AP® United States Government and Politics

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**Course Description**

AP® United States Government is a one semester course is designed to be the equivalent of a freshman-level college course. The curriculum is also meant to prepare students for the AP® United States Government and Politics Exam given each year in May. Due to the broad scope of the curriculum, this course will be more challenging than a typical high school American Government class. Frequent reading, homework, reviews, and tests will be necessary to prepare students for classroom tests and the AP® Exam.

**Course Objectives**

The course is organized around six basic units of study:

1. Constitutional Underpinnings of the United States Government

2. Political Beliefs and Behaviors

3. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media

4. Institutions of National Government: Congress, the Presidency, the Judiciary, and the

Bureaucracy

5. Public Policy

6. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Although each of these topics will be explored throughout the semester, they will not be covered in the exact order listed above. In fact, most of these units are interwoven together and will be referenced in their relationship to each other throughout the semester. Therefore, much of the material will be covered multiple times during the course.

Three course requirements set forth by the AP® College Board will be used to supplement instruction and evaluation:

1. Analyzing and interpreting data, charts, and tables relevant to U.S. government

2. Primary source documents and current events (newspapers, magazines, etc.)

3. Answering analytical and interpretive free-response questions

Each of these approaches will be used to supplement the textbook in creating and implementing the course curriculum. An emphasis will be placed on the student’s ability to interconnect the curriculum across the scope of the course and current events, and display knowledge through both multiple choice and free response essays. A student’s proficiency in critically interpreting data and information will be essential to his/her success in the course.

**Course Structure**

The course will be presented within the framework of a modified block schedule. The class will meet every Monday for 45 minutes and every Tuesday and Thursday for 85 minutes. This scenario will put a premium on regular class attendance and require a commitment to study outside the confines of the school day. Lecture and discussion, cooperative learning, summarization techniques, independent reading, other various instructional methods will be used drive instruction. Various current events that relate to the course will be highlighted and discussed, and guest speakers (politicians, local officials, lobbyists, etc.) will be invited make appearances, provided that scheduling does not impede. Students will be tested using a combination of multiple choice and free-response essays throughout the semester.

Non-mandatory review sessions will be held throughout first and second semester in order to further students’ understanding of the curriculum and the AP® Exam itself.

**Student Evaluation and Assessment**

LATE WORK IS NOT ACCEPTED!!!

Grades will be based on a combination of homework assignments and exams. Each test will be structured after the College Board’s AP® Exam, and will include both multiple choice and free-response questions.

A student may complete one (1) extra credit project for the semester, which will only count for a maximum of twenty (20) points. This will involve a proposal of the student’s choosing, and must be related to the current topic of study. It must be completed before the 70th day of the semester. It also must be academic in nature and be approved by the instructor. (Please understand that this is not a “grade-saving” option, only a method to “make-up” points for one typical homework assignment.)

LATE WORK IS NOT ACCEPTED!!!

**Primary Text**

Welch, Susan, John Gruhl, John Comer, and Susan M. Ridgon. *American Government*. 10th ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006.

**Supplemental Resources**

About America: How the United States is Governed (www.america.gov)

*Balance of Power Between Congress and the President* (AP® College Board Special Focus)

*The Federalist* Papers (selected texts), *The Anti-Federalist* Papers (selected texts), The Constitution of the United States of America

Print Media: *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Newsweek*, *etc.*

News Networks: CNN, NBC, CBS, Fox News, CNN, MSNBC (and accompanying websites)

Websites: www.apcentral.collegeboard.com, http://people-press.org (Pew Research Center), www.pollingreport.com, www.regulations.gov, www.opensecrets.org (Center for Responsive Politics), www.electionstudies.org (American National Election Studies), www.fedstats.gov, www.census.gov, www.fec.gov, www.gpo.gov, www.whitehouse.gov, www.america.gov, and other appropriate websites

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| **Semester Outline/Pacing Guide Week** | **Concepts** | | | **Topics** | | **Text Chapters** | | | **Supplemental Materials** |
| 1 | | | | | Syllabus and Introduction | | | | |
| **Constitutional Underpinnings of the United States Government** | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | American Revolution | | | Enlightenment ideologies (Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau), reasons for separation from Britain | | Ch. 2-3 | | | *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (Locke), *Democracy in America* (Tocqueville) |
| Need for Government | | flaws and failures of the Articles of Confederation, Shays's Rebellion | | | Ch. 2 | | | *The Federalist* No. 16 (Hamilton) | |
| Founding Principles/ Ideologies | | purpose and scope, freedom, order, equality, fear of factions (political conflict) | | | Ch. 2 | | | *The Federalist* No. 10 (Madison) | |
| 2 | Governmental Theories | | | unitary, confederacy, federalism, limited government, democratic system, republican system, pluralism, elitism, majority rule (excessive democracy and limitations) | | Ch. 2-3 | | | About America (*Similarities and differences between the United States and other forms of democratic government*) |
| Constitutional Compromises | | | Great Compromise, Three-Fifths Compromise, Commerce and Slave Trade Compromise | | | | Ch. 2 | | |
| Separation of Powers | | Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branch functions, governmental powers (expressed, implied, inherent, reserved, concurrent, prohibited) | | | Ch. 2 | | | *The Federalist* No. 47, 48, 51 (Madison), The Constitution of the United States of America, *Marbury v. Madison* | |
| Checks and Balances | | | each branch's limitations on powers in relation to other branches | | | | Ch. 2 | | |
| Party System | | Federalist and Anti-Federalist viewpoints | | | Ch. 2, 7 | | | *The Anti-Federalist* No. 17, 84 | |
| Amendment Process | | Bill of Rights + 17, formal and informal processes | | | Ch. 2 | | | The Constitution of the United States of America | |
| **TEST #1: Constitutional Foundations and Underpinnings** | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Federalism | | | definition and overview of the system, governmental powers as they relate to federalism, successes and challenges | | Ch. 3 | | | *The Federalist* No. 17 (Hamilton), 44, 45 (Madison), About America (*Overview of national, state, and local governments*) |
| Types of Federalism | | dual, cooperative, fiscal (types of grants and mandates), devolution | | | Ch. 3 | | | Chart: text. Pg. 80 (*What Does the Federal Government Give the States Money to Do?*) | |
| Federalism in Action | | landmark Supreme Court decisions, federal/state relations, interstate relations | | | Ch. 3 | | | *McCulloch v. Maryland, Gibbons v. Ogden* | |
| **TEST #2: Federalism** | | | | | | | | | |