

AP United States Government and Politics

Syllabus

Mr. Lipman

zlipman@pleasantonusd.net

Webpage: <https://sites.google.com/a/pleasantonusd.net/lipmanapush/>

Course Description

This course has been redesigned to meet the new curricular requirements including 14 must know Supreme Courts Cases, 9 Foundational documents and more extensive research and presentations than in past years. This entire course is intended to help students' prepare for the AP Government and Politics Exam in May. This course is equivalent to an introductory one-semester college course in American government. Students will be expected to take the AP exam in May. The course also follows each unit Content Outline and focuses on reinforcing the Big Ideas and Enduring Understandings within each unit. Students will be provided with the Content Outline at the beginning of every unit of study in preparation for the classroom expectations, as well as the AP Exam in May.

Major Course Objectives. Students will be able to demonstrate:

- A) Understanding of the Foundations of American Democracy including the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation and the US Constitution.
- B) Increased skills of analysis, synthesis, and communication in writing and in oral communication in preparation for the essay section of the AP Exam.
- C) Understanding the Interactions among the Branches of Government, including the Executive, Legislative, Judicial and the bureaucracy.
- D) Familiarity with the complexities of the US Constitution and development of federalism.
- E) Understanding of the issues and solutions provided by the government actions, laws and decisions to Civil Liberties and Civil Rights.
- F) Knowledge of the role of political beliefs and culture, political parties, media and interest groups in the public policy process.
- G) Understanding of the court system and evolution of public policy concerning civil liberties and civil rights
- H) Understanding of American Political Ideologies and Beliefs.

Methodology

I will be using challenging assignments involving student readings, analysis, synthesis, writing and presenting all of which will give the students the opportunity to develop along the lines of the course objectives. Lectures will be used in order to develop the course curriculum and make clear any themes or objectives. Group discussions and presentations as well Socratic discussions based on primary and secondary readings will be used in class.

Class simulations, debates and videos will be used in order to enrich and expand the student's knowledge of US government and politics. Student's will present and debate multiple court cases and even simulate the arguments before a group of students acting as Supreme Court Justices in class.

Homework, exams, quizzes, essays and current events:

- Usually reading every night- an average of 8-10 pages in the text. Even though it is not essential to bring the textbook to class everyday, the book is a good source for classroom discussions which is 10% of the student's grade.

- Unannounced quick writes, multiple choices timed quizzes on reading homework, lecture and homework assignments.
- Students will be writing on a weekly basis to help develop the writing techniques for the SCOTUS comparison essay, argumentative essay, quantitative analysis and the Concept Application essay.
- Exams: There will be an exam at the end of each unit. Each exam will consist of multiple-choice and one of the four styles of essay questions. Exams will cover material from the textbook, homework, and class discussion.
- Knowledge of contemporary political events is essential for the analytical focus that must be exhibited in essays. It is highly recommended that students expose themselves to as many the following sources as possible: major newspaper (i.e., *Washington Post National Weekly*, *New York Times* and *Christian Science Monitor*); major news magazines; television news programs (i.e. “ News Hour with Jim Lehrer,” “Nightline,” even the Daily Show) C-SPAN; major network evening news programs; and public radio-NPR
- There is a NO LATE policy. Remember this is a college course! Any work not turned in at the start of class will be considered late and not accepted.

Reading material include:

Text - Karen Waples and Scott Abernathy, *American Government: Stories of a Nation*, W.H. Freeman and Company, 2019.

(Optional) Test Preparation books are strongly recommended: i.e. AMSCO – Advanced Placement: United States Government and Politics by David Wolfford

Grading Policy

This course grade will be determined by total point performance achieved by the student on class projects, tests, quizzes, handouts, oral participation, debates, essays, etc. The percentage for determining a student’s grade are as follows: A=90–100%, B=89-80%, c=79-70%, D=69%-60%.

A **rough estimation** of grade distribution is as follows:

Class participation/classwork/projects.....	10%
Homework.....	20%
Exams/Quizzes.....	55%
Final exam.....	15%

- All essays written in class will be scored according to the College Board’s general rubric (when it applies) as well as a score that will count for their class grade.
- Class participation/citizen grade is determined by participation in class, attendance, and being prepared.
- **Each Unit has ESSENTIAL questions. The students need to be prepared for discussion daily on these for their participation grade.**

GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

******My website will have the dates for each unit test. The order of the class will be Unit 4, 5, 1, 2, 3. This is done to save some of the most important units near the 2nd half of the semester! These units are based on the course outline provided by the College Board.**

Unit 4: POLITICAL BELIEFS & BEHAVIORS

- A. Beliefs and behaviors of individuals
- 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 otherwise participate in political life
- E. Factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors

READINGS:

Text Readings: Chapter 10, 11, 12
AP USGoPo Review Book Ch. 10, 11

Lecture/Intro to Political Culture

- Compare liberals and conservatives of the 18th and 20th Centuries
 - What roles schools play in socialization of American culture/values
 - Importance of Polling; Accuracy (Analytical studies of polling data, elections results, exit polling, etc.)
 - Analyze protections, barriers, demographics, and other key factors to political participation
 - Impact of political parties, interest groups and social movements on political participation
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- Discussion Questions based on all readings
 - Students will practice looking at quantitative data on political efficacy, public opinion, polling data, and election results, each day in preparation for the Quantitative Analysis essay at the end of the unit. (Students will be presented with a chart, and will be given 7 minutes to 1. list 2 key trends from the data, 2. Explain one major implication or cause of one of the trends. And 3. How does this data relate to the functions of political beliefs, political participation or an institution of the government?)
 - Pew Research Center – will be used for graphs, charts, pies, etc.
 - <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/07/house-republicans-who-lost-re-election-bids-were-more-moderate-than-those-who-won/>
 - Students will go to this site and read the article, summarize it, first.
 - Students will look at the charts, and make 1-2 major trends of the chart.
 - Students will explain what major effect this will have on the political process.
 - Finally the student will explain the major cause of this data change(s).
 - Political Spectrum class activity (students take online survey to find their political beliefs (politicalcompass.com))
 - Political Ideology survey assignment/extra credit if members of family participate)
 - Discussion on Reader Article (One nation, Out of Many) –immigration.
 - Public Policy Handout: Explain What the position of liberals/conservatives is on certain issues and why they feel that way, i.e Iraqi War, abortion, affirmative action, Budget and taxes
 - Media influence on political culture (Culture War) and political participation
 - Essay on Political Ideology results: Analysis paper due beginning of seventh week

- Polling Methods and Questions by the Youth Leadership Initiative
- Federal policies on attempting to limit the influence of money in politics, intro to Citizens United
- Students also fill-in and highlight the Unit Content Outline as a study guide, which I check and use for quizzes.

Exam

- Test(25 Multiple Choice and one Free Response Essay) (Quantitative Analysis essay)

Unit 5: POLITICAL PARTIES, INTEREST GROUPS AND MASS MEDIA

- A. Political parties and elections(including their functions, organization, historical development, and effects on the political process)
- B. Interest Groups(including PAC's and their influence on elections and political system)
 - a. The range of interests that are or are not represented
 - b. The activities of interest groups
 - c. The effects of interest groups on the political process
 - i. Analyze the ruling of Citizens United case
- C. The mass media, including the functions and structures of the media and the impact of the media on politics

READINGS:

Text Readings: Chapter 13, 14, 15, 16

AP USGoPo Review Book Ch. 12-16

- Lectures/ Intro to Political Parties: Congress/Presidency
 - National elections(types, purpose, rules of the game, plurality system)
 - Presidential campaign and running a campaign,
 - Campaign Process and campaign finance
 - Media's role
 - Interest groups(PACs)

Activities:

- Discussion questions based on all readings and Essential Questions
- Group work on Elections(congressional law on election reform, US voting system)
- Political Party project: Students choose; include policy platform, leaders, previous candidate Analyze voting trends using “Looking at 2004 vote”
- Analyze of *Buckley v Valeo* (facts, constitutional question, holding and arguments)
- Lesson 21: PACs: Out of Control; Group work analyze data and write short in class essay for or against additional regulation of PACS and what they believe should be done about the impact of PACs on the election process
- In Preparations for this class debate – Students debate DBQ – Is a Hot Dog a Sandwich- one day before –
 - Class Debate on PACs. Are PACs out of Control? (each side argues the good and bad)
- Is the Media biased? Looking for political bias in newspaper/online articles, Red feed, Blue feed article- students do a write-up before discussion and after in class discussion.
- Students react and argue Citizens United case – presented by the teacher, but students read the arguments for each side leading to a decision.
- Students also fill-in and highlight the Unit Content Outline as a study guide, which I check and use for quizzes.

Quiz/Exam: one quiz midweek on Elections and Voting
Test (45 multiple choice and one Free Response essay) (Argumentative Essay)

UNIT I: CONSTITUTIONAL UNDERPINNINGS OF DEMOCRACY IN THE UNITED STATES

- A. Considerations that influence the formulation and adoption of the Constitution
- B. Separation of Powers
- C. Federalism
- D. Theories of Democratic Government

READINGS

Text Readings: Chapters 1, 2, 3

AP USGoPo Review Book Ch. 1, 2

Lecture: Introductions to American Government & Politics

- Discussion (Essential Questions): overview of politics and systems of government
- European thought and its influence: Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau
- Analyze the Declaration of Independence
- Articles of Confederation: Pro and Con
- Analyze the debate at the Constitutional Convention and debate over the ratification
- Federalist and Anti-Federalists: A comparison (Federalist 10, 51 and Brutus 1)
- Analyze the US Constitution – Articles (Legs execute, judges State, Amending Super Ratification – structure and details of the Articles, including an extensive study of the Bill of Rights and all 27 Amendments)

Activities:

- Debate: The Constitution is a relevant document to be revered and treated with respect.
- Constitutional Questions Handout in preparation for the Power Grab Game
- The Amendment Process Amending the Constitution; Lesson 8(AP Center for Learning)
- Students will be given Supreme Court Summaries, provided by STREET LAW, INC., (which has provided all 15 Key Supreme Court Cases) of US vs. Lopez and McCulloch v. Maryland. Students will summarize the Background, Issues, and rulings. Following this students will be working on creating Venn Diagrams to compare and contrast the rulings of these two cases, focusing on the Supreme Court's use of judicial review and the Federal governments' use of the "elastic clause."
- Foundational Documents (Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation and US Constitution)
 - DoI – Students will analyze the Document as a legal brief and as a break-up letter to look at the two perspectives of this famous document
 - Students will read excerpts of the Articles of Confederation to analyze why that was written into the first constitution and what problems these created for the new government.
 - Students will compete in a Power Grab Game, where the class is broken into three different (branches) groups who listen to an illegal power grab by another branch of the government. Their goal is to find the actual lines of the Constitution that proves this was illegal.
 - Students also write, within smaller groups from the Power Grab Game, Federalism songs, which highlight the powers and checks of each branch of government. Students write and perform the 45 second to 1 minute song in class as review. They provide the music and the

lyrics for students to follow along with. Each branch of government must discuss the Constitutional Check and Balance, as well as include within their song, a current example from the last few years where this has happened. Current examples of a political institution checking another branch of government or a state government, must be explicitly stated in the song. Students will also be required to include the direct lyrics of the song, along with an explanation with analysis of their lyrics, including, for example, how a Supreme Court ruling would use judicial review.

- Essential Questions
- Students also fill-in and highlight the Unit Content Outline as a study guide, which I check and use for quizzes.

Federalism Unit

- Group work on eras of Federalism: philosophical aspect of each era, major court cases and or important congressional or presidential actions that exemplify these era
- Discussion on Gay Marriage in relation to Federalism (Obergefell case)
- Discussion on Medical Marijuana / Federalism – Analyze federalism and States Rights/Powers with court cases (McCulloch v. Maryland and US vs. Lopez)
- Discussion on Federalist #10 – Students annotate and then take part in a Socratic seminar.
- Group Work on Federalist #51 – students annotate and answer key questions from the AMSCO Review book. Students highlight and make visuals to highlight key ideas of Fed. 51
- Test Review; jeopardy and Kahoot

Quiz/Exam

- Quiz : end of week 2
- Exam 40 Multiple Choice and 1 Free Response Essay (Concept Application Essay)

Unit 2: THE CONGRESS, THE PRESIDENCY, THE BUREAUCRACY, AND THE FEDERAL COURTS: INSTITUTIONS AND POLICY PROCESSES.

- A. The major formal and informal institutional arrangements of powers
- B. Relationships among these four institutions
- C. Links between these institutions and political parties, interest groups, the media, sub-national government, and public opinion

READINGS:

Text Readings: Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7

AP USGoPo Review Book Ch. 3-6

Lecture/Intro on Congress; The evolution and composition of Congress

- Running for office
- Success of incumbents
- Congressional redistricting/reapportionment/Gerrymandering - Analyze gerrymandering (Supreme Court case studies of Baker v. Carr and Shaw v. Reno)
- Power and ethics in Congress

Activities:

- Short Video on “How a bill becomes Law”

- **Congress Project:** Writing one bill for Mock Congress & **Mock Congress** (3 days) includes committee work; debates (floor debate). (CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT)
- How a bill becomes a law(in theory) worksheet
- How a Bill becomes a law(in reality) worksheet
- Lesson “Who is Your Congressman”?
- Difference between the House and the Senate
- Congress Assignment (fill in, multiple choice); Comprehensive review of the 3 branches.
- Students will be given Supreme Court Summaries, provided by STREET LAW, INC., (which has provided all 15 Key Supreme Court Cases) of Baker v. Carr and Shaw v. Reno. Students will summarize the Background, Issues, and rulings. Following this students will be working on creating Venn Diagrams to compare and contrast the rulings of these two cases, focusing on the Supreme Court’s ruling on redistricting, gerrymandering and the Equal Protection clause of the 14th Amendment.
- Political Politics(decisions)
- Test Review(due day of test)
- Students also fill-in and highlight the Unit Content Outline as a study guide, which I check and use for quizzes.

Quizzes/Exams;

- Quiz on Legislative Branch
- Test(40 multiple choice and one Concept Application essay)

Lecture/ Intro Presidency

- Paradox of Presidency; Bush Administration
- Use of Media and White House
- Overview of foreign policy and president
- Analyze Federalist # 70 – and compare and contrast with US v. Nixon and NY Times v. US

Activities:

- Discussion questions based on all the readings
- Essay: Presidential Expansion of powers of the Executive Office through the use of formal and informal powers. Due at beginning of week 10
- Chart of Presidential Powers (Duties, Description of Pres. Powers, current examples)
- “The Power of the Pen”(The not so secret weapon of Congress: the executive order)
- Video: Bush’s foreign policy followed by discussion
- Presidential Jeopardy and Kahoot
- Test Review due the day of Test
- Students also fill-in and highlight the Unit Content Outline as a study guide, which I check and use for quizzes.

Quizzes/Exams:

- 1 presidential quiz 15 questions
- 35 multiple choice and one Free Response essay: The Presidency and Bureaucracy) – Argumentative Essay)

Lecture Into to Bureaucracy

- Overview
- Types and functions

Activities:

- “How does the government affect you?” article and group work
- Bureaucratic Pathology Lesson: Reading and chart, followed by discussion
- Students also fill-in and highlight the Unit Content Outline as a study guide, which I check and use for quizzes.

Quiz/Exams:

- one Bureaucracy quiz(15 multiple choice)
- Test with the Presidency: 25 multiple choice and one concept application essay

Lecture/Intro to Judiciary: The least dangerous branch

- The American legal system
- Supreme Court (nomination, selection, senate approval)
- Understanding the 14th Amendment: Historical time period of its ratification, original SC Interpretation, Slaughterhouse Cases, Selective Incorporation, Incorporation,
- Judicial philosophy and selection: strict v. Loose Interpretation, judicial activism, originalist intent, judicial restraint, equal protection,
- Balancing Federal Governmental powers and individual rights
- Analyze Federalist # 78 – judicial review

Activities:

- Socratic Seminar on Marbury v. Madison and Judicial Review
- Handout: How well do you know the Supreme Court
- Lesson “Who Said This, and Why?: Judicial Activism
- **Acting like the Supreme Court** – How would you decide? – activity in groups, students analyze obscure cases on non Must-Know Supreme Court Cases (New Jersey v. TLO, Skokie Case, Great Zambini, etc.) and write opinions on cases (majority, concurring, dissenting)
- Students also fill-in and highlight the Unit Content Outline as a study guide, which I check and use for quizzes.

Quiz/Exam:

- one quiz(15 multiple choice)
- Test(25 multiple choice and one Free Response essay)

Unit 3: CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CIVIL RIGHTS

A. The development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation, including, for example:

a. First Amendment freedoms

i. Religion

1. Establishment – Engel v. Vitale
2. Exercise – Wisconsin v. Yoder

- b. Freedom of Speech
 - i. Symbolic Speech – Tinker and Johnson v. Texas cases
 - ii. Clear and Present Danger – Schenck case
- c. Right to Privacy – Roe v. Wade
- d. 2nd Amendment – McDonald v. Chicago
- e. The rights of the accused
 - i. Miranda Rights – Miranda and Gideon cases
 - ii. Exclusionary rule – Mapp v. Ohio
 - iii. Search and Seizure - Mapp
- f. Minority rights and women’s rights
 - i. Brown v. Board, Title IX, Busing, Affirmative Action

READINGS:

Text Readings: Chapter 8, 9

AP USGoPo Review Book Ch. 7-9

Activities:

Lecture/ Intro to Civil Liberties

- Historical Overview
 - Discussion on Court Cases (9 Must-Know Supreme Court cases)
 - Analyze Letter from a Birmingham Jail
 - Intro: Civil Rights : Supreme Court's role in protecting minority rights, evolution of civil rights
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- Discussion Questions based on all readings and Essential Questions
 - Students will be given Supreme Court Summaries, provided by STREET LAW, INC., (which has provided all 15 Key Supreme Court Cases) of Engel v. Vitale and Wisconsin v. Yoder. Students will summarize the Background, Issues, and rulings. Following this students will be working on creating Venn Diagrams to compare and contrast the rulings of these two cases, focusing on the 1st Amendment religious protection issues of “freedom of expression”. Other students will also be comparing each of these cases with non-required cases, like Prince v. Massachusetts or McCollum v. Board of Education.
 - Court cases: facts, constitutional questions/issues/holding/impact (Street Law Supreme Court case summaries, for study and presentations by groups, comparing to other similar cases)
 - Students will use STREET LAW, summary cases of the following cases to analyze the significance of the rulings, but are also required to compare and contrast the Key Supreme Court Case with at least 2 other non-required cases, and explain how the Key Supreme Court Case changed/added or reversed the previous rulings of the Supreme Court.
 - Example: Required case = Shenck v. US, Compare/contrast with Debs. Vs. US and Abrams vs. US
 - Example: Required case = Tinker v. Des Moines, compare/contrast with West Virginia Board of Educ. V. Barnette
 - First Amendment presentation; Students divided up into 4 groups each with important/landmark court cases. Presentations to class with Prezi or power point.
 - 14th Amendment : Due Process of Law: The Exclusionary Rule Lesson 38(Center for Learning)
 - Substantive vs. Procedural due process and Mapp v. Ohio
 - Students also fill-in and highlight the Unit Content Outline as a study guide, which I check and use for quizzes.

Quiz/Exam

- Midweek Quiz
- Test (45 Multiple Choice and one Free Response essay) (SCOTUS Comparison essay)

Week Fifteen

Review for AP US Government and Politics Exam and in class final Exam

Final Exam (15 percent of final course grade)

- 100 Multiple choice and true-false, two free response question) (SCOTUS Comparison and Quantitative Analysis Essays)

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

Timing: One hour and 20 minutes

Percentage of Total Exam: 50% 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

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.

Course Content and Big Ideas

The course content consists of the essential political knowledge that will be synthesized in the construction of enduring understandings and big ideas about American government and politics.

The big ideas that connect the content in the course units include:

- Constitutionalism (CON)
- Liberty and Order (LOR)
- Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD)

- Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI)
- Methods of Political Analysis (MPA)

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

Required Supreme Court Cases [CR15: 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)

Required Foundational Documents [CR10: 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 No. 10
- Brutus No. 1
- Federalist No. 51
- The Constitution of the United States
- Federalist No. 70
- Federalist No. 78
- “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

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. To aid in the analysis of these foundational documents, students will also have access to the

AP United States Government and Politics reading skills workbook. This online reader contains strategies for analyzing the required foundational documents and a sampling of 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