

Advanced Placement U.S. Government and Politics: 2011-2012

Mr. Edwards

Course Description

This semester-long, college-level course is designed to deepen your understanding of our structures of government and the processes of the American political system. It will be challenging, requiring that you put forth your best effort on a DAILY basis. Throughout, there will be ample opportunities for you to demonstrate that you are a competent learner, effective communicator, culturally aware individual and an involved citizen.

Course Objectives and Goals

As prescribed by the Advanced Placement College Board, students successfully completing this course will:

- know important laws, concepts and theories pertaining to U.S. government and politics.
- understand typical political processes and behavior and their consequences (including the components of political behavior, the principles used to explain or justify various government structures and procedures, and the political effects of these structures and procedures).
- be able to analyze basic data relevant to U.S. government and politics.

Key Materials

Magleby, David, et al., Government by the People, New Jersey, Prentice Hall Co., 2006.

- Wood, Ethel. Multiple Choice and Free Response Questions in Preparation for the AP U.S. Government and Politics Examination., New York: D&S Marketing Systems, 2005.

Sparknotes AP Power-Pack- U.S. Government and Politics., New York: Spark Publishing, 2006 (or newer).

Course of Study (Including connections to the main materials and the timeframe)

- I. **Constitutional Underpinnings** (Chapters 1-3, *Federalist 51*), 2 weeks, 5-15%
 - A. Theories of democratic government
 - B. Separation of powers
 - C. Considerations that influenced the formation and adoption of the Constitution

- D. Federalism
- II. **Political Beliefs/Political Behaviors** (Chapters 4,7,9,10), 2-3 weeks, 10-20%
 - A. Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and their leaders
 - B. Processes by which citizens learn politics
 - C. The nature, sources and consequences of political opinion
 - D. The ways in which citizens vote and otherwise participate in political life
 - E. Factors that influence citizens to differ in terms of political beliefs and behaviors
- III. **Interest Groups, Parties and Media** (Chapters 9,11 and 12, *Federalist 10*), 2-3 weeks, 10-20%
 - A. Political parties and elections: functions, organizations, development, effects on political processes, and electoral laws and systems
 - B. Interest groups: range of interests that are or are not represented, the activities of interest groups, effects of interest groups on the political process, characteristics and roles of PACs
 - C. The mass media: functions and structures, impact on politics
- IV. **Institutions: the Congress, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, the Federal Courts** (Chapters 13-16, *Federalist 78*), 7 weeks, 35-45%
 - A. Major formal and informal institutional arrangements of powers
 - B. Relationships among the institutions
 - C. Links between these and parties, groups, media, sub-national governments, and public opinion.
- V. **Public Policy** (Chapters 17-21), 1-2 weeks, 5-15%
 - A. Policy making in a federal system
 - B. Formation of policy agendas
 - C. Role of institutions in policy enactment
 - D. Role of bureaucracy and courts in policy implementation and interpretation
 - E. Linkages between policy processes and: political institutions and federalism, political parties, interest groups, public opinion, elections, and policy enactment
 - F. **Public policy making in the following areas: Foreign and Defense Policy, Health Care Policy, Economic Policy, Environmental Policy, and Social Welfare Policy, including, for each, the background, major players, key policy initiatives, and current policy issues.**
- VI. **Civil Liberties/Civil Rights** (Chapters 4-6), 2 weeks, 5-15%
 - A. Development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation
 - B. Substantive rights and liberties
 - C. Impact of the 14th Amendment on rights and liberties.

REMEMBER: Keep all your materials in a binder. Separate your notes, readings, charts graphs and cartoons for these units by tab dividers so that you will be organized to prepare for the AP test.

ANAYYZING and INTERPRETING GRAPHS, MAPS, CHARTS, and POLITICAL CARTOONS

One key to deepening your understanding of U.S. government and politics, is sharpening your ability to thoughtfully analyze and explain related visual stimuli. With that in mind, each day will begin with a student led analysis/discussion of a graph, map, chart, or cartoon related to our current area of study. All students will be responsible for presenting several of these over the course of a semester. Guides will be given and suggested approaches will be modeled.

CURRENT EVENTS: A CRITICAL PIECE

In addition to your regular coursework, keep up with current events and incorporate them into class discussions. **Be deliberate** about making connections between the theoretical concepts in this course and current U.S. government and politics events. By doing so, it's much more likely that you'll retain the material and perform better on free-response questions (both on unit tests and the AP exam). I strongly suggest that you get in a daily routine of following the news. Some suggested approaches:

- Read national news stories in the L.A. Times. Include letters to the editor and “op-ed” pieces.
- Listen to National Public Radio (NPR) : (KPCC 89.3 FM or KCRW 89.9 FM)
- Watch news-oriented programs like Meet the Press, Face the Nation, and...
- Watch a national network news broadcast.
- Read a weekly news magazine- Time, U.S. News and World Report, Newsweek...
- Check the following website each day: realclearpolitics.com (links to a variety of articles and perspectives)

Immaculate Heart HS Benchmarks & Performance Standards

Students completing the AP U.S. Government and Politics course will:

- Explain the political origins and evolution of the fundamental principles and values of American liberal democracy. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12)
- Evaluate and take positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured. (Standards: 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12)
- Analyze the roles and responsibilities of the three branches of the national government and how conflicts between the branches are resolved. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12)
- Describe and evaluate the expansion of federal civil rights legislation and federal protection of civil liberties. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12)
- Describe and evaluate the major political groups and the impact they have on American political culture and behavior. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10)
- Analyze the ways in which citizens interact with and participate in government and its related political groups. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10)
- Describe and evaluate the expansion of federal civil rights legislation and federal protection of civil liberties. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12)
- Describe and evaluate the major political groups and the impact they have on American political culture and behavior. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10)
- Analyze the ways in which citizens interact with and participate in government and its related political groups. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10)
- Identify and describe current political, social, and economic issues facing American society. (Standards: 1, 2, 5, 8)
- Identify and evaluate the means by which public policy is created at the national level. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 8, 12)
- Identify and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a federal system of government. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 12)
- Improve ability to analyze and synthesize visual stimuli, especially graphs, tables and political cartoons. (Standards: 1, 8)
- Identify and utilize ways in which technology enables citizens to be better informed about the political process. (Standards: 5, 8)
- Improve oral communication ability through asking and answering analytic questions, participating in thoughtful discussion and giving informal presentations. (Standards: 2, 5)

- Improve test-taking ability in preparation for standardized testing and introductory college classes. (Standard: 1)

Attendance

Regular attendance is absolutely essential in this class. I will enforce the school attendance.

Homework

Expect nightly assignments, often reading assignments. Take these seriously! Lectures and discussions will be directly related to the homework, as will the quizzes and tests.

Building a strong vocabulary in the areas of government and politics is critical to your success in this course. To that end, you will engage in a variety of vocabulary building activities

Grading

Your semester grade will be based on the following factors:

- 1) Homework related quizzes.
- 2) 6 unit tests which will include multiple choice questions (50%) and free response questions (50%).
- 3) Vocabulary assignments, class presentations, reading analysis, graph and cartoon analysis, and other assignments as they arise.
- 4) A cumulative final exam.

Some Final Thoughts

We are all born with the unalienable rights of life, liberty and property. The extent to which these rights are honored is directly related to the government we live under. For that reason, more than any other, I find that studying government and politics is compelling and personal. I feel fortunate to be exploring these topics with you and I'm excited to be involved as you develop and share your thinking in these areas. With that in mind, I wish you (and myself!) a great semester!

