

AP American Government

Designed by John Cornet, Phoenix HS
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As an academic field, American government encompasses not only the study of the systems, institutions, and policies of the United States government, but also the political ideals, beliefs and political aspirations of the American people. The field falls within the broader discipline of political science - the study of government and power - wherein we strive to answer questions concerning the political culture, the distribution of power, decision-making processes, government policies, and laws, among other issues and behaviors.

Subject Learning Outcomes

- ⇒Students will critically examine the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the American political system, exploring their internal mechanisms and their inter-relationship between one another.
- ⇒Students will critically contemplate the nature of power relationships in the pursuit of political objectives.
- ⇒Students will understand the concepts of separation of powers and checks-and-balances
- ⇒Students will be able to tie primary source Constitutional materials into their explanations of why and how governmental decisions are made as they are.
- ⇒Students will 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)
- ⇒The State of Oregon, The College Board (Advanced Placement) and Southern Oregon University learning standards are content specific and available online. This course has been approved by all three.

Skills-Based Learning Outcomes

- ⇒Organize, maintain and learn how to study from a subject-specific notebook
- ⇒Be able to demonstrate how to take notes (including utilizing two-column format)
- ⇒Be able to engage in meaningful, substantive and respectful discussion with others on political topics.
- ⇒Be able to demonstrate effective and active reading habits (summarization, questioning, agreeing/disagreeing with the text, etc.)
- ⇒Be able to synthesize different facts and interpret the principles guiding actions to make broader conclusions.
- ⇒Be able to analyze and interpret basic data relevant to American government and politics (including data presented in charts, tables, and other formats)
- ⇒Be able to critically analyze relevant theories and concepts, apply them appropriately, and develop their connections across the curriculum
- ⇒Be able to identify learning strategies which work for the student.
- ⇒Be able to argue and defend a position in written and verbal formats.
- ⇒Be able to express themselves through fluent writing and with appropriate

Behavioral Expectations and Grading Policy

- ⇒Attendance, participation and being prepared to learn and engage in the material are daily expectations.
- ⇒A classroom culture of respect and tolerance is critical to create a comfortable environment for all to learn.
- ⇒Digital and electronic devices will not be in use during class time without teacher permission.
- ⇒Do not hesitate to ask questions at any time and for any relevant reason.

In the event of multiple instructors teaching this course, while teachers proceed through the lessons at their own pace - out of respect for the integrity of one another's classrooms, teaching styles and expertise - they will strive to never be more than ten days apart in curriculum and from time to time will use common written/essay/examination assessments which will be evaluated jointly on occasion. Instructors will meet regularly (as supported by the administration) to discuss their common course.

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Overarching Social Studies Thematic Approach

Overarching Social Studies Thematic Approach	The social sciences discipline may be interpreted as a tug-of-war between the perspectives of moral relativism and moral absolutism.
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Comprehensive Approach Toward The Course

Comprehensive American Government Thematic Approach	American Government may be best examined through the lens of power shifting behaviors; that is, who has power and at the expense of whom, and what principles guide the application of this power?
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Enduring Multi-Unit Themes (framed as essay topics)

Identify the root fears of the nation's founders (which led them to support a Republic; not a Democracy) and examine how they incorporated precautions into the operations and structure of government to protect against the tyranny of the majority.
Identify the power struggle between the Federalist and anti-Federalist poles, and explain how it is manifested in political discourse.
Identify the sources of external influences upon politics, explain how these influence the decision-making process, and assess the extent to which it risks hyperpluralism.
Identify and explain the history of political realignment in this country, identifying patterns and precursors or's which are necessary for such an event to unfold.
Assess the impact of the Due Process clause to the unfolding of judicial interpretations.
Explore on the concept of 'separation of church and state', chronicling its origins, supportive founding documents and challenges over time, all the while keeping an eye toward constitutional precedent.
Explore the concept of so-called 'judicial activism', defining its particulars and examining the degree to which it is real or claimed as a propaganda initiative.
Over the course of American history, have civil liberties been considered an absolute guarantee, or are there circumstances in which such liberties have been removed constitutionally?
Can any branch of government become too powerful, how would this be identified and reconciled, or does history suggest the Madisonian system of checks-and-balances will always, eventually, yield a balancing of an otherwise unequal power relationship in government?
Chronicle the modern history of the evangelical movements' influence on American politics, emphasizing strategies from 1980 to present and assessing the strength of their impact.

"Overarching Social Studies Thematic Approach"

This is an overarching approach for all courses in the Social Studies department

"Comprehensive Approach Toward The Course"

This presents the broad approach and lens through which material in this course will be examined.

"Enduring Multi-Unit Themes"

These are questions, themes or big ideas framed as comprehensive essay topics which stretch across multiple, sometimes overlapping, units. It provides an opportunity for students to connect historical and contemporary dots over time.

"Individual Instructional Units"

These are the targeted learning outcomes (Power Standards) per unit of instruction. They are amended by key conceptual learning targets, key vocabulary, and a sampling of important judicial rulings and vocabulary.

In Other Words . . .

The "Individual Instructional Units" allow a student to walk into a bookstore, glance at a book and have a sense of what that book may be about before they even open it. "Enduring Multi-Unit Themes" allow a student to finish the book, return to browse 50 titles remaining in the bookstore and recognize these books all talk to each other; that is,

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UNIT TOPICS		POWER STANDARD	KEY CONCEPTUAL LEARNING TARGETS AND KEY VOCABULARY	
Quarter 1	Introduction to American Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the policy making system, with particular emphasis upon how people shape policy and how policy impacts people 2. Identify and explain the challenges to democracy 3. Identify and explain the difference between a democracy and a republic, and assess which maintains a more significant sway on the American system of governance. 	Federalism Pluralism Bureaucracy Partisan/nonpartisan Policy	
2	Political Science	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify what a political science approach toward viewing politics is, and explain its value and implications for comprehending future realpolitik. 	Political science What do political scientists do, and how is it different from historians.	
3	Historical-Constitutional Foundations for Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the philosophical contributions to and historical foundations of the modern American government. ↳ Your answer must address both philosophy (John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison) and history (reaction against the Crown, Articles of Confederation) 2. Identify and explain the differing issues which were raised in Philadelphia - such as those of equity, economic, individual rights and federalist v.anti-federalist poles - how they were addressed and brought to resolution 3. Identify and explain the arguments for and against the Constitution 	Democracy v.Republic Lockian view of government Hobbes view of government Madison view of gov't	
4	Federalism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain federalism. ↳ Your answer must include the Constitutional division of power, the establishment of national identity, and states obligations to one another. 	Preemption Regulatory federalism Gibbons v.Ogden	
5	The Two Cornerstones of the American system: Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify separation of powers, and explain the circumstances against which it does and does not work well. 2. Identify checks and balances, and explain the circumstances against which it does and does not work well. 3. Identify the circumstances under which the independent council law was a reaction to an overreach of presidential ambition, and explain how the law would work both in unison with and against the precepts of separation of powers and checks and balances. 4. Identify and explain the extent to which the three branches of government compete with one another. 	Separation of Powers Checks and Balances Impeachment Impoundment Independent council law	
6	The Constitution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the structure of the Constitution, emphasizing which offices responsibilities reside where. 2. Identify and explain the process for amending the Constitution. 3. Identify and explain the process of admitting new states into the Union. 	Supremacy clause	
7	Bill of Rights	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After describing the nationalization of the Bill of Rights, identify and explain examples of selective incorporation and total incorporation. 	Nationalization of Bill of Rights	
8	Congress	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the structure of the Congress, emphasizing the responsibilities for each branch. 2. Identify and explain the process for creating a law. 3. Identify and explain the process for creating a new state. 	Bicameral system Qualifications for Senators Qualificatioesn for Rep.	

9	The Presidency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the responsibilities of the President. 2. Identify and explain the shifting poles of presidential power over time. 	<p>Qualifications for executive</p> <p>Executive order</p> <p>Executive privilege</p>	
10	The Federal Court System	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the structure of the federal judicial system. 2. Identify and explain the politics inherent in judicial selection. 3. Some have accused the courts of acting as policy makers. Identify and explain evidence in support of or opposition to this accusation. 4. Identify and explain criticism of the Supreme Court and its Justices. 	<p>Qualifications of Justices</p> <p>Judicial activism</p> <p>Judicial activism</p> <p>Jurisdiction</p> <p>Marbury v. Madison</p>	
11	The Federal Bureaucracy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the mechanisms of the Iron Triangle 2. Identify and explain the organization of the following bureaucracies - Cabinet departments, regulatory agencies, government corporations, and independent executive agencies. 3. Identify and explain the role of bureaucracies in the debate over industry regulation/deregulation and in immigration matters. 4. Identify and explain the extent to which (if at all) a largely permanent professional bureaucracy serves democracy. 	<p>Policy implimentation</p> <p>Regulatory commissions</p> <p>Title IX</p> <p>Plum Book</p>	
12	Civil Liberties and Public Policy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the freedoms of and limits upon speech, faith, gun rights, women's choice, privacy, and defendant's issues. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Your answer must address both the constitutional foundations on the matter and the multiple interpretations of those foundations. 	<p>Incorporation</p> <p>Due process</p> <p>Establishment clause</p> <p>Lemon v. Kurtzman</p> <p>Prior Restraint</p> <p>Symbolic/commercial speech</p> <p>Probable cause</p> <p>Unreasonable search and seizures</p> <p>Excluionary rule</p>	
13	Civil Rights and Public Policy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the politicization of Civil Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Your answer must include relevent history from slavery to the Civil War, restrictions imposed in the Jim Crow south to desegregation, resegregation and affirmative action. 2. Identify and explain the politicization of women's rights issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Your answer must address the status of women in the workplace (including changing perspectives of women's roles in society), wage discrimination and comparable worth, and proposals for an Equal Rights Amendment. 3. Identify and explain the politicization of other groups beneath the auspices of the Civil Rights banner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Your answer must address the graying of America, people with disabilities, and gay/lesblan/bisexual rights. 		
14	Public Opinion and Political Action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the prominent influences upon and consequences of political socialization. 2. Identify and explain the manner in which polling is conducted, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Your answer must address different kinds of polling -- exit polling, telephone polling, push polling -- and assess not just its accuracy (are the results meaningful to the candidate?) but also its legality. 3. Identify and explain the extent to which public opinion shapes public policy. 		

15	The Mass Media and the Political Agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the differences in campaigning through different mediums (newspaper, public television, cable, online), and how these avenues have affected change in the nature of campaigns over the past century. ↳ Your answer must extrapolate upon address themes of partisan/nonpartisan mediums and resultant viewership, the soundbite, cost and media bias. 2. Identify and explain the extent to which media sets the political agenda. ↳ Consider whether the media is an impartial observer or active participant; does it betray its obligation when it tries to mold public opinion rather than report on events, or is its obligation to conduct this active investigative journalism? 	Sound bites	
16	Political Parties	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the political ideologies of the Democrats, Republicans and third parties (independants, Tea Party conservatives), noting divergent differences as well as areas of philosophical agreement. 2. Identify and explain the role of political parties in shaping the national agenda. 3. Political parties were not envisioned by the Founders...identify and explain the extent to which their existance and activities are in keeping with or distracting from the Founders vision. 	Rational choice theory Political platform Platform committee Nominating process	
17	Nominations and Campaigns	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the philosophy underpinning the primary and caucus system and how they are used to set up the party's national convention. 2. Identify and explain the strategic thinking which occurs in campaigns, with particular emphasis upon how things are framed, damage-control conducted, defining oneself, and how one gets out ahead of an issue. 3. Identify and explain the considerations governing Electoral College strategy, choice of a vice presidential candidate, and which topics to address when/where/how. 4. Identify and advantages an incumbent enjoys relative to the disadvantages a challenger has to overcome in pursuit of winning an election. 	Incumbent	
18	Elections	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the process of electing a president in this country, with an emphasis upon the Electoral College system. 2. Identify and explain the impact a third party may have upon a presidential election campaign, citing examples from the past three decades to illustrate your argument. ↳ Your answer must address the Tea Party movement, and candidates Nadar, Perot and Paul. 		
19	Voting Behavior	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain why certain groups are disenfranchised from voting. 2. Identify and explain demographic patterns in relation to voting participation. 		
20	Interest Groups and Pluralism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the constitutional foundations for lobbying behavior, and assess whether this strengthens (or not) the American policymaking process. 2. Identify and explain the varying degrees of Pluralism as you assess whether it strengthens or hinders the American policymaking process. 3. Identify and explain how an interest group differs from a Political Action Committee, and why these are therefore accountabe to different laws. 	Electioneering Interest groups	
21	The Congress, the President, and the Budget: The Politics of Taxing and Spending	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the process for creating an appropriations bill. 2. identify and explain the interrelationship between the State of the Union address, campaigning, lobbying groups, Congress and the presidency when crafting the budget. 3. Identify and explain the difference between the national debt and the federal deficit, and assess the import of these upon the nations present economy. 4. Identify and explain the complexities of balancing the budget. 	Earmarks Porkbarrel legislation Grants - block, etc Incrementalism	

22	Economic Policymaking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain monetary policy and "The Fed". 2. Identify and explain the fiscal policy of presidents and political platforms 3. Identify and explain why it is difficult to control the economy, and indicate which branch of government has the most control over influencing it. 4. Identify the extent of influence each branch has over the economy, and explain which branch weilds the most authority to affect economic change 	<p>Grants - block, etc.</p> <p>Ronert Weintraub, research in Fed/WH relationship</p>	
23	Social Welfare Policymaking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify what socal policy is and explain why it is so controversial. 2. Identify and explain the history of social welfare policy in government from the New Deal to today. 3. Identify what social security is and explain why it is in trouble. 		
24	Policymaking for Health Care and the Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the role of government in health care policymaking, and assess its effectiveness. 2. Identify and explain the role of government in environmental policymaking, and assess its effectiveness. 		
25	National Security and Foreign Affairs Policymaking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain the instruments of American foreign policy. 2. Identify and explain elements of American foreign policy making since the Cold War era 3. Identify and explain the politics of defense policy and pursuit of a global agenda. 		
26	State and Local Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "All politics is local." Identify the logic behind this statement and explain whether or not it is an accurate reflection of how political engagement is conducted. 2. Identify and explain the typical organizational structure of state governments 		
27	Proposed Reforms of the National Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and explain contentious areas of American government, indicating areas of criticism and offer practical reform ideas which are consistant with the intent of the Constitution. 		