

ADVANCED PLACEMENT AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE

This course is designed to provide an in-depth look at the American Political System. Students are encouraged to participate in discussion and debate as we interpret and analyze the founding documents, political culture and ideology, the role of the media, national institutions, the policy-making process, and many other interesting and relevant topics. The main thrust of the course, however, is to be able to apply an understanding of our political system to historical and contemporary events. Students will conclude this course with the Advanced Placement Exam in this subject.

GOALS OF THE COURSE

1. To provide a framework for understanding the purposes, principles, and practices of American government and law as established by the Constitution of the United States.
2. To help students understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens and how to exercise these rights and responsibilities in local, state, and national government.
3. To provide a forum for informed political debate and discussion.
4. Allow students to utilize critical thinking skills while analyzing primary source documents, news, and electronic media.
5. Students will gain essential knowledge and skills that will help prepare them for the Advanced Placement exam.

GRADING

Homework/Reading Quizzes/Data Analysis 20%

Tests (AP style multiple choice and open response from released exams) 40%

Projects/Major Papers 20%

Quizzes/Graph Analysis 20%

THEME QUESTIONS FOR A. P. AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

1. What are the foundations of Government in the United States? (USG 2.1)*
 - Enlightenment influences
 - Colonial/Revolutionary Experience
 - Declaration of Independence
 - United States Constitution

2. What are the purposes, principles, and institutions of government in the United States? (USG 3.3)

- Federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances
- Representative democracy
- Executive, legislative, and judicial branches
- Legislative process, judicial review, executive powers
- Individual rights under the law

* *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework, August 2003*

3. What is the role of citizens in the United States? (USG 5.2)

- Responsibilities of citizens
- Voting, volunteering, jury duty
- Monitoring through interest groups
- Taking an active role in public policy
- Understanding rights and responsibilities under the law

A.P. AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS UNITS OF STUDY

- Constitutional Underpinnings of the United States Government
- Political beliefs and behaviors of individuals
- Political parties, interest groups, and mass media
- Elections and Campaigns
- Institutions of National Government:
- Public policy, civil rights and liberties

TEXTS AND OTHER SOURCES

American Government and Politics Today Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes. Wadsworth Publishing, 2003-2004 Edition

American Polity, Third Edition Edited by Ann G. Serow and Everett C. Ladd

We The Students: Supreme Court Cases for and about Students, Jamin B. Raskin, CQ Press

Spin Cycle, Howard Kurtz

Hardball Chris Matthews (Summer Assignment)

Fight Club Politics Juliet Elperin (Summer Assignment)

In addition to these texts, supplemental readings and primary sources are given to students as handouts. These sources include written documents, charts and graphs,

photographs, and political cartoons. Also, numerous internet resources, readings and assignments can be accessed through the class web page, as well as links to a variety of news and government sites with resources and information.

ASSESSMENTS AND EVALUATION

Tests and Quizzes	Term Papers
Video Presentations	Class Discussion
Chart/Document Analysis	Self-Assessment
Peer Assessment	Document Analysis
Debates	A.P. Test Prep/Grading w/ Rubrics
Journals	Homework
Attendance	MidYear and Final Exams
Presentations	Open Response Essays

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Teacher Directed Questioning	Lecture
Student Simulations	Research and Writing
Discussion	Library Skills
Photo/Cartoon Analysis	Graph Interpretation
Student Presentations	Cooperative Learning
Media Analysis	Field Work
Guest Presenters	Field Trips
Computer Learning	

UNIT OF STUDY: CONSTITUTIONAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

ESSENTIAL GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What contribution did the enlightenment make to the formation of our Constitution?
- What impact did the Colonial experience have on the writing of the Constitution?
- What early English/Colonial efforts contributed to the Constitution?

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will explain the impact of European political thought through the writings of Locke, Montesquieu, Hobbs, Rousseau, and Voltaire. (USG 2.3)
2. Students will identify the reasons why the colonists favored a limited federal government. (USG 1.7)

3. Students will explain the significance of the Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, Mayflower Compact, and the Massachusetts State Constitution on the U.S. Constitution. (USG 1.9)

RESOURCES

Reading Response Journals *Schmidt* 6-16, 33-41, 42-58

Why Government? Lesson

Locke / Jefferson Plagiarism lesson

Locke's Second Treatise of Government

The Declaration of Independence

Federalist Papers #10 and #51

Massachusetts State Constitution

UNIT OF STUDY: POLITICAL BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS OF INDIVIDUALS

ESSENTIAL GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What factors influence Public Opinion?
- What factors influence one's political ideology?
- What trends have influenced voter participation in recent years?

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Students will understand the role of the family, religion, the gender gap, education, occupation, race, and region in determining public opinion on political issues. (USG 5.5)
2. Students will approximate their own political ideology through a series of ideology tests discovering whether they tend to lean toward liberal, conservative, populist, or libertarian views. (USG 5.5)
3. Students will understand the factors which have led to a decline in voter participation in recent years (Generational replacement, attack ads, voter apathy, length of campaigns etc.) (USG 5.8)

RESOURCES

Reading Response Journals *Schmidt* 205-214, 214-223

Serow The Ladd Report 26-39 excerpt Race Matters by Cornel West 39-46

Readings on Pluralism and The Power Elite

U.S. Citizenship Test

Political Ideology Handbook Project

World's Smallest Political Quiz and other online ideology tests

Public Opinion and Ideology Chart

Questions from the National Council on Public Polls

UNIT OF STUDY: POLITICAL PARTIES, INTEREST GROUPS AND MEDIA

ESSENTIAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What has been the role of political parties in America and how have they influenced the political process?
- How has the role of interest groups in Washington D.C. changed the political process in the last 50 years?
- What role does the media play in influencing the outcome of elections?

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will identify ways in which political parties have adapted to the changes in the social, political, and cultural landscape. (USG 5.4)
2. Students will identify the causes in the rise of “issue specific” parties. (USG 3.7)
3. Students will understand the influence of lobbyists and PACS as well as other interest groups on the political process at both the federal and state level. (USG 5.3)
4. Students will learn to examine all forms of media as critical, informed consumers. (USG 3.13)
5. Students will identify ways in which the media (particularly television) has influenced the outcome of some elections (Kennedy/Nixon debates) (USG 3.13)

RESOURCES

Reading Response Journals *Schmidt* 333-341, 342-351
Serow The Party's Over 590-595
Political Parties Project
Types of Parties (Worksheet)
Political Landscape Map/Graphs
Interest Group Study and Influence Activity
Film “Wag the Dog”
Book “Spin Cycle”
Video “Seeing is Believing” Media responsibility
Media Ethics lesson
Kennedy-Nixon Video vs. Radio tapes

UNIT OF STUDY: ELECTIONS AND CAMPAIGNS

ESSENTIAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

- To what extent does money and interest groups including PACs and 527's influence the election process?
- What role has elections played in party realignment throughout 19th and 20th century?
- What efforts can be made to control the influence of money in elections?

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will explain the difference between hard money and soft money donations. (USG 5.3)
2. Students will analyze the elections of 1800, 1828, 1860, 1896, and 1932 to show the effects of party realignment. (USG 3.7, USG 5.4)
3. Students will cite examples of attempts to control campaign financing (Buckley v. Valeo, Campaign Finance Reform Act 2002). (USG 5.3)

RESOURCES

Reading Response Journals *Schmidt* Chapter 10
Serow The Constitution and Campaign Reform 530-540
Campaign Finance Board Games (Project)
Opensecrets.org
The Bottom Line an where it came from, *Center for Responsive Politics* (Handout)
Film Clips "Primary Colors"
Video Documentary "Taking on the Kennedys"
Election/Campaign Role play
War Room Project
Election Term Paper

UNIT OF STUDY: INSTITUTIONS OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

ESSENTIAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the purposes, organization, and functions of the institutions of the national government?
- What is the role of both the national and state governments in the federal system?
- What is the place of law in the American constitutional system?

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students should be able to describe the purpose, organization, and functions of the three branches of the federal government (legislative, executive, and judicial). (USG 3.3)
2. Students should describe the limits of powers (Federal vs. State) as well as protections that the States have from the federal government (i.e. 10th Amendment). (USG 3.3)
3. Students should give examples of how the rule of law protects the basic rights of citizens (life, liberty, property), and how it establishes limits on both those who govern and the governed. (USG 1.5)

RESOURCES

Reading Response Journals *Schmidt* 393-404, 406-414, 357-369, 370-385, 451-475
Serow Federalist 78, The Congressional experience 203-211
Online Congressional Committee assignment
Who's Who in Congress (handout)
Write a letter to your Rep. or Senator (assignment)
CSPAN Presidential Leadership survey
JFK inaugural address
Presidential Crisis Leadership Project
Film clips "13 Days" "Nixon" "Truman" Presidential Leadership Paper
Text: We the Students: Supreme Court cases for and about students
Landmark Supreme Court Cases (RESEARCH PROJECT)
Supreme Court Justices (handout)

UNIT OF STUDY: PUBLIC POLICY, CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

ESSENTIAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the theories surrounding the art of public policy making?
- What considerations must be made before purposing a public policy agenda?
- What issues have dominated the public policy agenda in the 20th century?
- What important Supreme Court decisions have been made in the 20th century in regard to civil rights and liberties?

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will identify and explain majoritarian politics, interest-group politics, Client politics, and Entrepreneurial politics as the major public policy theories. (USG 5.9)
2. Students will learn how to weigh costs vs. benefits in a public policy initiative. (USG 5.9)

3. Students will understand the legal, social, and political evolution following the Supreme Court's decision regarding racial segregation. (USG 2.10)

4. Students will be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Supreme Court decisions as tools of social change. (USG 5.7)

RESOURCES

Reading Response Journals, *Schmidt* 109-125, 147-161, 485-505, 515-526

Serow Jihad vs. McWorld 709-717

USA Patriot Act

Film Clips "Eyes on the Prize"

Public Policy Initiative and Presentation (major project)

Documents on Japanese Internment

Woman's Rights / suffrage testimony

Brown v. Board of Education