

Advanced Placement US Government and Politics

2024-2025 School Year

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Introduction to AP U.S. Government and Politics

AP U.S. Government and Politics is a college-level semester-long course that seeks to prepare students for success on the AP Exam in May, and provide students with political knowledge. Students will further develop their reasoning processes in order to participate meaningfully and thoughtfully in discussions and debates that are currently shaping American politics and society. It is important to note this course is not a history course, it is a political science course.

AP U.S. Government and Politics studies the interconnectedness of the different parts of the American political system, and the behaviors and attitudes that shape and are the byproduct of this system. Through the development of political knowledge, disciplinary practices, and reasoning processes, by the end of the course, students will be able to analyze current and historical political events like a political scientist. Students will learn how to develop factually accurate, well-reasoned, thoughtful arguments and opinions, that acknowledge and grapple with alternative political perspectives.

Instructional Schedule

This AP U.S. Government and Politics class is taught in one semester using a traditional school day schedule. There are approximately 85 available instructional days in each semester.

Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy (15 days)

Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of Government (22 days)

Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (11 days)

Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs (8 days)

Unit 5: Political Participation (16 days)

Textbook

Edwards, George C. *Government in America*: Pearson, 2014.

Supplemental Readings

The primary text will be heavily supplemented by outside readings, including the 14 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.

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:

55 Multiple-Choice Questions:

Structure – The questions on multiple choice will ask you 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

Timing: One hour and 20 minutes

Percentage of Total Exam: 50%

4 Free-Response Questions:

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

Timing: One hour and 40 minutes

Percentage of Total Exam: 50%

As the breakdown of the AP Exam highlights, success in this course and on the AP Exam requires far more than the memorization of political knowledge. Success in this course and on the AP Exam requires connection-making with the aim of being able to analyze political information, regardless of the format the information is presented, and develop a factually accurate, thoughtful, and well-reasoned opinion regarding this

information.

The different pieces of the course fit together in pursuit of this aim through course content and big ideas, reasoning processes, and disciplinary practices.

Big Ideas in AP U.S. Government and Politics

The big ideas described below are intended to illustrate distinctive features and processes in U.S. government and politics as well as how political scientists study political behavior.

1. **Constitutionalism (CON)** The U.S. Constitution establishes a system of checks and balances among branches of government and allocates power between federal and state governments. This system is based on the rule of law and the balance majority rule and minority rights.
2. **Liberty and Order (LOR)** Governmental laws and policies balancing order and liberty are based on the U.S. Constitution and have been interpreted differently over time.
3. **Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD)** Popular sovereignty, individualism, and republicanism are important considerations of U.S. laws and policy making and assume citizens will engage and participate.
4. **Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI)** Multiple actors and institutions interact to produce and implement possible policies.
5. **Methods of Political Analysis (MPA)** Using various types of analyses, political scientists measure how U.S. political behavior, attitudes, ideologies, and institutions are shaped by a number of factors over time.

Reasoning Processes

The reasoning processes are the thought processes that will facilitate connection-making and analysis in the pursuit of effectively executing the disciplinary practices in the course. In other words, the reasoning processes form the cognitive bridge between the course content/big ideas and the disciplinary practices. The reasoning processes in this course include:

- **Definition/Classification:** Demonstrating knowledge of course concepts
- **Explain - Process:** Explaining political processes
- **Explain - Causation:** Explaining causes and effects of political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors
- **Explain - Comparison:** Explaining similarities and differences among political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors

Disciplinary Practices

The disciplinary practices are the tasks students will apply to the course content using the reasoning processes. Becoming proficient in these disciplinary practices gives you the tools to analyze political information, regardless of the format, and develop a factually accurate, thoughtful, and well-reasoned argument or opinion about an issue related to American government and politics. The disciplinary practices in this course include:

- Practice 1: Apply political concepts and processes to scenarios in context
- Practice 2: Apply Supreme Court decisions
- Practice 3: Analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics
- Practice 4: Read, analyze, and interpret foundational documents and other text-based and visual sources
- Practice 5: Develop an argument in essay format

Every AP Exam question fuses course content, reasoning processes, and disciplinary practices. Thus, in-class and outside of class assignments will focus on the acquisition of course content and the application of course content to disciplinary practices using reasoning skills.

Required Supreme Court Cases

This course will incorporate the analysis of the following 14 required Supreme Court cases:

- Marbury v. Madison (1803)
- McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)
- Schenck v. United States (1919)
- Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
- Baker v. Carr (1961)
- Engel v. Vitale (1962)
- Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)
- Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969)
- New York Times Company v. United States (1971)
- Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972)
- Shaw v. Reno (1993)
- United States v. Lopez (1995)
- McDonald v. Chicago (2010)
- Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (FEC) (2010)

For each of these cases, the facts, issues, holdings, and reasoning underlying the majority and dissenting opinions can be found through the Oyez database online. Oyez also has an app that can be downloaded to smartphones.

You will be required to complete multiple assignments analyzing and comparing

these cases with other non- required cases.

The list above is not an exhaustive list of the Supreme Court cases that will be analyzed and discussed in this course. Additionally, you will have access to information and majority/dissenting opinion excerpts for cases that complement the required cases, such as:

- Gonzales v. Raich (2005) to go along with the analysis of McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)
- Heart of Atlanta Motels v. United States (1964) to go along with the analysis of United States v. Lopez (1995)
- Zelman v. Simmons-Harris (2002) to go along with the analysis of Engel v. Vitale (1962)
- Morse v. Frederick (2007) to go along with the analysis of Tinker v. Des Moines (1969)

Required Foundational Documents

This course will incorporate the analysis and discussion of nine required foundational documents to help understand the context and beliefs of the founders and their critics and the debates surrounding the writing and ratification of the U.S. Constitution:

- The Declaration of Independence
- The Articles of Confederation
- Federalist #10
- Brutus No. 1
- Federalist No. 51
- The Constitution of the United States
- Federalist No. 70
- Federalist No. 78
- "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

You will also be responsible for related readings, including:

- Excerpts from Locke's Second Treatise of Civil Government to go along with the analysis of the Declaration of Independence
- "Letters from the Federal Farmer to the Republican I" to go along with the analysis of the Articles of Confederation
- Essays from the National Constitution Center's "Matters of Debate" series (Interactive Constitution resource) to go along with the analysis of the Tenth Amendment

Grading Breakdown

All grades will be assessed on a point system. Final Semester grades will be weighted as follows

40% Exams	30% Essays	20% Quizzes	10% Assignments
Unit Exams Multiple Choice	AP Gov FRQs	A variety of assessments will be used but not limited to multiple choice, short answer, matching to name a few.	Participation in Discussions In-Class Activities Document and Cases reading and annotation

** any assessment that is timed on the AP Exam will be timed in class!**

Grading Scale

It is not my policy to "round up" - questions? - see me!

90% - 100% = A

80% - 89% = B

70% - 79% = C

60% - 69% = D

0% - 59% = F

Students who do not show up for the scheduled exam as well as the scheduled make up exam will receive zero points

Extra Credit

There are NO extra credit assignments in this course. Bonus Points are available at various times throughout the semester.

Late Work Policy

One day late-eligible for 100%

Two days late -eligible for 50%

Three days late or more – 0%

All work is to be turned into the basket or email if directed.

Academic Integrity

The MPHS Student Handbook provides definitions of what is expected of your work. If you are found to be in violation of this policy, then corrective steps will be taken.

Honor

The students of Mr. Waddell are setting the standard for those who follow: We will not pass off another's work as our own, We will respect one another and our campus, We will take responsibility for our actions and accept the consequences. In short, we will act with personal integrity because we choose to live a life of honor and success.

Academic Achievement

Every student wants to do well and it is expected that each student will achieve at and beyond their ability. There may come a point during the semester that the student is not meeting their expectations or those of the class. When that occasion arises, the student needs to be proactive. First, check the class website for information on grades and assignments. Next, contact the instructor and determine the best path for achievement. The instructor is there to help the student with academic achievement. This can take many forms, such as creating and maintaining study groups, meeting before or after school. The next step is to discuss the issues with the guidance department. They may have other achievement tools available to the student.

Behavioral Expectations

- Respect the equipment, possessions, ideas and opinions of the other people in this class
- Respect the time we have – take care of your personal needs/business on your personal time
- Use your electronic devices to enhance your education – not take away from it
- Pick up after yourself and those around you
- MPHS attendance, tardy and dress code policies will be enforced

Some simple advice

If you have a question – ask me. If you are having problems – talk to me. Don't get behind. Come to class prepared!!!!

AP U.S. Government and Politics Essential Questions

Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy

(15 days)

Essential Questions

1. How did the founders of the U.S. Constitution attempt to protect individual liberty, while also promoting public order and safety?
2. How have theory, debate, and compromise influenced the U.S. constitutional system?
3. How does development and interpretation of the Constitution influence policies that impact U.S. citizens?

Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of Government

(22 days)

Essential Questions

1. How do the branches of the national government compete and cooperate in order to govern?
2. To what extent have changes in the powers of each branch affected how responsive and accountable the national government is in the 21st century?

Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

(11 days)

Essential Questions

1. To what extent do the U.S. Constitution and its amendments protect against undue government infringement on essential liberties and from invidious discrimination?
2. How have U.S. Supreme Court rulings defined civil liberties and civil rights?

Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs

(8 days)

Essential Questions

1. How are American political beliefs formed and how do they evolve over time?
2. How do political ideology and core values influence government policy making?

Unit 5: Political Participation

(16 days)

Essential Questions

1. How have changes in technology influenced political communication and behavior?
2. Why do levels of participation and influence in politics vary?
3. How effective are the various methods of political participation in shaping public policies?