

AP U.S. Government and Politics *Chapter Outlines*

Directions: For each section, categorize the information based on the “Key Concepts” provided below. When categorizing information, be sure to include enough relevant facts and evidence to successfully confirm the concept. You will be asked to present your section to the class as part of our exam review. Once you have categorized your section, create a multiple-choice quiz to accompany your presentation (minimum of 10 questions)

Constitutional Origins

- I. Distribution of political power among a nation’s political elite is viewed in various ways.
- II. The path to independence accelerated with Britain’s difficulty in administering and financing territory gained in the French and Indian War.
- III. The Articles of Confederation were the nation’s first constitution and created a number of problems for the new nation.
- IV. Proponents of the Constitution argued that it provided for a much needed and stronger national government; opponents preferred that state governments remain stronger.
- V. The Constitution has two amendment processes, which account in large measure for its endurance.
- VI. Defining the relationship between the national government and state governments has been – and continues to be – a major issue in the nation’s history.
- VII. The cornerstone of federal and state government relations today is the system of mandates and grants-in-aid, or funds distributed by Congress to state and local governments.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors

- I. Political attitudes and culture are derived from many sources, among them family, religion, gender, and education.
- II. Americans increasingly mistrust government.
- III. Political efficacy is a citizen’s capacity to understand and influence political events.
- IV. Americans practice enough political tolerance to allow civil discourse.
- V. Defining public opinion in the United States is a difficult task.
- VI. Political elites have great influence on American public opinion.
- VII. Political ideology is a coherent and consistent set of beliefs.
- VIII. The American electorate has expanded through extended voting rights for minorities, women, and youth.
- IX. Voter turnout in the United States is relatively low, and the relatively difficult process of voter registration probably accounts for it.
- X. There are many levels and forms of participation in the American political system.

Institutions of National Government
Legislative/Judicial

- I. The United States Congress is a bicameral legislature that has evolved into two very distinct chambers.
- II. Three theories (representational, organizational, attitudinal) attempt to explain how members of Congress behave in their voting patterns.
- III. Congress is organized in various ways, including party, committee, and staff organizations.
- IV. The process of a bill becoming a law is complex and laden with a multitude of rules.
- V. The federal courts have evolved into an institution that has significant impact on public policy.
- VI. The selection of federal judges is a very political process.
- VII. A limited number of cases are heard in federal courts, and an even more limited number reach the Supreme Court.
- VIII. Judicial activism is a philosophy in which judges make bold policy decisions.
- IX. The other branches of government and the public have checks on the powers of the federal courts.

Institutions of National Government
Executive/Bureaucracy

- I. The powers of the presidency are constrained by the separation of powers in the Constitution.
- II. The executive branch includes the president's personal staff, the cabinet, and many other agencies that report to him.
- III. Presidential power often rests on the president's ability to persuade, as well as the checks and balances he has on other branches of government.
- IV. Presidents bring to office a program they hope to enact during their terms.
- V. The federal bureaucracy grew dramatically as a result of the Great Depression and World War II.
- VI. Federal agencies have substantial power in setting policy.
- VII. Congressional oversight is an important check on the powers of the bureaucracy.
- VIII. Several impressions of the federal bureaucracy are constant subjects of reform.

Public Policy

- I. The political agenda determines which issues will receive consideration in formulating new policy.
- II. Costs and benefits determine who supports a policy, who opposes it, and the coalitions that form to compete over a policy.
- III. Business regulation is an excellent case study of the different types of policies and policy-making.
- IV. Perceptions, beliefs, interests, and values all play a critical role in the policy-making process.
- V. Differing theories among the political elite have dominated the nation's economic policy.
- VI. The cornerstones of social welfare policy in the United States are Social Security and Medicare.
- VII. Environmental policy illustrates the various forms of policy-making in the United States.
- VIII. The Constitution creates a power struggle between Congress and the President over foreign policy
- IX. Differing worldviews among the political elites have dominated the nation's foreign policy.