

AP United States Government and Politics

Syllabus

American Senior High School

Textbook

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

Course Objective

Primarily this course is designed to improve and enhance student understanding and appreciation of United States Government and Politics. Specifically the goals are for students to understand the doctrines of and historical background to the Constitution and the United States Government, be familiar with key principles such as federalism and separation of powers, and be able to discuss such principles as democratic theory, republicanism, majoritarianism, pluralism, and elitism. Students will also achieve a better appreciation of how the various parts of the federal government work in unison to govern the citizens of the United States.

Students in this course will also improve many skills, including time management, organization, studying, critical reading of sources, writing communication, and the use of deductive and inductive reasoning.

Course Overview

This course examines the political theory and practice that dictates the daily operation of the United States Government and shapes U.S. policy. This course is also intended to prepare students for the AP United States Government and Politics Exam.

Course Teaching Strategies

This Course is taught at a college level through a combination of lecture, Socratic questioning, discussion and the analysis of College Board multiple choice and free response questions. Students are expected to keep up with readings and be prepared for classroom instruction by keeping up with events in the news. To do so students are

encouraged to read articles from *The Miami Herald* or find similar articles from other newspapers on the internet concerning government and political issues. Periodic pop reading quizzes and current event homework summaries are given to ensure students meet these responsibilities.

Also, a selection of primary source materials and contemporary news sources are utilized by the instructor for analysis during the daily lessons of class. News sources include but are not limited to articles of political reports and commentary from such publications as *The Miami Herald*, *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*; local, network and cable news television programs; and the Internet. These materials and articles allow students to study the foundations of and many examples of how Government and Politics work in the United States. Such documents and articles are used to help students in their preparation for the Free-Response Questions (essays) found on the AP United States Government and Politics Exam. Assorted charts, polls and photographs are included in instruction and are commonly projected onto a white board with a digital projector through a laptop computer.

Furthermore, at least one Free-Response Questions (essay) is assigned per Chapter of study and a 50 question multiple choice Exam will be given at the end of each Chapter of study. Multiple Choice questions and Free-Response Questions (essays) primarily will be taken from but are not limited to those given in previous AP United States Government and Politics Exams.

Course Assessment

At the end of each grading period (9 weeks) student grades will be compiled and measured will the following percentages designed to emulate the AP United States Government and Politics Exam.

45 % = Unit Tests. Each weighted equally.

45 % = Free-response questions (essays). Each weighted equally.

10 % = Reading Quizzes and Current Event Summaries. Each weighted equally.

Percentage Based Scores	Four Point Scale
90 – 100 = A	3.5 – 4.0 = A
80 – 89 = B	2.5 – 3.4 = B
70 – 79 = C	1.5 – 2.4 = C

60 – 69 = D	1.0 – 1.4 = D
0 – 59 = F	0 – 0.9 = F

Course Outline and Planner

The course is covered in one semester and typically in the fall to coincide with any elections. Therefore Thanksgiving plays a factor in the number of weeks.

Students will be responsible for reading the assigned material listed below from the textbook as well as additional readings. It is necessary for students to keep up with the readings in order to succeed academically in this class. Periodic reading quizzes will be given asking students to summarize the readings in an effort to ensure that course requirements are met.

The specific and final selection of all articles, polls, charts and questions is up to the instructor of the course and as such will not be mentioned here. I believe this is necessary in an effort to better gauge and meet the ever changing needs of the students as instruction plays out over the school year. Furthermore, the study of government and politics includes current actions and events, the unpredictability of which may dictate changes in the focus of certain lessons.

Textbook Readings and Lesson Focus:

First Nine Weeks

(After reading each chapter and learning about the subjects within, students will become familiar with the...)

Week 1: Chapter #2 The Constitution

(factors and considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the U.S. Constitution; separation of powers; federalism; and theories of democratic government.)

Week 2: Chapter #3 Federalism

(aspects of the Federal system in place in the United States; hierarchy and spheres of influence between the national, state and local governments of the United States.)

Week 3: Chapter #4 American Political Culture

(beliefs that U.S. citizens hold about their government and leaders; processes by which citizens learn about politics.)

Week 4: Chapter #5 Public Opinion

(nature, sources, and consequences of public opinion; ways in which citizens vote and otherwise participate in political life; factors which influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors.)

Week 5: Chapter #7 Political Parties

(origin and growth of Political Parties in the U.S.; how Political Parties facilitate the communication of interests and preferences of like-minded citizens.)

Week 6: Chapter #8 Elections and Campaigns

(workings of the electoral process; the role of money and interest groups on campaigns; the laws governing elections; the ways individual campaigns operate on the local, state, and national level.)

Week 7: Chapter #9 Interest Groups

(role of and growth of Interest Groups in the U.S.; how Interest Groups facilitate the communication of interests and preferences of like-minded citizens and interact with Political Parties.)

Week 8: Chapter #10 The Media

(history of and growth of mass Media in the U.S.; how The Media facilitates the communication of political interests and both influences and is influenced by Political Parties and Interest Groups.)

Week 9: Chapter #11 Congress

(workings of the legislative process; major formal and informal institutional functions and powers of the U.S. Congress; relationship to other branches of government under the constitution; change and evolution of Congressional powers due to specific events in history; links between the U.S. Congress and the following: public opinion, voters, interest groups, political parties, the media, local and state governments.)

Second Nine Weeks

(After reading each chapter and learning about the subjects within, students will become familiar with the...)

Week 10: Chapter #12 The Presidency

(major formal and informal institutional functions and powers of the executive branch; executive branch's relationship to other branches of government under the Constitution; change and evolution of presidential powers due to specific events in history; links between the Presidency and the following: public opinion, voters, interest groups, political parties, the media, local and state governments.)

Week 11: Chapter #13 The Bureaucracy

(major formal and informal institutional powers of the Federal Bureaucracy; change and evolution of presidential powers due to specific events in history; relationship between national, state and local bureaucracies; role of the national bureaucracy in forming the national budget; links between the Bureaucracy and the following: public opinion, voters, interest groups, political parties, the media, local and state governments.)

Week 12 - 13: Chapter #14 The Judiciary

(workings of the judicial process; functions and powers of the federal court system; major formal and informal institutional functions and powers of the federal court system; change and evolution of the judiciary due to specific events in history; relationship of the Supreme Court to other branches of government under the Constitution; links between the Judiciary and the following: public opinion, voters, interest groups, political parties, the media, local and state governments.)

Week 14 - 15: Chapter #15 The Policy-Making Process

(policy making process in a federal system, the formation of policy agenda, the role of institutions in the enactment of policy, and the role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation; history and current situation of topics such as foreign and defense policy, health care, economic policy, environmental policy, and social welfare policy.)

Week 16: Chapter #18 Civil Liberties

(development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation; knowledge of substantive rights and liberties; impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties.)

Week 17: Chapter #19 Civil Rights (Refer to Civil Liberties)

Week 18: Review for AP United States Government and Politics Exam

Additional Readings:

In addition to the textbook readings supplemental readings are given to coincide with each chapter and are further discussed in daily lessons.

Samples of additional historical readings:

Articles of Confederation, U.S. Constitution; John Locke (Second Treatise excerpts), *Federalist Papers* 10 and 51, U.S. Bill of Rights; and excerpts from selected U.S. Supreme Court cases.

Samples of current event articles include any of the following taken from reliable news gathering sources:

Public opinion polls, editorials, political articles, election maps, and political video programs selected from both national and local news. Since they are intended to be current they of course cannot be named more specifically at this time.

Supplemental Activities:

Class activities utilized in addition to information found in the textbook include analysis of exit poll data, comparison of public opinion polls, the discussion of demographics charts, and the evaluation of election maps.

Assorted charts, polls, videos, election maps, and power point presentations are included in instruction and are commonly projected onto a white board with a digital projector through a laptop computer.