

**APGOV**  
**Syllabus**  
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**Course Purpose:**

What is the purpose of government? Responses will vary from person to person and nation to nation. Some say, government is here to protect us. Others say, government is here to provide social services or protect private property. While those answers may very well help us to see individual areas of an overall mission, we must look closer at the underlying principles of government to really answer the question.

John Locke, an early seventeenth century theorist first referred to a principle known as the “State of Nature” The State of Nature is a condition in which there is no government. It is a condition of an environment without law. Furthermore, Thomas Hobbes, the original “Social Contract” theorist, advised that human beings in the State of Nature would behave badly, as that state would lead to a “war of every man against every man” and would make life “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

The basic problem with the State of Nature is that people do not have a method to protect their liberty, property, or life from others. Therefore, it is in the best interest of people to unite and form a method, device, or government, to protect their rights as human beings. Alexander Hamilton further explained this theory in Federalist #15. Hamilton asks and answers, “Why has government been instituted at all? Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint.”

John Locke elaborates in his Second Treatise on Government that civil society was created for the purpose of protecting property. Locke examines the origin of the word “property,” which when translated into Latin, means “one’s own” or oneself.” In this Locke concluded the purpose of government was to protect life, liberty, and property.

The purpose of this class is to teach you how government attempts to fulfill these roles and who influences its direction and reach.

Just as history is a weapon, government is a powerful tool/weapon that the citizen must be trained to use if as the framers said “and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America” is to come true.

**Course Description**

APGOV and Politics is a serious study of the United States’ government and political systems. There is an emphasis placed on policy design, creation, implementation, and oversight. This is a nine-week class that meets for one and a half hours each day.

**Text:**

Edwards III, George C., Robert L. Lineberry, and Martin P. Wattenberg. *Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy*. 10th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2002.

**Supplemental Texts:**

Faultlines: Debating the Issues in American Politics. Eds. Canon, David T., John J. Coleman, and Kenneth R. Mayer. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004.

Woll, Peter. *American Government Readings and Cases*. 15th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2003.

**Reference Texts:**

*American Politics*. Eds. Cigler, Allan J., and Burdett A. Loomis. 5th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.

Middendorf II, J. William. *A Glorious Disaster: Barry Goldwater's Presidential Campaign and the Origins of the Conservative Movement*. New York: Basic Books, 2006.

O'Brien, David M. Storm Center: *The Supreme Court in American Politics*. 7th ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2005.

*Summaries of Leading Cases on the Constitution*. Eds. Bartholomew, Paul C., and Joseph F. Menez. 13th ed. Savage, Maryland: Littlefield Adams Quality Paperbacks, 1990.

*The Enduring Debate*. Eds. Canon, David T., Anne Khademain, and Kenneth R. Mayer. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000.

Various articles, documents, and essays will be assigned throughout the course. Students should be knowledgeable of current events (i.e. US News and World Report, The Economist, and The Washington Times). Students should read daily newspapers and other periodicals. A good source for current news issues is <http://www.executivelibrary.com>

## **Course Organization and Evaluation**

### **Organization**

A calendar for each unit will be given at the beginning of each unit. The calendar will contain all reading assignments, essays, classroom assignments, simulation dates, quiz, and exam dates. The class will be a combination of interactive lecture, simulations, group assignments, and Socratic seminars. All essays will be graded on the nine-point AP rubric.

Units are organized according to content goals based on the curriculum created by the College Board. The Content Goals will be used to write your curve purchase Free Response Essays.

### **Evaluation**

Exams will be a combination of Objective Questions and Free Response Essay Questions based and timed on the standard set by the College Board for the APUSGOV Exam. All exams will have multiple-choice and Free Response Essay Questions based on the Content Goals and your outside readings.

Free Response Essay Questions will also be used as in-class exams. All FRQs will be based on Collage Board released exams.

At the end of the nine-weeks grading period there will be a comprehensive exam. The nine-week exam counts for 20% of your nine-week grade, as per LISD board policy. The nine-week exam will based on the AP Government and Politics exam in question level, style, and timing.

## **Course Plan**

### **Unit I: Philosophy and Foundations**

#### **Content Goals**

The student will be able to understand and delineate the ideologies and historical background and context relating to the US Constitution. Constitutional principles such as compromise, limited government, federalism, checks and balances, separation of powers will be studied. The philosophical ideologies that form the basis of the US governmental system and interpretations of the Constitution including democratic theory, republicanism, pluralistic theories, and elitism will be stressed.

#### **Materials**

Articles of Confederation, the US Constitution, the Federalist Papers, The Antifederalist Papers, commentaries on the US Constitution and its basis.

#### **Major Readings/Assignment(s)**

Government in America Chapters 1-3

Second Treatise, Of Civil Government by John Locke

Framing the Constitution by Charles A. Beard

The Federal System by Morton Grodzins  
Federalist 16,17 by Alexander Hamilton

## **Unit II: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights**

### **Content Goals**

The student will be able to understand and apply the protections and guarantees of political and civil rights and liberties protected by the US Constitution. The student will apply important court decisions, Congressional legislation to arguments about constitutional protections; limits on liberties, the impact of the Fourteenth Amendment, Selective Incorporation, and customs on public and private life in the United States.

### **Materials**

Supreme Court decisions, current video of civil rights debates post 9/11, Debate materials for The Tradeoff between Security and Freedom

### Major Readings/Assignment(s)

Government in America Chapters 4-5

Antifederalist Paper No. 84

Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas 1954 and 1955

Roe v. Wade (1973)

Engel v. Vitale (1962)

Civil Rights Simulation

### **Debate**

The Tradeoff between Security and Freedom (Faultlines)

## **Unit III: Opinion, Media, and Political Parties**

### **Content Goals**

The student will understand the creation, measurement, and impact of public opinion on the political process. This will include the functions, roles, and impact of the media on the political and governing processes. Also includes the creation, functions, and maintaining of political parties as an instrument of policy creation, implementation, and change. The history of political parties and party eras also will be covered.

### **Materials**

Debate materials

Deciphering the Democrat's Debacle by Ruy Teixeira

Democrats Go Off the Cliff by David Brooks

Democratic Party Platform 2000 and 2004

Republican Party Platform 2000 and 2004

Congressional Record 2000 through 2006

**Major Readings/Assignment(s)**

Government in America Chapters 6-8  
Divided We Govern by David R. Mayhew  
You might be a Republican if....  
You might be a Democrat if....

**Debate**

“There’s not a dimes worth of difference between” Republican and Democrats

**Assign**

Biased or Just Inaccurate? By Dr. David G. Johnson  
Poll Analysis Exercise

**Unit IV: Campaigns, Elections, Interest Groups****Content Goals**

The student will understand the means of converting interests and policy desires in government action elections and the Iron Triangle. This will include functions and roles of interest groups and their influence on the election process and policy creation, implementation, and change. This will also include the differences in function, organization, and impact of interest groups and political parties and the impact of court decision on their power and influence. Differences in voting, beliefs, and political activities by various demographic groups as a way to understand political behavior will be included.

**Materials**

Government in America Chapters 9-11  
US Census Data (Voting demographics, economic data)  
Voting Maps  
FEC.gov data on contributions and spending  
Opensecrets.org  
Buckley v. Valeo  
Myths and Realities about The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002

**Major Readings/Assignment(s)**

Federalist #10  
Party Government by E.E. Schattschneider  
The Group Basis of Politics: Notes for a Theory by Earl Latham  
The Hyperpluralism Trap by Jonathon Rauch  
Iron Triangle Policy Project  
Voting Patterns Exercise  
Campaign Finance Exercise  
Political Ideology Online Quiz- Do we vote for people, parties, or ideologies?

## **Debate**

Interest groups like the National Resource Defense Council carry more political weight than their membership numbers warrant.

## **Unit V: Congress**

### **Content Goals**

The student will analyze and understand the legislative process, the enumerated and implied powers of Congress, intergovernmental relations, checks and balances. Students will also understand the historical context of congressional powers and how these powers have evolved throughout United States history. Congress as a decentralizing force will also be covered.

### **Materials**

2000 Reapportionment Map  
Texas Reapportionment Article  
Gerrymandering Article  
Fenno Notes  
Congressional Financing Data

### **Major Readings/Assignment(s)**

Government in America Chapter 12  
A Nation at War: Paying for the War; Senate Rolls a Pork Barrel into War Bill by David Firestone  
Rolling out the Pork Barrel by Sean Paige  
Roll out the Barrel: The Case Against the Case Against Pork by Jonathon Conn  
Reapportionment and Gerrymandering Chart  
Fenno Chart  
<http://www.congresslink.org/index.htm>

## **Unit VI: The Executive Branch, The Bureaucracy, and Taxing and Spending**

### **Content Goals**

The student will understand the functions, enumerated powers, implied powers, and roles of the president and executive branch; the executive branch's relationships with the other coequal branches under the Constitution; the evolution of presidential power and the bureaucracy as a result of specific events in United States history. The relationship between the federal government and lower government bureaucracies and their respective roles in formation of the federal budget and policy implementation will be covered. The president as a focus of power will be discussed.

### **Materials**

Government in America Chapters 13-15  
Bureaucracy Chart  
Executive Office Chart

### **Cabinet Chart**

Budget Simulation

The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House

Bureaucratic Influence Determinants Notes and Chart

Federalist #70

Budget receipts and outlays data

### **Major Readings/Assignment(s)**

Budget Simulation

The Imperial Presidency Redux by Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

Too Much History by Noemie Emery

Congress Goes AWOL by John Isaacs

What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It? James Q. Wilson

### **Debate**

Legislators prefer bureaucratic agencies to be inefficient, so that legislators can weaken the executive branch and take credit for constituent problem solving.

## **Unit VII: The Judiciary**

### **Content Goals**

The student will understand the functions, roles, and powers of the federal court system and its relationship with the other coequal branches of the national government along with its relationships with state and local systems under the Constitution. The political influences on the nomination process and the evolution of the judiciary over the course of US history will also be covered.

### **Materials**

Court System Chart

Reviews of major cases from the US Supreme Court

### **Major Assignment(s)**

Government in America Chapter 16

The Role of the Senate in Judicial Confirmation by Stephen B. Presser

The Right's Judicial Juggernaut by Jack Newfield

Supreme Court Case Presentations

Mock Oral Arguments and decision

## **Unit VIII: Public Policymaking**

### **Content Goals**

The student will understand the major policy issues, debates, and stakeholders in play in American government today including Foreign and Defense Policy, Health Care, Economic Policy, the Environment, and Social Welfare Policy.

## **Materials**

Computer Lab and Library Time

## **Major Readings/Assignment(s)**

Government in America Chapters 17-20

Whose Tax Cuts by Robert B. Reich

Nine Simple Guidelines for Pro-Growth Tax Policy by Daniel J. Mitchell

Nation Building by Marina Ottaway

Bush is Flunking Reconstruction by Stan Crook

A Little Patience Please by David Pryce-Jones

Iron Triangle Presentations

## **Essay Component**

For every unit the student will answer free-response questions in essay form that will show their ability to analyze, interpret, and synthesize the structure, issues, stakeholders, policy creation and implementation within US government and politics. There are in-class timed essays and take-home essays. Below is an abbreviated list of sample essay prompts taken from released AP exams, text resources, and teacher created exams.

### **Unit I: Philosophy and Foundations**

1. At the Philadelphia Convention, there was consensus on some policy issues and conflict necessitating compromise on others. Identify and describe these issues and how the delegates dealt with them.
2. Some argue that the Constitution has been “democratized” over time. Explain what is meant by “democratization,” and give specific examples using references to the relevant Constitutional amendments.
3. Define the term federalism and contrast it with unitary and confederation governments. Give specific examples of each.

### **Unit II: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights**

1. Many scholars and observers have argued that the ratification of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution has become the single most important act in all of US politics.
  - a. Identify which provision of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment was applied in two of the following cases. For the cases you select, explain the significance of the decision on US politics.
    - ☞ Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954)
    - ☞ Baker v. Carr (1962)
    - ☞ Regents of the University of California v. Bakke (1978)

b. Identify which provision of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment was in two of the following cases. For the cases you select, explain the significance of the decision on US politics.

- ☞ Mapp v. Ohio (1961)
- ☞ Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)
- ☞ Miranda v. Arizona (1966)

2. Explain how the freedoms of speech and press have been compromised in the name of public order and the right to a fair trial.

3. How has Civil Rights affected democratic government and the scope of government in the US? What are the basic conflicts between Civil Rights and democracy

### **Unit III: Opinion, Media, and Political Parties**

1. Analyze the quote “if people are not more informed in the high-tech age, it is largely because they do not care to hear about complex political issues.”

2. Both party leadership and committees in Congress play key roles in the legislative process.

a. Define two of the following elements of the congressional committee system and explain how each influences the legislative process.

- ☞ Specialization
- ☞ Reciprocity/logrolling
- ☞ Party representation on committees

b. Identify two ways party leadership in Congress can influence the legislative process, and explain how each way influences the process.

3. What is public opinion, and why is so much time and effort spent on measuring it in the US? What techniques are used to obtain an accurate reading of public opinion? Do public opinion poll results have a positive or negative influence on campaigning and governing?

### **Unit IV: Campaigns, Elections, Interest Groups**

1. Compare and contrast how pluralist, elite, and hyperpluralist theories explain the roles filled by interest groups.

2. Are PACs a threat or boon to the republic?

3. Different interest groups will choose different techniques to achieve their objectives based on their resources, characteristics, and goals.

a. Describe each of the following techniques and explain why an interest group would choose each technique.

- ☞ Litigation
- ☞ Campaign Financing
- ☞ Grassroots lobbying/mass mobilization

b. Select one of the following groups and identify the primary technique it uses from the list in part (a). Explain why the group you selected would employ that technique over the other two techniques.

- ☞ National Resource Defense Council
- ☞ National Organization of Women
- ☞ John Birch Society
- ☞ LULAC

### **Unit V: Congress**

1. Explain two specific methods Congress uses to exercise effective oversight of the federal bureaucracy

OR

Give two specific explanations for the failure of Congress to exercise effective oversight of the federal bureaucracy.

2. Explain what is meant by the claim that members of Congress are generalists surrounded by specialists who know more than they do. What consequences does being generalists have for policy making? Describe the effect this has on the Iron Triangle.

3. Some argue that Congress is too responsive to constituents, and, especially, to organized interests....(while others) argue that Congress is too insulated from ordinary citizens. Evaluate the evidence for each argument.

### **Unit VI: The Executive Branch, The Bureaucracy, and Taxing and Spending**

1. Presidential approval ratings fluctuate over the course of each presidential administration.

a. Identify two factors that decrease presidential approval ratings, and explain why each factor has that effect.

b. Identify two factors that increase presidential approval ratings, and explain why each factor has that effect.

2. Presidents are generally thought to have advantages over Congress in conducting foreign policy because of the formal and informal powers of the presidency.

a. Identify two formal constitutional powers of the President in making foreign policy.

b. Identify two formal constitutional powers of the Congress in making foreign policy.

c. Identify two informal powers of the President that contribute to the President's advantage over Congress in conducting foreign policy.

d. Explain how each of the informal powers identified in (c) contributes to the President's advantage over Congress in conducting foreign policy.

3. The US Congress and the President together have the power to enact federal law. Federal bureaucratic agencies have the responsibility to execute federal law. However, in the carrying out of these laws, federal agencies have policy-making discretion.

a. Explain two reasons why Congress gives federal agencies policy-making discretion in executing federal laws.

b. Choose one of the bureaucratic agencies listed below. Identify the policy area over which it exercises policy-making discretion AND give one specific example of how it exercises that discretion.

Environmental Protection Agency

National Park Service

Bureau of Indian Affairs

## **Unit VII: The Judiciary**

1. The judicial branch is designed to be more independent of public opinion than are the legislature or the executive. Yet, the US Supreme Court rarely deviates too far for too long from prevalent public opinion.

a. Describe two ways in which the US Supreme Court is insulated from public opinion.

b. Explain how two factors work to keep the US Supreme Court from deviating too far from public opinion.

2. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the judiciary as a political institution. What do the courts have the power to do? What do they not have the power to do? How do these powers compare to other political institutions.

3. The Supreme Court is commonly thought to be "above politics." However, one can argue that the appointment of Supreme Court justices is political.

a. Identify three characteristics of Supreme Court nominees and discuss how each characteristic has been politically relevant during the appointment process.

b. Identify two methods that have been used by interest groups to influence the appointment process. Explain how each of these methods has been used to influence that process.

### **Unit VIII: Public Policymaking**

1. Describe the major features of the 1996 welfare reform bill. Is it clear whether the welfare reform had its intended effects? Explain how opponents and proponents of the reforms address these questions.

2. How does the term interdependency explain the nature of the international economy? What are the characteristics of American international economic policy?

3. In recent decades, entitlement programs have constituted a substantial portion of the US federal budget. Social Security is the largest entitlement program in the US. From the information in the chart (charted added on the exam) above and your knowledge of the US government and politics, perform the following tasks.

a. Define entitlement program.

b. What is the primary source of revenue for the Social Security program?

c. Identify one threat to the future of the Social Security program should the trends depicted in the chart above continue.

d. Describe one demographic trend that threatens the future of the Social Security program AND explain how it is responsible for the threat that you identified in (c).

e. Explain how any one of the trends in the chart above would change if the age of eligibility for Social Security were raised.