

AP® UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

AP® United States Government and Politics is an extensive study of the formal and informal structures of government and the processes of the American political system, with an emphasis on policy-making and implementation. This course is designed to prepare students for the AP Exam.

Text

Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy, 14th ed. New York: Longman, 2009.
Edwards, George C. III, Martin P. Wattenberg, and Robert L. Lineberry.

Supplemental Text

Woll, Peter. American Government: Readings and Cases, 17th ed. New York: Longman

Other Materials

Assigned and used in class: articles from current newspapers; news magazines; news footage and documentaries; excerpts from the Federalist Papers; numerous websites.

Course Plan

Unit I: Foundations of American Government - Content Goals

Students should understand the doctrines and historical background to the Constitution; key principles, such as federalism and separation of powers; the ideological and philosophical underpinnings of American government; and theories informing interpretations of the Constitution including democratic theory, republicanism, pluralism and elitism.

Unit II: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights - Content Goals

Students should understand the institutional guarantees to political and civil rights granted under the Constitution; the rights conferred by the American government system; key Supreme Court cases and arguments regarding constitutional protections; the impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on civil rights at the state level; and the impact of judicial decisions on American society.

Unit III: Political Parties and the Public - Content Goals

Students should understand the mechanisms of transmitting interests to government action, including interest groups, political action committees, and mass media; the role of media coverage and the press on elections and government actions the different historical and ideological beliefs of political parties; demographic groups in the U.S. and their political beliefs; and ways of understanding political beliefs and behavior.

Unit IV: Campaigning and Elections - Content Goals

Students should become familiar with the workings of the electoral process; the role of money and interest groups on campaigns; the laws governing elections; and the way individual campaigns operate on the local, state, and national level.

Unit V: Institutions of National Government: The Congress - Content Goals

Students should understand the workings of the legislative process; the functions and powers of Congress; the relationship to other branches of government under the Constitution; and the change and evolution of congressional powers as a result of specific events in American history.

Unit VI: Institutions of National Government: Presidency, Bureaucracy, and Federal Budget - Content Goals

Students should understand the functions and powers of the executive branch; its relationship to other branches of government under the Constitution; the change and evolution of the executive branch and the bureaucracy as a result of specific events in American history; the relationship between the national government and state and local government bureaucracies; and the role of the bureaucracy in formulating the federal budget.

Unit VII: Institutions of National Government: The Judiciary - Content Goals

Students should understand the workings of the judicial process; the functions and powers of the federal court system; the relationship of the Supreme Court to other branches of government under the Constitution; and the change and evolution of the judiciary as a result of specific events in American history.

Unit VIII: Public Policy – Content Goals

Students should understand the major policy areas and debates in American Government today. This unit covers several areas of public policy, including:

- Foreign and Defense Policy
- Health Care
- Economic Policy
- Environmental Policy
- Social Welfare Policy