

## COURSE SYLLABUS

TEXTBOOKS American Government: 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, Wilson & Dilulio  
American Government: Readings and Cases: 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Edition, Woll

### Supplemental Readings

Various outside readings including the 15 required Supreme Court cases and 9 foundational documents which will be assigned during the course.

### DESCRIPTION OF COURSE

This Advanced Placement course in AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS is a college-level course and will be taught as such. It is designed for the highly motivated student who wishes to study American politics in depth and earn college credit. Students who successfully complete this course and perform well on the AP Examination will receive college credit and satisfy the state requirement in American Government at both the high school and the college levels. Due to the rigorous schedule required, the class is two semesters, rather than one semester long. Economics will be covered throughout the content of the course and later in a separate unit.

The course is designed to give students a critical perspective on government and politics in the United States. It involves both the study of general concepts used to interpret American politics, and the analysis of specific case studies. The course is both heavily content laden and highly analytical and interpretive. It requires familiarity with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that make up the American political system. Successful students will acquire a broad knowledge of the American political system and be able to apply it in analyzing and evaluating politics and government.

A variety of instructional methods will be used in class. Since this is a college course, there will be lectures given by the teacher. It is expected and essential that students take good notes during lectures and class discussions and place them in their drive/portfolio for study and examinations. In addition to lecture, there will be some student-centered activities including simulations, debates, mock trials, projects, and a variety of group activities.

### Discussion and Participation

A major emphasis of this course is class discussion and participation. All students are expected to contribute! The course is based on the contention that knowledge and understanding must be used to make intelligent evaluations and decisions. Therefore, you will constantly be asked to take stands on issues, to argue positions and determine what you believe and why you believe it. A variety of viewpoints and interpretations will be encouraged and expected.

**Because we will be dealing with personal beliefs as well as facts, it is absolutely essential that students at all times demonstrate respect for the views and opinions of others in the class. Any disrespect for the opinions or statements of others will not be tolerated.**

### Quizzes and Exams:

Reading quizzes will be given after each chapter.

Exams will be given after each major unit in class (see content unit below). The exams will be in AP format and will consist of two parts - multiple choice and essay. Every attempt will be made to make the test questions approximate actual former AP exam

questions. A final comprehensive exam will be given at the end of the fall and spring semesters.

### **Grading:**

All grades will be on a point scale throughout each semester. The percentage scale used to determine grades is as follows:

A= 90-100%

B= 80 - 89%

C= 70 - 79%

D= 60 - 69%

Your grades will be posted promptly online. It is your responsibility to check them and to know at all times how you are performing in class. If you have any questions about your grade you should contact the teacher.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

### **STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS**

- Students taking a college course must **assume** personal responsibility for their own learning!
- You are expected to be on time and to assume responsibility for clearing absences and missed assignments.
- You are expected to come to class prepared to work. This includes bringing the assigned materials necessary to participate in class activities. Previously assigned readings and/or written assignments must be completed prior to the beginning of class.
- You are expected to be productive in class. Do not waste time on personal activities or assignments from other classes. Work on developing perceptive reading and listening skills. Develop your leadership and interpersonal skills by sharing, interacting and assisting fellow students. Follow instructions and assume responsibility for a positive and productive classroom-learning environment.
- You are expected to take responsibility for completing all class assignments on time. All work submitted must be your own.
- You are expected to leave all cell phones and computers away unless instructed otherwise.

**Important:** It is required that you follow current events throughout the class by viewing news reports and reading magazines, newspapers and appropriate websites. We will often relate current topics to political science concepts. We will continue to apply contemporary issues to our studies throughout our time together.

### **Curricular Requirements**

CR1 - The course includes the Foundations of American Democracy Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs)

CR2 - The course includes the Interactions Among Branches of Government Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

CR3 - The course includes the Civil Liberties and Civil Rights Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

CR4 - The course includes the American Political Ideologies and Beliefs Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs)

CR5 - The course includes the Political Participation Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs)

CR6 - The course integrates public policy within each unit.

CR7 - The course addresses the big ideas by connecting enduring understandings across one or more units.

CR8 - The course provides opportunities to analyze and compare political concepts.

CR9 - The course provides opportunities to analyze and interpret quantitative data to explain what the data implies or illustrates about political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.

CR10 - The course provides opportunities to analyze and interpret qualitative sources (primary and secondary sources including the nine required foundational documents) to explain how they relate to political concepts.

CR11 - The course provides opportunities to analyze and interpret visual information to explain how the elements of the visual illustrate or relate to political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.

CR12 The course provides opportunities to apply course concepts and Supreme Court decisions in real-world contexts or scenarios.

CR13 The course provides opportunities to develop an argument in the form of an essay, supported by relevant evidence, about a concept described in the AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework.

CR14 Students are provided with an opportunity to engage in a political science research or applied civics project tied to the AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework that culminates in a presentation of findings.

CR15 Students are provided opportunities to analyze the 15 required Supreme Court cases as described in the AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework and connect them to other non-required landmark cases.

CR16 Students and teachers have access to a college-level U.S. government and politics textbook.

## **AP United States Government and Politics Syllabus**

### Instructional Schedule

This AP U.S. Government and Politics class is taught throughout the academic year using the Bear River modified block schedule.

Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy (5-6 weeks)

Unit 2: Interaction Among Branches of Government (6-7 weeks)

Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Rights (3-4 weeks)

Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs (2-3 weeks)

Unit 5: Political Participation (4-5 weeks)

### Major Class Activities:

Current events presentations - Students will prepare several current events presentations that will be shared with the class throughout the academic year. The presentations must include at least one story that links one or more of the big ideas of the five units in the AP Gov Framework. The presentation must include at least one visual with a caption that explains its connection to the big idea.

Analytical paper assignment - Student will be required to write three analytical papers about important topics in the class. The papers will be due on varying dates throughout the year. The rubric and parameters of each paper will be determined by the

instructor as necessary.

Vocabulary exam - Students will be required to learn important AP Government terms throughout the course. These terms will be assigned throughout the course as individual chapters are covered.

Debates and discussion - Students will participate in numerous class discussions and will compete in a debate about a current public policy or issue. The rubric for the debate will be determined by the instructor as necessary.

Supreme Court case reenactment - Students will create a presentation of one of the 15 required Supreme Court cases that will include a summary of the constitutional issue involved, a summary of the holding of the case and any significant dissents in the case.

## **AP Government and Politics Course Plan**

As this is the first year of a major AP Government course redesign, the course plan will be developed and presented prior to each of the major units of study.

### **Unit One: Foundations of American Democracy**

**Time: Five to Six weeks**

**Assessment: Unit Exams and Free Response Questions**

#### **Essential Questions**

How did the founders of the U.S. Constitution attempt to protect individual liberty, while also promoting public 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 U.S. citizens?

Key Terms:

Refer to the terms on individual chapter assignments

### **Politics, Power and Democracy**

#### **Chapter 1**

The purpose of this chapter is to give the student a preview of the major questions to be asked throughout the textbook and to introduce key terms. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter the student should be able to do each of the following:

1. List the two basic questions to be asked about government in the United States (or any other nation) and show that they are distinct questions.
2. Explain what is meant by power, and by political power in particular. Relate the latter to authority, legitimacy, and democracy.
3. Distinguish among the two concepts of democracy mentioned in the chapter, explaining in which sense the textbook refers to United States government as democratic.
4. Differentiate between majoritarian politics and elitist politics, explaining the four major theories of the latter.
5. Explain how political change tends to make political scientists cautious in stating how politics works or what values dominate it.

**Time:** One week

**To do:** Read & discuss Wilson's Chapter 1, Assigned Discussion Questions, group activities, Current Event and Chapter Quiz and practice free response writing.

## **The U.S. Constitution**

### **Chapter 2**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce students to the historical context within which the United States Constitution was written. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter the student should be able to do each of the following:

1. Explain the notion of "higher law" by which the colonists felt they were entitled to certain "natural rights." List these rights.
2. Compare the basis on which the colonists felt a government could be legitimate.
3. List and discuss the shortcomings of government under the Articles of Confederation.
4. Compare and contrast the Virginia and New Jersey plans, and show how they led to the "Great Compromise."
5. Explain why separation of powers and federalism became key parts of the Constitution.
6. Explain why a bill of rights was not initially included in the Constitution and why it was added.
7. List and explain the two major types of constitutional reform advocated today, along with specific reform measures.

**Time:** One week

**To do:** Read & discuss Wilson's Chapter 2, Handbook exercises, Constitutional Scavenger Hunt, Charles A. Beard, *Framing the Constitution* and John P. Roche, *The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action* articles (Woll), Current Event and Chapter Quiz and practice free response

## **Federalism**

### **Chapter 3**

The central purpose of the chapter is to introduce the student to some of the complexities of federal government in the United States—that is, one where both the national and state governments have powers independent of one another. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter, the student should be able to do each of the following:

1. Identify important policy areas affected by federalism.
2. Explain the difference between federal and centralized systems of government, and give examples of each.
3. Show how competing political interests at the Constitutional Convention led to the adoption of a federal system that was not clearly defined.
4. Outline the ways in which national and state powers have been interpreted by the courts.
5. State the reasons why federal grants-in-aid to the states have been politically popular, and cite what have proven to be their pitfalls. Distinguish between categorical grants and block grants.
6. Distinguish between mandates and conditions of aid with respect to federal grant programs to states and localities. Discuss whether or to what extent federal grants to the states have created uniform national policies comparable to those of centralized governments.
7. Evaluate the effect of devolution on relationships between the national and state governments. Assess its implications for citizens as taxpayers and as clients of government programs.

**Time:** One week

**To do:** Read & discuss Wilson's Chapter 3, Assigned Discussion Questions, Current Event and Chapter Quiz and practice free response

## **American Political Culture**

## **Chapter 4**

Previous chapters focused on the legal and historical aspects of the United States government. This chapter concentrates instead on the somewhat less concrete notion of "political culture," or the particular set of beliefs, attitudes, and opinions people (in this case, Americans) have about how their government ought to operate. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter, the student should be able to do each of the following:

1. Define what scholars mean by political culture, and list some of the dominant aspects of political culture in the United States.
2. Discuss how American citizens compare with those of other countries in their political and economic attitudes.
3. List the contributions to United States political culture made by the Revolution, by the nation's religious heritages, and by the family.
4. Explain how the "culture war" between orthodox and progressive Americans shapes the debate over controversial policy issues.
5. Identify reasons for Americans' mistrust of government and explain how it is affected by both political events and political efficacy.
6. Explain why political tolerance is a necessary component of a democratic system.

**Time:** One week

**To do:** Read & discuss Wilson's Chapter 4, Assigned Discussion Questions, Read Tocqueville (Woll), Current Event and Chapter Quiz