Course Title: AP United States Government & Politics

Course #: 1615-1616

Course Description: AP United States Government and Politics introduces students to key political ideas, institutions, policies, interactions, roles, and behaviors that characterize the political culture of the United States. The course examines politically significant concepts and themes, through which students learn to apply disciplinary reasoning, assess causes and consequences of political events, and interpret data to develop evidence-based arguments. This course is a year-long course that satisfies the American Government and Economics graduation requirement.

Students are strongly encouraged to take the AP Exam in May.

UC/CSU Approval: “a” approval pending

Grade Level: 12

Estimated Homework Per Week: 4 hours
- Reading: 1 to 1.5 chapters per week
- Writing: Chapter Study Guides, FRQs, Analytical Essays

Prerequisite: Completion of US History with a grade of B or higher OR completion of College/Dual Enrollment US History or AP US History with a grade of C or higher

Recommended Prerequisite Skills:
Seniors with an interest in government and political science are encouraged to enroll. Students are required to engage in extensive reading and accelerated study in one semester. Students focus in-depth attention on the systems and politics of the United States of America in preparation for the Advanced Placement Exam in May.
- The course addresses the big ideas by connecting enduring understandings across one or more units.
- The course provides opportunities to analyze and compare political concepts.
- 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.
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.

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.

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

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.

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.

**Course Grade Scale:**
- Exams: 35%
- Final Exam: 20%
- Projects/Classwork/Homework: 25%
- Quizzes: 20%

**Major Assessments/Units/Topics:** (there is an exam for each unit and a 10 question quiz for each chapter explored)

**Unit 1: Constitutional Underpinnings; The Constitution, Federalism**
Unit 1 focuses on the “original” Constitution (the Preamble and the Articles), the Federalist papers, and the arguments involved with the making of the Constitution. This unit also focuses on the relationship and the ever changing power struggle between the national government and the states.

**Unit 2: Public Opinion and Political Action, The Mass Media**
Unit 2 focuses on political socialization, ideology, and political action of the electorate. It also focuses on the mass media and the impact on public opinion and political behavior, and the impact on the scope of government and democracy in America.

**Unit 3: Political Parties, Campaigns and Voting Behavior, Interest Groups**
Unit 3 focuses on the rise and fall of America’s political parties since its founding, Madison’s attempt to prevent the rise of factions which political parties would usher into the political process, the voting behavior of different demographic groups with particular focus on recent Presidential and midterm elections, and the increasing importance of interest groups particularly as it relates to the role of campaign finance.
Unit 4: Institutions of National Government; Congress, the Presidency, the Federal Bureaucracy

Unit 4 focuses on the roles of the legislative and executive branches, the large federal bureaucracy which executes the laws passed by these bodies, and the ways in which government attains money from its citizens and spends it. Students will learn the immense powers provided to Congress by the Constitution, and how bills become laws with particular emphasis on how those procedures have changed. Students will analyze the distinctive role of the American presidency through its progressively heightened power since America’s founding and its importance as the symbolic head of government.

(Unit exam is split into two tests: 1. Congress Test and 2. President and Bureaucracy Test)

Unit 5: The Judicial Branch and Protecting Our Rights

Unit 5 focuses on the role the judiciary branch has played in American history and the large powers federal courts have through judicial review. Students will analyze the contrasting opinions of whether judges should make decisions through a judicial activist or originalist perspective. Students debate major cases that have come before the U.S. Supreme Court, using critical thinking skills to adapt their positions to their opponents’ arguments, and improve public speaking skills.

Overview of the AP Exam and Keys to AP Exam Success

The AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam will be comprised of the following sections:

Multiple-Choice Questions: Number of Questions: 55

Structure – The questions on multiple choice will ask students to:
• Analyze and compare political concepts
• Analyze and interpret quantitative, text-based, and visual sources
• Apply course concepts, foundational documents, and Supreme Court decisions in a variety of hypothetical and real-world scenarios

Free-Response Questions: Number of Questions: 4

Structure – The four questions on the free response will ask students to:
• Apply political concepts in real-world scenarios
• Compare the decisions and implications of different Supreme Court cases
• Analyze quantitative data
• Develop an argument using required foundational documents as evidence

The Unit Exams in the class consist of 55 multiple choice questions and 2 FRQs