

Advanced Placement (AP) United States Government and Politics

Course Syllabus
2016-2017 School Year

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The Course:

The Advanced Placement (AP) United States Government and Politics Course will give students an analytical perspective on government and politics in the United States. This course will include both the study of general concepts used to interpret U.S. government and politics and the analysis of specific examples. It also requires familiarity with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that constitute U.S. government and politics. Students will become acquainted with the variety of theoretical perspectives and explanations for various behaviors and outcomes. The aim of this AP course is to provide the student with a learning experience equivalent to that obtained in most college introductory U.S. Government and Politics Course. This course will be representative of a typical college course and will be both reading and writing intensive. While the workload will be challenging, this course has not been designed to be so intensive that it consumes all the time of the average AP student. The course will be a mixture of traditional lecture, notes, and readings, as well as debates, Project Based Learning (PBL) activities, and a number of research and written assignments. To extend class time outside of the classroom, students will also participate in several on-line discussion posts via Schoology. The use of technology will be encouraged and used throughout the course. Students will be provided several opportunities to practice analyzing and interpreting data from examples in the Wilson text, various web-sites (polls, census, etc.), as well as conducting their own surveys to practice interpreting and analyzing the collected data. Students will be required to complete two practice Free Response Questions for each of the six units. Additional assessments will be in the form of quizzes, unit tests, and midterm/final exams to assist students in preparing and successfully passing the AP Exam, which is a requirement to earn college credit for this course. All quizzes will be 30-multiple choice questions and include one Free Response Question. There will be six Unit Exams that will include 60-Multiple choice questions and two Free Response Questions. The Mid-term and Final Exams will be composed of 60-multiple choice questions and four Free Response Questions (these exams will be timed in accordance with the standards of the regular AP Exam). The AP United States Government and Politics Exam is 2 hours and 25 minutes long. It includes a 45-minute multiple-choice section consisting of 60 questions and a 100-minute free-response section consisting of 4 questions. Details of the location and time of the AP Exam will be provided at a date later in this course.

Textbooks:

Wilson, James Q. & Dilulio, John, J. Jr. *American Government* (11th Edition). Houghton Mifflin Company. New York: 2008.

Lasser, William. *Perspectives on American Politics* (4th Edition). Houghton Mifflin Company. New York: 2004.

Grover, William F. & Peschek, Joseph, G. *Voices of Dissent –Critical Readings in America Politics*. (5th Edition). Pearson Longma. New York: 2003.

Goals: Students successfully completing this course will:

1. Know important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to U.S. government and politics.
2. Understand typical patterns of 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)
3. Be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to U.S. government and politics (including data presented in charts, tables, and other formats.
4. Be able to critically analyze relevant theories and concepts, apply them appropriately, and develop their connections across the curriculum

Course Outline:

Unit 1: The United States Constitution (14-days)

- a. Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution.
- b. Separation of powers
- c. Checks and balances
- d. Federalism
- e. Theories of Democratic government

Readings:

Wilson Textbook, Chapters 1-3

Declaration of Independence - Appendix 1-3

Declaration of Independence - Appendix 1-3

Federalist No. 10 and No. 51 – Appendix 21-29

U.S. Constitution - Appendix 4-20

Lasser Textbook, Chapter 1

Current Events:

Opening Activity of class each day will include a short class discussion of current events, using newspaper articles, Internet resources, and media.

Data Analyzing and Interpretation:

Wilson Text, Table 3.1 - page 63

Wilson Text, Figure 3.2 – page 64

Develop surveys and analyze and interpret the data.

Unit 1 Project:

Students will be placed in small groups where they will develop surveys that will evaluate what the average 9th grade student knows about the U.S. Constitution. Two 9th grade Civics classes will compete the surveys, and AP students will analyze and interpret the data and report deficiencies and recommend a strategy or action plan to ensure 9th grade students become proficient in their knowledge of the Constitution. Prior to the end of the semester, the AP students will survey the same classes to evaluate if the students become more proficient in their knowledge of the Constitution after successfully completing the 9th grade Civics course. Students' will be presenting and explaining their findings in class.

Unit 2: Political Beliefs and Behavior (14-days)

- a. Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders
- b. Processes by which citizens learn about politics
- c. The nature, sources, and consequences of public opinion
- d. The ways in which citizens vote and other wise participate in political life
- e. Factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors

Readings:

Wilson Textbook, Chapters 4, 7, 8

Lasser Textbook, Chapters 5

Grover Text, pages 75-81 – *Goodbye to Patriotism* by Robert Jensen

Data Analyzing and Interpretation:

Class notes and lectures will include a number of charts and graphs in regard to voting trends and public opinion.

Wilson text, Figure 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3

Wilson text, Table 7.1, 7.2, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5

Current Events:

Each student will be assigned a date to report current events and lead a class discussion in regard to what is going on in the nation both politically and internationally.

Unit 2 Project:

The small group's mission is to create a new political ideology with the goal of providing a solution to many of the issues that are currently present in the American political culture. The goal is to enlist as many people as possible to join your new political movement to create positive change in American. This project will require students to gather information and analyze it, develop their own political ideology, and then present it and persuade others to join their movement.

Unit 3: Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media (15-days)

- a. Political parties and elections
 1. Functions
 2. Organization
 3. Development
 4. Effects on the political process
 5. Electoral laws and systems
- b. Interest Groups, including Political Action Committees (PACs)
 1. The range of interests represented
 2. The activities of interest groups
 3. The effects of interest groups on the political process
 4. The unique characteristics and roles of PACs in the political process
- c. The mass media
 1. The functions and structures of the news media
 2. The impacts of the news media on politics
 3. The news media industry and its consequences

Readings:

Wilson Textbook, Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12
Lasser Textbook, Chapters 6, 7, 8

Unit 3: Project: MCL – Project Based - Students will work in small groups and organize and implement a school-wide Presidential Election.

Unit 4: Institutions of National Government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial (20-days)

- a. The major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power
- b. Relationships among these four institutions and varying balances of power
- c. Linkages between institutions and the following:
 1. Public opinion and voters
 2. Interest groups
 3. Political parties
 4. The media
 5. State and local governments

Readings:

Wilson Textbook, Chapters 13, 14, 15, 16,
Lasser Textbook, Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12

Unit 4: Project: Students will work in small groups where they will analyze national strategy and problem solve ways to deal various government issues. Field trip to the Defense Logistics Agency –Distribution Center in New Cumberland, PQ.

Unit 5: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (14-days)

- a. The development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation
- b. Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
- c. The impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the Constitutional development of rights and liberties

Readings:

Wilson Textbook, Chapters 5, 6
Lasser Textbook, Chapters 3, 4

Unit 5: Issue Centered Paper – 6-8 pages in length

Unit 5: Project – MCL – Project Based

Unit 6: Public Policy (14-days)

- a. Policymaking in a federal system
- b. The formation of policy agendas
- c. The role of institutions in the enactment of policy
- d. The role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation
- e. Linkages between policy processes and the following:
 1. Political institutions and federalism
 2. Political parties
 3. Interest groups

4. Public opinion
5. Elections
6. Policy networks

Readings:

Wilson Textbook, Chapters 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
Lasser Textbook, Chapter 13

Unit 6: Project: MCL – Project Based

Grading System:

The grading system is based on a point system. Grades will be determined by the percentage of total points earned by each student during a making period. The following grading scale will be used to determine your grade:

90-100%	4
80- 89%	3
70- 79%	2
65- 69%	1
0- 64%	0

Assignments:

Students are expected to come to class prepared each day. All assignments are expected to be turned in on time, unless prior arrangements have been made with me. For each day an assignment is late, a student will lose 3-points from their grade on that assignment. If a student is absent from school, they are expected to check my website on the district web page to view the assignments missed for the day.

Extra Study Sessions:

Every Wednesday afternoon (between 2:50--5:30 p.m.), I will be available in Room 503 to assist students with any questions or additional help with any classroom assignments. If a student makes prior arrangements with me, I will make myself available for afterschool study sessions on any other day of the week.

I look forward to working with each and every one of you this semester. If you have any special needs, please do not hesitate to ask for my assistance.

Karen A. Hudson