AP United States Government & Politics

The Course:
Combining a study of American government and politics with an in-depth study of an individual’s rights under the Constitution. This course involves discussion, problem solving, and role playing simulations. The South Carolina Social Studies Standards will serve as a guide for the content of the course as well as material from the College Board. Students are expected to enhance their understanding of our government and politics by keeping up with current events.

The Advanced Placement Program is designed for students who are preparing to earn a four-year degree beyond college. They must be willing to accept the challenge of academic expectations beyond the honors level requirements. Advanced Placement students should be advanced readers. College credit is awarded by colleges based on the level of achievement on the AP exam.

Required Materials:


Supplemental Readings:
The primary text will be heavily supplemented by outside readings, including the 15 required Supreme Court cases and nine foundational documents which will all be assigned during the course.

In addition to the required cases and documents, recent articles regarding political science concepts and current political issues will be provided to students to supplement the primary text. Links to the supplemental readings will be posted on the course website or provided to students in hard copy.

Contact Information:
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➢ Website: http://www.williston.k12.sc.us/olc/teacher.aspx?s=86
➢ Room Number and Planning Periods: Room 133, 4th Block Planning

Resources:
World Wide Web Resources are located at:
http://www.apcentral.collegeboard.com/
http://www.politics1.com
Grading:

- **Daily Grades** 30% of yearly average
  (Includes homework, reaction papers, class work, and class participation)

- **Major Grades** 50% of yearly average
  (Includes unit exams, projects, and writing assignments)

- **Unit Exams** 20% of yearly average
  (Seniors with a 90 yearly average may exempt the final exam)

Attendance:

Students should follow the procedures for attendance that are outlined in their handbooks. AP U.S. Government & Politics is a semester course, therefore; students are not allowed to miss more than six days. Make-up work is the responsibility of the student. All work, including tests, will expire at the end of the quarter. If the work is not made up by the expiration date, then a zero will be given as a grade. Test corrections will be allowed at the discretion of the teacher. Tardiness will not be accepted. Students should show up to class on time or they will be marked tardy unless they have a pass. Tutoring will be available to students on Thursday afternoons from 3:00-4:00 pm.

Classroom Rules:

1. Follow all instructions given by the teacher.
2. Students are to be seated in their desks when the bell rings and to begin on work given by the teacher.
3. Bring all required materials to class everyday.
4. Remain respectful at all times.
5. Make-up work is the responsibility of the student and will not be discussed during class.
6. At the end of the class, students are to remain seated until they are dismissed by the teacher.

Major Class Activities

**Current events presentations:** Students, individually or as a pair, will prepare a current events presentation that they will share with the class at the start of their assigned week. The presentation must include at least one story that links one or more of the big ideas to each of the five units in the AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework. The current events presentation also must include at least one relevant visual source (photo, political cartoon, or infographic) for each story with a caption that explains its connection to the big idea and/or unit that story covers.

**Analytical paper assignment:** Students will be required to write three analytical papers about important topics in United States government and politics. These papers will be due on varying dates during the course. Each paper must be no more than four pages in length. In each paper, the students must briefly summarize the assigned readings, connect the readings to the current unit of study (how they do this will vary depending on the resources provided for each paper and the unit of study in which it is due), and make a connection between the readings and a current political issue. One to two analytical paper assignments will require students to also examine how the assigned article and a required case/foundational document corroborate or contradict one another.

**Monster vocabulary exam:** Using the AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework, a list of important political science and government terms has been generated for use in this course, such as political culture, etc. At the start of the unit, each student will be assigned two or more terms. Students will use their assigned terms to create a study presentation, such as a Google Slides presentation, a Quizlet presentation, or a Kahoot quiz that can be used by the entire class as a study aid. At a later date, students will take an exam over these terms. On this exam, they must score a 90% or better in order to earn credit. They can take the exam up to three times in order to earn credit.
Debates: Students, in teams of three, will compete in a debate about a current public policy or issue in American government and politics. Each team will get a five-minute opening statement, a five-minute cross examination period, and a five-minute closing statement. Students must also have a visual that helps support their main arguments. This visual can be a chart, graph, table, political cartoon, or infographic. Students will analyze the visuals presented by other teams as part of the debate. Finally, each team is responsible for providing an annotated works cited page of the resources used to develop their arguments and questions.

Prezi assignment for required court cases: In pairs, students will create a Prezi interactive presentation for three of the 15 required Supreme Court cases using Prezi.com. Their interactive presentation must include a summary of the constitutional issue involved in the case, a summary of the holding of the case, any significant dissents in the case, and connections to at least two similar cases (acting as precedent or overturning the original decision). In addition to the previous requirements, each student’s Prezi should contain relevant visuals, such as political cartoons, photographs, or tables/charts and a caption that explains their relevance to the case.

Civics Project: From the AP U.S. Government and Politics Course Framework. Students will be provided an opportunity to engage in a political science research or applied civic project tied to course. The project will apply course concepts to real-world political issues, processes, institutions, and policymaking.

Required Foundational Documents:

- Federalist No. 10
- Brutus No. 1
- The Declaration of Independence
- The Articles of Confederation
- The Constitution of the United States of America
- Federalist No. 51
- Letter from a Birmingham Jail (Martin Luther King, Jr.)
- Federalist No. 70
- Federalist No. 78

Required Supreme Court Cases:

- Marbury v. Madison (1803)
  - Established the principle of judicial review empowering the Supreme Court to nullify an act of the legislative or executive branch that violates the Constitution.
- McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)
  - Established supremacy of the U.S. Constitution and federal laws over state laws.
  - Congress may not use the commerce clause to make possession of a gun in a school zone a federal crime.
- Engel v. Vitale (1962)
  - School sponsorship of religious activities violates the establishment clause.
- Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972)
  - Compelling Amish students to attend school past the eighth grade violates the free exercise clause.
- Tinker v Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969)
  - Public school students have the right to wear black armbands I school to protest the Vietnam War.
- New York Times Co. v. United States (1971)
  - Bolstered the freedom of the press, establishing a “heavy presumption against prior restraint” even in cases involving national security.
- Schenck v. United States (1919)
  - Speech creating a “clear and present danger” is not protected by the First Amendment
- Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)
  - Guaranteed the right to an attorney for the poor or indigent.
- Roe v. Wade (1973)
  - Extended the right of privacy to a woman’s decision to have an abortion.
• **McDonald v. Chicago (2010)**
  o The Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms for self-defense is applicable to the states.
• **Brown v. Board of Education (1954)**
  o Race-based school segregation violates the equal protection clause.
• **Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)**
  o Political spending by corporations, associations, and labor unions is a form of protected speech under the First Amendment.
• **Baker v. Carr (1961)**
  o Opened the door to equal protection challenges to redistricting and the development of the “one person, one vote” doctrine by ruling that challenges to redistricting did not raise “political questions” that would keep federal courts from reviewing such challenges.
• **Shaw v. Reno (1993)**
  o Legislative redistricting must be conscious of race and ensure compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
AP U.S. Government and Politics Course Plan

Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy

(16 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 development and interpretation of the Constitution influence policies that impact U.S. citizens?

Key Terms

Natural rights

Popular sovereignty

Republicanism

Social contract

Declaration of Independence

Philadelphia Convention

Participatory democracy

Pluralist democracy

Elite democracy

Shay’s Rebellion

Great (Connecticut) Compromise

Electoral College

Three-Fifths Compromise

Importation (slavery) compromise

Separation of powers

Checks and balances

Federalism

Exclusive powers

Implied powers

Concurrent powers

Categorical grants

Block grants

Mandates (unfunded)

Commerce clause

Readings

• Chapters 1-3 in American Government and Politics Today textbook.

• The Declaration of Independence

• Federalist No. 10

• Brutus No. 1

• Federalist No. 51

• The Articles of Confederation

• The Constitution of the United States (Articles I-VII, 10th and 14th Amendments)

• McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)
• Lopez v. United States (1995)


**Primary Lecture Topics**

• The philosophical foundations and documents of American democracy, including the Declaration of Independence, social contract theory, republicanism, types of democracy, and the tension between individual liberty and order/safety.

• How the Articles of Confederation failed to adequately balance individual liberty and public order/safety, and how the framers wrestled with these questions in drafting the Constitution.

• The compromises reached at the Constitutional Convention and the debate between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists during the ratification debate.

• The evolving relationship between the national and state governments, including the grant process, policy issues (ADA, Medicaid, marijuana), and the idea of devolution.

**Instructional Activities for Unit 1**

3-2-1 Activity/Seminar. Using the 3-2-1 seminar protocol, students discuss the “How American Politics Went Insane” article from The Atlantic. This will allow students to connect the current state of politics to important Unit 1 concepts such as popular sovereignty, republicanism, and social contract theory of government. This is a high interest article that will help “hook” students at the start of the semester.

Students brainstorm a list of things they believe government should do by asking the question, “What should government do?” Make a list of student responses on the board. Use this list to facilitate a discussion about order, liberty, and equality. Then share the Preamble to the Constitution and have students link their list to the language in the Preamble.

Prezi Court cases assignment. See description in the major class activities section above.

Monster vocabulary terms. See description in the major class activities section above.

Debate. Two teams of three students each debate the resolution, “States have exceeded their authority in legalizing recreational marijuana use, and the federal government should reassert its national supremacy over drug policy.”

Analytical paper “Our Broken Constitution” due. The purpose of this analytical paper is to allow the students to examine criticisms of how the U.S. Constitution operates in modern America. Student papers must connect the issues the author explores to arguments made by the Anti-Federalists, in particular, Brutus No. 1.

Students engage in a Deliberative Discussion using Federalist No. 51 and Brutus No. 1.

Checks and balances graphic organizer. During class lectures and their reading of the Constitution, students create a graphic organizer detailing the system of checks and balances. In addition to the basic checks and balances system, students annotate their organizer with a list of Supreme Court cases and public policies that gave one or more branches the opportunity to check another.

Free-Response Question (FRQ). Students respond to a textual, qualitative-based FRQ comparing the McCulloch and the Lopez decisions. The FRQ will include an excerpt from the McCulloch and/or the Lopez decision. The FRQ will require the students to understand and make connections to the concepts of enumerated, implied powers, and federalism.
Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of Government

(28 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?

Key Terms

Enumerated powers        Nomination and confirmation
Gridlock                 Rules Committee
Implied powers           Treaty negotiation and ratification
Gerrymandering           Committee of the Whole
Necessary and proper clause 22nd Amendment
Divided government       Discharge petitions
Checks and balances      Bully pulpit
Trustee                  Discretionary spending
Bicameralism             Judicial review
Delegate                 Mandatory spending
Speaker of the House     Precedent/stare decisis
Politico                 Pork barrel legislation
President of the Senate  Judicial activism
Veto (including pocket veto) Logrolling
Senate Majority Leader   Judicial restraint
Commander in Chief       Partisanship
Filibuster               Patronage
Executive order          Civil service
Cloture                  Congressional oversight
Signing statements       Iron triangles/issue networks
Holds

Readings

• Chapters 11-17 in American Government and Politics Today textbook.
• The Constitution of the United States (Articles I-III)
• Baker v. Carr (1962)
• Shaw v. Reno (1993)
• Federalist No. 70
• Federalist No. 78
• Marbury v. Madison


**Primary Lecture Topics**

• Structure of Congress, including significant differences between the chambers regarding organization, leadership, incumbency, and powers.
• Congressional representation and gerrymandering.
• The president’s formal and informal powers.
• Judicial independence, Federalist No. 78, Marbury v. Madison, and judicial decision-making.
• How the bureaucracy operates and its place in the checks and balances system.
• The future of entitlement spending in the United States.

**Instructional Activities for Unit 2**

Budget simulation and class discussion. Using the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget’s The Debt Fixer website and the quantitative data therein, students try to reduce the debt as a percentage of GDP. After completing the online simulation, students discuss the difficulties they encountered in reducing the size of the national debt. During this discussion students should link the budget process to important concepts such as entitlement spending and the political nature of the budget.

Debate. Two teams of three students each debate the resolution, “Congress has abandoned its role in the checks and balances system.”

Analytical paper for “Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory” and Federalist No. 70 due. The purpose of this paper is for the students to examine the growth of presidential power and how the other two branches may attempt to check presidential power. See description of critical article reviews found above under major class activities.

Checks and balances role play. Using a lesson from the National Constitution Center’s Separation of Powers Lesson Plan as a model, students engage in a simulation in which they develop a plan of action to ensure the creation/implementation of a policy based on the powers given to their assigned branch of government (legislative, executive, judicial). In addition to developing this plan of action for their own goal, students must develop a plan to either support or oppose another branch’s goal.

Watch “The Stackhouse Filibuster” (Season 2, Episode 17) from The West Wing. Political concepts examined in this episode include the filibuster, the White House Staff, the presidential relationship with the press, and how legislation is developed by both the presidency and Congress. The West Wing is available on both Netflix and iTunes.
Students complete at least two of the scenarios in The Redistricting Game found online. This is an online simulation that allows the students to draw and gerrymander imaginary congressional districts. The simulation has four different scenarios, each with a different take on the process of redistricting and gerrymandering. As students complete each of the scenarios, they respond to a set of questions about the process and the difficulties they encountered. All students must do scenario 1, a straight redistricting scenario. The second scenario is up to them. In addition to completing two of the scenarios, students read about proposed changes to the redistricting process and respond to these proposals.

Students respond to a quantitative data FRQ regarding presidential vetoes and the interaction between the president and Congress.

Students respond to a scenario-based FRQ examining how the bureaucracy operates and its interactions with the presidency, Congress, and the courts.

AP Civics Project-Project taken from the AP U.S. Government and Politics Course Framework. Students will participate in a mock congress. The student will assume the role of a congressman who is attempting to implement a legislative agenda. Students will research an issue, write a draft of a bill, and write a floor speech to introduce the proposed legislation. Students will engage each other in debate as they portray their roles as congressmen. Students will give a floor speech and provide evidence based answers to questions proposed about their bills.
Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

(12 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?

Key Terms

Civil liberties  Miranda Rights
Civil rights  Patriot Act
Bill of Rights  Exclusionary rule
Judicial review  Equal protection clause
Selective incorporation  National Organization for Women
Establishment clause  Civil Rights Act 1964
Free exercise clause  Voting Rights Act 1965
Symbolic speech  Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972
“Clear and present danger”  “Separate but equal”
Due process clause

Readings

• Chapters 4-5 in American Government and Politics Today textbook.

• The Bill of Rights

• The 14th Amendment’s due process and equal protection clauses

• Engel v. Vitale (1962)

• Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972)

• Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (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)

• Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka Kansas (1954)

• “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

**Primary Lecture Topics**

- The role of the courts, and the due process and equal protection clauses in the expansion of civil liberties and civil rights, including the idea of selective incorporation.

- The expansion of the liberties protected by the 1st and 2nd Amendments.

- The development of the right to privacy and its implications for reproductive rights and 4th Amendment protections.

- A history of civil rights issues and how historically disadvantaged groups in American society have achieved greater equality and equitable treatment in society.

**Instructional Activities for Unit 3**

Bill of Rights scenarios. Students write five hypothetical scenarios regarding civil liberties. Each scenario should be clearly tied to one of the amendments found in the Bill of Rights. Students must also create a “key” for their scenarios. In their key, students must identify the amendment the scenario involves, the required Supreme Court case that incorporated or clarified the application of the amendment in question, and finally the students must link the required case to a different case that deals with the same constitutional issue.

Debate. Two teams of three students each debate the resolution, “History has proven that affirmative action programs are necessary to safeguard equal opportunity in both education and employment for minorities.”

Analytical paper “Jim Crow 2.0? Why States Consider and Adopt Restrictive Voter Access Policies” due. The purpose of this analytical paper is to allow students to explore the recent actions by many states that may have a negative impact on the right to vote in those states. In this analytical paper, students write a thesis and defend it with information from the article, the course, and recent political and social events.

Students respond to a textual FRQ that uses one of the required Supreme Court cases and a non-required case. The FRQ will require students to examine the Court’s decision in both cases and apply the Court’s reasoning to a related course concept.
Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs

(8 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?

Key Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political ideology</th>
<th>Scientific polling</th>
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<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Party platform</td>
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<td>Political culture</td>
<td>Liberal ideology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political socialization</td>
<td>Conservative ideology</td>
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Readings

• Chapter 6 American Government and Politics Today textbook.
• The Monkey Cage series on political polarization in America found at The Washington Post.
• "Political Polarization in the American Public." Pew Research Center, June 12, 2014.

Primary Lecture Topics

• Elements of a scientific poll, the different types of polls, and how they are used in U.S. government and politics.
• The basic tenets of American political culture, the conservative and liberal political ideologies, and how these are acquired (political socialization).

Instructional Activities for Unit 4

Using Gallup.com, Polling Report.com, and the Pew Research Center, students study different polls regarding a variety of policy issues in the United States. Students are provided several examples of polls with questionable reliability. Students must write a comparison of what makes one poll reliable and another unreliable and explain how public policy is affected by the accuracy and reliability of polls.

Students take the Pew Research Center’s Political Typology quiz. This quiz places the students into one of nine political typologies – it divides the traditional left/right spectrum into several subgroups (four on each side of the center and one for non-engaged quiz takers). After the students have completed the quiz, they write their names on the class political spectrum, as does the teacher. Then as a class they discuss how the class does or does not reflect the larger community and what might account for the class’s overall political ideology.

Analytical paper "Polarized or Sorted? Just What’s Wrong with Our Politics, Anyway?" and “America's Missing Moderates: Hiding in Plain Sight" due. The purpose of this analytical paper is to allow students to compare the
competing views on partisan polarization in American political culture. In this paper, students must evaluate which argument regarding polarization best reflects the reality in American political culture today.

Debate. Two teams of three students each debate the resolution, “Demographic changes represent a threat to the long-term electoral success of the Republican Party.”

Class poster presentations of party platforms. Divide the class in half – one half examines the Democratic Party platform and the other half examines the Republican Party platform. Within each platform, students pair to explore a particular topic, such as education, defense, entitlement spending, etc. and create a poster that explains the party’s policy proposals for that particular topic. Students then present their findings to the class. As a follow-up homework assignment, students then research public opinion polls on their issue and write a summary of how the American public feels about their issue and evaluate whether or not their assigned party reflects the American public. Finally, students must identify a policy from their assigned platform and determine if it has been implemented and how.

Students respond to a quantitative data FRQ regarding changing demographics in the United States. Students have to interpret data from the U.S. Census Bureau regarding racial and age composition of the United States and how they are changing. Students also link these demographic changes to representation in Congress. The final section of the FRQ will require students to assess the potential impacts of these changes on the two political parties and the policies each party promotes.
Unit 5: Political Participation

(17 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?

Key Terms

Rational choice theory
Retrospective voting
Prospective voting
Party-line voting
Political efficacy
Midterm election
Demographics
Linkage institution
Political party
Interest group
Critical election
Political realignment
Proportional electoral system
Winner-take-all electoral system
Iron triangles
Free rider problem
Single issue groups
Participatory democracy
Pluralist democracy
Elite democracy

Primaries (open v. closed)
Caucuses
Party convention
General election
Electoral College
Incumbency advantage
Federal Election Commission
Federal Elections Campaign Act
McCain-Feingold
Citizens United v. FEC (2010)
PACs
Super PACs
Independent expenditures
Media
Social media
Watchdog
Gatekeeper
Horse race journalism
“Fake news”
Readings

• Chapters 7-10 American Government and Politics Today textbook.
• Federalist No. 10
• Citizens United v. FEC (2010)

Primary Lecture Topics

• The evolution of voting rights and the current state of voter turnout.
• Factors that influence voter choice in elections.
• The functions of political parties in the United States and third parties in United States government and politics.
• The development of candidate-centered campaigns.
• The theory of critical elections.
• Interest groups in United States government and politics.
• Nominations, campaigns, and elections in United States government and politics.
• The media as a linkage institution, including changes in media, such as the growth of social media and partisan media sources.

Instructional Activities for Unit 5

To better understand how state election laws impact voter turnout, students find voter turnout data from a state that has passed a strict voter ID law in the 21st century, such as Wisconsin, Indiana, or Texas. Prior to their research, students formulate a hypothesis about the impact voter ID laws have on voter turnout. Students then research voter turnout stats from the presidential election prior to the passage of that state’s voter ID law, and the presidential election immediately after the passage of voter ID laws. Students break the data down by major demographic groups, such race, age, and education. Students write a summary of their findings, including an evaluation of their thesis and reasons why their thesis was correct/incorrect.

Debate. Two teams of three students each debate the resolution, “Interest groups have too much influence in the policy process and are detrimental to democracy.”

Analytical paper "The Electoral College: How It Works in Contemporary Presidential Elections" due. The purpose of this analytical paper is to have students examine the original design and purpose of the Electoral College, and then assess how it works in modern U.S. politics, with special attention paid to the 2016 election. In this paper, students must examine the various proposals to reform the Electoral College and assess the advantages and disadvantages to each, explaining why the current system should either be maintained, revised, or completely eliminated and replaced with election by national popular vote.
After the lecture regarding the theory of critical elections, students use presidential election data from the 20th and 21st centuries to classify each election as either a critical election or a deviating election.

Students write an essay, with an analytical thesis, that incorporates information from a select list of foundational documents that examines the influence of interest groups on the policy-making process in the United States.

After the lecture on the media as a linkage institution, especially the part about partisan media and social media, students complete a media analysis assignment. Students are assigned to read two articles about a specific policy issue in the United States. One article is from a conservative source and one from a liberal source. They then analyze the two sources – making note of the facts provided, the viewpoints expressed in each, and other differences between the two sources. This will also allow students to make a connection to gridlock in the national government.

Political Science Research Project. After reading “How to Spot Fake News” at FactCheck.org as homework, students work in groups to identify the fake news stories in their assigned packet (the packet contains both legitimate and fake news stories). Students first develop a list of indicators which they can use to determine if each story is fake news or not and then they conduct a content analysis of each report. Finally, they share the results with the class and assess the extent to which political science research provided in the course can provide guidance for discerning the difference between valid and invalid news stories.