the corresponding Topic Questions can reveal misunderstandings and guide student practice.

Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of Government (Big Ideas: Competing Policy Making Interests, Methods of Political Analysis) – 34 instructional days

Essential Questions:

- How do the branches of the national government compete and cooperate in order to govern?
- To what extent have changes in the powers of each branch affected how responsive and accountable the national government is in the 21st century?

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States, *Federalist No. 70*, *Federalist No. 78*, and *Federalist No. 51*

Required Cases: *Baker v. Carr* (1961), *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), *Marbury v Madison* (1803)

Topics and Skills

2.1 Congress: The Senate and the House of Representatives - Skill 1.C

2.2 Structures, Powers, and Functions of Congress - Skill 3.A

2.3 Congressional Behavior - Skill 2.A

2.4 Roles and Powers of the President - Skill 3.B

2.5 Checks on the Presidency - Skill 1.E

2.6 Expansion of Presidential Power - Skill 4.A

2.7 Presidential Communication - Skill 1.E

2.8 The Judicial Branch - Skill 2.B

2.9 Legitimacy of the Judicial Branch - Skill 1.D

2.10 The Court in Action - Skill 2.C

2.11 Checks on the Judicial Branch - Skill 1.D

2.12 The Bureaucracy - Skill 4.B

2.13 Discretionary and Rule-Making Authority - Skill 1.D

2.14 Holding the Bureaucracy Accountable - Skill 2.C

2.15 Policy and the Branches of Government - Skill 3.D

Skills

In this unit, we will be continuing to develop the skill of Concept Application, SCOTUS comparison, and Source Analysis as well as introducing the skill of Data Analysis. These skills will be assessed in both the topic questions and the end of unit PPC questions. The questions increase in difficulty with each unit; be sure you address the skill and knowledge targets for each topic on order to most successfully prepare for the end of unit PPC questions and the final summative assessment.

Note:

Topic 2.2 can be especially challenging because skill 3.A requires students to describe the data presented in a chart or diagram. This is the first time they will encounter this skill. Assigning the corresponding Topic Questions can reveal misunderstandings and guide student practice.

Topic 2.8 can be especially difficult because skill 2.B requires students to explain how a required Supreme Court Cases relates to a foundational document or to other primary or secondary sources. Assigning the corresponding Topic Questions can reveal misunderstandings and guide student practice.

Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (Big Ideas: Liberty and Order, Methods of Political Analysis) – 18 instructional days

Essential Questions:

- To what extent do the U.S. Constitution and its amendments protect against undue government infringement on essential liberties and from invidious discrimination?
- How have U.S. Supreme Court rulings defined civil liberties and civil rights?

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States and “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

Required Cases: *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), *Schenck v. United States* (1919), *New York Times Co. v. United States* (1971), *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010), *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963), *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

Topics and Skills

- 3.1 The Bill of Rights - Skill 1.D
- 3.2 First Amendment: Freedom of Religion - Skill 2.A
- 3.3 First Amendment: Freedom of Speech - Skill 5.A
- 3.4 First Amendment: Freedom of the Press - Skill 4.D
- 3.5 Second Amendment: Right to Bear Arms - Skill 4.A
- 3.6 Amendments: Balancing Individual Freedom with Public Order and Safety - Skill 5.B
- 3.7 Selective Incorporation - Skill 2.B
- 3.8 Amendments: Due Process and the Rights of the Accused - Skill 5.C
- 3.9 Amendments: Due Process and the Right to Privacy - Skill 2.A
- 3.10 Social Movements and Equal Protection - Skill 4.C
- 3.11 Government Responses to Social Movements - Skill 2.B
- 3.12 Balancing Minority and Majority Rights - Skill 2.C
- 3.13 Affirmative Action - Skill 1.E

Skills

In this unit, we will be continuing to develop the skill of Concept Application, SCOTUS comparison, and Source Analysis. These skills will be assessed in both the topic questions and the end of unit PPC questions. The questions increase in difficulty with each unit; be sure you address the skill and knowledge targets for each topic on order to most successfully prepare for the end of unit PPC questions and the final summative assessment.

Note:

Topic 3.4 can be especially challenging because skill 4.D requires students to explain how the visual elements of a cartoon, map, or infographic illustrate or relate to political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors. This is the first time they will encounter this skill. Assigning the corresponding Topic Questions can reveal misunderstandings and guide student practice. Topic 3.8 can be especially difficult because skill 5.C requires students to use reasoning to organize and analyze evidence, explain its significance to justify the claim or thesis. Assigning the corresponding Topic Questions can reveal misunderstandings and guide student practice.

Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs (Big Ideas: Civic Participation in Representative Democracy, Methods of Political Analysis) – 13 instructional days

Essential Questions:

- How are American political beliefs formed and how do they evolve over time?
- How do political ideology and core values influence government policy making?

Topics and Skills

4.1 American Attitudes About Government and Politics - Skill 1.D

4.2 Political Socialization - Skill 3.A

4.3 Changes in Ideology - Skill 3.B

4.4 Influence of Political Events on Ideology - Skill 4.B

4.5 Measuring Public Opinion - Skill 3.C

4.6 Evaluating Public Opinion Data - Skill 3.D

4.7 Ideologies of Political Parties - Skill 1.E

4.8 Ideology and Policy Making - Skill 4.D

4.9 Ideology and Economic Policy - Skill 3.E

4.10 Ideology and Social Policy - Skill 4.C

Skills

In this unit, we will be continuing to develop the skill of Concept Application, Source Analysis, and Data Analysis. These skills will be assessed in both the topic questions and the end of unit PPC questions. The questions increase in difficulty with each unit; be sure you address the skill and knowledge targets for each topic on order to most successfully prepare for the end of unit PPC questions and the final summative assessment.

Note:

Topic 4.3 can be especially challenging because skill 3.B requires students to describe patterns and trends in data. Assigning the corresponding Topic Questions can reveal misunderstandings and guide student practice.

Topic 4.10 can be especially difficult because skill 4.C requires students to explain how the implications of the author's argument or perspective may affect political principles, institution, processes, policies, and behaviors. Assigning the corresponding Topic Questions can reveal misunderstandings and guide student practice.

Unit 5: Political Participation (Big Ideas: Civic Participation in Representative Democracy, Methods of Political Analysis) – 26 instructional days

Essential Questions:

- How have changes in technology influenced political communication and behavior?
- Why do levels of participation and influence in politics vary?
- How effective are the various methods of political participation in shaping public policies?

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States

Required Case: *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010)

Topics and Skills

- 5.1 Voting Rights and Models of Voting Behavior - Skill 1.D
- 5.2 Voter Turnout - Skill 3.C
- 5.3 Political Parties - Skill 1.B
- 5.4 How and Why Political Parties Change and Adapt - Skill 4.B
- 5.5 Third-Party Politics - Skill 3.D
- 5.6 Interest Groups Influencing Policy Making - Skill 3.F
- 5.7 Groups Influencing Policy Outcomes - Skill 1.E
- 5.8 Electing a President - Skill 5.A
- 5.9 Congressional Elections - Skill 5.B
- 5.10 Modern Campaigns - Skill 5.C
- 5.11 Campaign Finance - Skill 2.B
- 5.12 The Media - Skill 5.D
- 5.13 Changing Media - Skill 2.D

Skills

By the end of this unit, student should have developed mastery over each of the identified skills. These skills will be assessed in both the topic questions and the end of unit PPC questions. The questions increase in difficulty with each unit; be sure you address the skill and knowledge

targets for each topic in order to most successfully prepare for the end of unit PPC questions and the final summative assessment.

Note:

Topic 5.10 can be especially difficult because skill 5.C requires students to use reasoning to organize and analyze evidence, explaining its significance to justify the claim or thesis. Assigning the corresponding Topic Questions can reveal misunderstandings and guide student practice.

Topic 5.12 can be especially challenging because skill 5.D requires students to use rebuttal in responding to opposing or alternate perspectives. Assigning the corresponding Topic Questions can reveal misunderstandings and guide student practice.