AP United States Government and Politics

Course Description
Advanced Placement U.S. Government and Politics is a college level course designed to give the student an analytical perspective of government and politics in America. Course content will begin with foundations of United States Government, progress into an analysis of political beliefs and why Americans behave as they do and the impact of the media. This course includes an intensive focus on the four government institutions followed by a study of civil rights and civil liberties in America, their evolution through judicial interpretation and the evolving role of the 14th amendment on American’s civil rights and liberties. The course will culminate with a breakdown of how public policy is created and the linkages between the political process, political parties, interest groups and elections. The course requires familiarity with the various institutions groups belies, and ideas that constitute U.S. politics. Students will gain knowledge through a variety of theoretical perspectives and explanations.

Student assessment occurs at a variety of levels throughout the course. Students are assessed via oral examination and other synchronous sessions. Actual course assessment types include student assessed work, auto-graded, partially auto-graded, and totally instructor graded assignments.

This course is designed to be highly teacher facilitated. Instructors give a great deal of specific and timely feedback. Students have opportunities for oral examinations, discussions, and whiteboard sessions. Teachers conduct synchronous elluminate sessions, which require critical thinking and analysis of articles, tables, data, free-response questions, and general discussion.

Goals
Students successfully completing this course will:
- Know important facts, concepts and theories pertaining to U.S. government and politics.
- Understand typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences
- Be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to U.S. government and politics.

Primary Text

Additional resources
The New York Times and The Washington Post. Articles and charts are used throughout the course.

Discovery Education United Streaming Video Resources

Week 1: Introduction to Government

*Text: Wilson, Chapter 4*

Content
- Freedom vs. Order
- Shay's Rebellion
- Lockean Theory
- Personal Political Beliefs

Additional Readings or Resources
- ADA, [http://www.ada.gov/](http://www.ada.gov/), used to discuss freedom vs. equality.
- Selections from The Second Treatise of Government (1690), [http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm](http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm)

Major Assignments
- Political Self-assessment
- Comprehensive Chapter Exam

Week 2: Constitutional Underpinnings

*Text: Wilson, Chapter 2*

Content
- Democratic Theories
- American understanding of republicanism, pluralism and majoritarianism
- Weaknesses of Articles of Confederation
- Formulation and adoption of the Constitution
- Constitutional Themes
- Origin of Judicial Review
- U.S. Implementation of Separation of Powers Theory
- General Knowledge of Origin and Structure of the Bill of Rights
- Amendment Process
- Essay Tutorial

Additional Readings or Resources
- Articles of Confederation

The United States Constitution
Federalist #78, http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa78.htm

Major Assignments
Essay- Initial essay will teach proper essay format.
Bill of Rights Quiz
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

Week 3: Federalism
Text: Wilson, Chapter 3

Content
Concept of Federalism
American Federalism
Competing Federalist Theories
Tensions Caused by Federalism
Centralization vs. Decentralization
Judicial Enforcement
Unfunded Mandates – Blood Border

Additional Readings or Resources
Frontline website devoted to the analysis of response after Hurricane Katrina,
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/storm/
Court cases from: http://www.oyez.org/oyez/frontpage
   Heart of Atlanta Hotel v. U.S.
   South Dakota v. Dole

Major Assignments
Assessment to examine the role of the federal, state and local government in disaster preparedness and response.
Comprehensive Chapter Exam
Oral Examination

Week 4: Political Beliefs
Text: Wilson, Chapter 5
Content
Contributing Factors to Personal Political Beliefs
Evolution of Political Behavior
Relationship between Political Culture and Political Participation
Political Socialization
Nature, sources and consequences of public opinion
Polling Concepts
Effects of Polling on Political Participation

Additional Readings or Resources
Polling discussion and data analysis from the Roper Center, [http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/)

Major Assignments
Mayoral Election Simulation and Statistical Analysis
Essay Practice and Rubric Assessment
Polling and Participation Assessment
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

Week 5: Media
Text: Wilson, Chapter 10

Content
Impact of Political Cartoons on political players
Functions, structure of media
Symbiotic relationship between media and the candidate.
Impact of media on voters; the Daily Show Effect, and new media

Additional Readings or Resources
Political Cartoon website: [Daryl Cagle’s Professional Cartoonists Index!](http://www.pbs.org/30secondcandidate/index.html)
PBS The: 30 Second Candidate; [http://www.pbs.org/30secondcandidate/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/30secondcandidate/index.html)

Major Assignments
Political Cartoon Analysis Assessment, including effects of Political Cartoons on the Public
Major Historical Events Impacted by Media Assessment
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

Week 6: Political Behavior
Text: Wilson, Chapter 6

Content
Political Consequences of the differences in political participation
Conventional and Unconventional Political Behavior
Voting Patterns and Election Data
Trends in Voter Efficacy: Internal/External
Effects Voter Efficacy has on political system

Additional Readings or Resources
Major Assignments
Political Behavior Essay
Analysis of Tables and Graphs Assessment
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

**Week 7: Political Parties**  
*Text: Wilson, Chapter 7*

**Content**
- Ideological Differences between parties
- Evolution of Political Parties
- Strategies of Political parties in the Electronic Age
- Effects of Political Parties on political system
- Challenges of Third Parties
- Party Conventions: Historical Importance and Shifting impact on the Political Process

**Additional Readings or Resources**

Major Assignments
Changes in Nomination Process Essay
Technological and Media Impact on Campaigning Essay
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

**Week 8: Elections**  
*Text: Wilson, Chapter 8*

**Content**
- Evolution of Elections
- Congressional Campaigns
- Advantages of Incumbency
- Political Impact of Incumbency
- Presidential Campaigns and Result Data
- Exploration of the Candidate
- Election Simulation to teach Election Law and Systems

**Additional Readings or Resources**
- Hoover Institution Public Policy Inquiry: Campaign Finance, (multiple readings) [http://www.campaignfinancesite.org/default.htm](http://www.campaignfinancesite.org/default.htm)
Week 9: Interest Groups and Political Action Committees

Text: Wilson, Chapter 4

Content
Function of Interest Groups
Impact on Political System
PACs, range of interests represented
Evolution of Tactics
Represented vs. Unrepresented Issues

Additional Readings or Resources

Week 10: Institutions of National Government: The Congress

Text: Wilson, Chapter 11

Content
Members of Congress
Formal Powers of Congress
Congressional Organization
Legislative procedure
Evolution of Redistricting
Judicial Impact on Redistricting
Analysis of Powers Granted vs. Powers Denied

Additional Readings or Resources
Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
War Powers Act
Gerrymandering,
All court cases from http://www.oyez.org/oyez/frontpage
   Baker v. Carr
   Wesberry v. Sanders
   INS v. Chada
   Shaw v. Reno
   Georgia v. Ashcroft

Major Assignments
Congressional Voting Patterns Essay
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

Week 11:   Institutions of National Government: The Presidency
Text: Wilson, Chapter 12

Content
Expansion of Presidential Power
Presidential Agendas
Federal Government Administration
Role of Presidential Cabinet
Constraints of Presidential Power
Change in institutions rolls in times of crisis

Additional Readings or Resources
Lessons of Presidential Leadership: Leader to Leader Doris Goodwin,
http://www.pfd.org/leaderbooks/l2l/summer98/goodwin.html
Letter of Presidential Transition: Richard Neustadt,

Major Assignments
Powers of the President Assessment
Presidential Assessment and Essay Practice
Comprehensive Chapter Exam
Week 12: Institutions of National Government: The Bureaucracy

Text: Wilson, Chapter 13

Content
Bureaucratic Structure
Role in Public Policy
Investigation of Policy Networks

Additional Readings or Resources
C-Span: Iron Triangles
http://www.c-span.org/questions/weekly77.asp
Selections of Max Weber on Bureacracy
Bureaucracy Spotlight: FEMA
FEMA, http://www.fema.gov/about/history.shtm

Major Assignments
Policy Network Assessments
Essay Practice and Peer Evaluation
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

Week 13: Institutions of National Government: The Judiciary

Text: Wilson, Chapter 14

Content
Supreme Court Procedures and Structure
Judiciary as a policymaking body
Jurisdiction
Judicial Review

Additional Readings or Resources
Supreme Court Homepage, http://www.supremecourtus.gov/
Supreme Court Justices Biographies, http://www.oyez.org/oyez/portlet/justices/
Supreme Court Rules and Procedures
http://www.law.cornell.edu/rules/supct/overview.html
Virtual Tour of Supreme Court Building, http://www.oyez.org/oyez/tour/

Major Assignments
Compare and Contrast: Nomination of Supreme Court Justices Assessment
Essay practice, deconstruction and analysis, Judicial Branch linkages to other Institutions
Comprehensive Chapter Exam
Week 14:  Civil Liberties
Text: Wilson, Chapter 18

Content
Development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation.
General knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
Impact of 14th Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties

Additional Readings or Resources
First Amendment
http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/
Second Amendment
http://www.nra.org/
http://www.madisonbrigade.com/library.htm

Gitlow v. New York
Incorporation
http://www.crf-usa.org/bria/bria7_4.htm#second
http://www.constitution.org/col/intent_14th.htm

Major Assignments
Incorporation Essay
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

Week 15:  Civil Rights
Text: Wilson, Chapter 19

Content
Evolution of Civil Rights
Political Evolution following Desegregation
Supreme Court Decisions impact on social change
Supreme Court Role in Minority Rights
Landmark Supreme Court Cases

Additional Readings or Resources
Civil War Amendments
United Streaming Video: Civil Rights: The Long Road to Equality - Marching in Alabama: The Civil Rights Act

**Landmark Court Case Review**
- *Lynch v. Donnelly*
- *Engle v. Vitale*
- *Minersville School District v. Gobitis*
- *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*
- *Schenck v. United States*
- *Gitlow v. New York*
- *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*
- *Texas v. Johnson*
- *Miller v. California*
- *New York Times v. Sullivan*
- *New York Times v. United States*
- *Palko v. Connecticut*
- *Miranda v. Arizona*
- *Mapp v. Ohio*
- *United States v. Leon*
- *Roe v. Wade*
- *Webster v. Reproductive Services*
- *Regents of the State of California v. Bakke*
- *Adarand Constructors v. Pena*

**Major Assignments**
Landmark Civil Rights Case Analysis Assessment
Essay Practice, Civil Rights
Oral Examination
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

**Week 16: Policymaking and Foreign Policy**

*Text: Wilson, Chapter 15*

**Content**
Federal government policy making procedure
Issue Networks
Foreign Policy
Ties between Branches when making policy
Implementation of Policy: Roles of Institutions
Additional Readings or Resources -

Policy Project:
The Brookings Institutions, http://www.brook.edu/default.htm
The Heritage Foundation, http://www.heritage.org/
The Urban Institute, http://www.urban.org/


Major Assignments
Tracing the origin, creation and implementation of policy Assessment
Compare and Contrast Two Foreign Military Conflicts Assessment
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

**Week 17: Economic Policy**
*Text: Wilson, Chapter 16*

Content
Competing Economic Theories
Linkages of Executive to Economy
Budget Process- Roles of Institutions
Analysis of Tax Plans

Additional Readings or Resources

Major Assignments
The Budget Process Research Project
Essay Practice
Comparing and Contrasting Tax Plans Assessment
Comprehensive Chapter Exam

**Week 18: Review for Semester Exam**
*Text: Wilson- Review of Course Text Notes*

Content
Content review
Test taking strategies
Multiple Choice strategies
Free-response strategies

Major Assignments
Comprehensive Final Exam

**This course is accompanied by an online tutorial and review that uses released AP Exams. Students are given systematic and timed practice for all portions of the exam. Students receive specific feedback on progress and mastery levels as they complete the practice exams.