



Sample Syllabus 1 Contents

Curricular Requirements ii

AP United States Government and Politics Syllabus 1

 Section #1: Overview of the Course and the AP Exam 1

 Introduction to AP U.S. Government and Politics 1

 Overview of the AP Exam and Keys to AP Exam Success..... 1

 Course Content and Big Ideas 2

 Reasoning Processes..... 2

 Disciplinary Practices..... 2

 Overview of Required Course Texts and Additional Resources 3

 Required Supreme Court Cases 3

 Required Foundational Documents 4

 Section #2: Civic Engagement Project – Creating an Interest Group Strategic Plan 5

 Section #3: Course Outline 5

 Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy 5

 Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of Government 8

 Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights 12

 Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs 16

 Unit 5: Political Participation 18

Curricular Requirements

- CR1 The course includes the Foundations of American Democracy Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).
- See page 5
- CR2 The course includes the Interactions Among Branches of Government Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).
- See page 8
- CR3 The course includes the Civil Liberties and Civil Rights Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).
- See page 12
- CR4 The course includes the American Political Ideologies and Beliefs Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).
- See pages 16, 21
- CR5 The course includes the Political Participation Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).
- See page 18
- CR6 The course integrates public policy within each unit.
- See pages 5, 7, 11, 15, 17
- CR7 The course addresses the big ideas by connecting enduring understandings across one or more units.
- See pages 7, 11, 15, 22
- CR8 The course provides opportunities to analyze and compare political concepts.
- See pages 7, 11, 14, 15, 22
- CR9 The course provides opportunities to analyze and interpret quantitative data to explain what the data implies or illustrates about political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.
- See pages 18, 20, 21
- CR10 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.
- See pages 4, 7, 10, 12, 17
- CR11 The course provides opportunities to analyze and interpret visual information to explain how the elements of the visual illustrate or relate to political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.
- See pages 7, 16



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- CR12 The course provides opportunities to apply course concepts and Supreme Court decisions in real-world contexts or scenarios.
- See pages 5, 7, 10, 15, 18
- CR13 The course provides opportunities to develop an argument in the form of an essay, supported by relevant evidence, about a concept described in the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework*.
- See pages 10, 11, 15
- CR14 Students are provided with an opportunity to engage in a political science research or applied civics project tied to the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework* that culminates in a presentation of findings.
- See pages 5, 22
- CR15 Students are provided opportunities to analyze the 15 required Supreme Court cases as described in the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework* and connect them to other non-required landmark cases.
- See pages 3, 4, 10, 14, 15
- CR16 Students and teachers have access to a college-level U.S. government and politics textbook.
- See page 3



AP United States Government and Politics Syllabus

Section #1: Overview of the Course and the AP Exam

Introduction to AP U.S. Government and Politics

AP U.S. Government and Politics is a college-level year-long course that not only seeks to prepare students for success on the AP Exam in May, but also provide students with the political knowledge and reasoning processes to participate meaningfully and thoughtfully in discussions and debates that are currently shaping American politics and society. It is important to note that this course is not a history course; it is a political science course that studies the interconnectedness of the different parts of the American political system and the behaviors and attitudes that shape this system and are the byproduct of this system.

AP U.S. Government and Politics accomplishes these goals by framing the acquisition of political knowledge around enduring understandings and big ideas about American government and politics that can be applied to a set of disciplinary practices through the use of a set of reasoning processes. Through the development of this set of political knowledge, disciplinary practices, and reasoning processes, by the end of the course, students will be able to analyze current and historical political events like a political scientist and develop factually accurate, well-reasoned, thoughtful arguments and opinions that acknowledge and grapple with alternative political perspectives.

This year-long course will meet for 50-minutes on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays and for 30-minutes on Wednesdays. The course will be organized around the following units of study:

- Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy (19 days)
- Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of Government (34 days)
- Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (18 days)
- Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs (13 days)
- Unit 5: Political Participation (26 days)

The course also consists of:

- A one-class period review day in each unit
- A unit exam at the end of each unit that will be administered over two class periods
- A week for civic engagement project presentations at the end of the course
- Two weeks of review for the AP Exam at the end of the course

The political knowledge, enduring understandings, and big ideas acquired and developed in each unit will be applied to the disciplinary practices using the reasoning processes outlined below.

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

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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

Disciplinary Practices

The disciplinary practices are the tasks students will apply to the course content using the reasoning processes. Becoming proficient in these disciplinary practices gives students the tools to analyze political information,

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regardless of the format, and develop a factually accurate, thoughtful, and well-reasoned argument or opinion about an issue related to American government and politics. The disciplinary practices in this course include:

- Practice 1: Apply political concepts and processes to scenarios in context
- Practice 2: Apply Supreme Court decisions
- Practice 3: Analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics
- Practice 4: Read, analyze, and interpret foundational documents and other text-based and visual sources
- Practice 5: Develop an argument in essay format

Every AP Exam question fuses course content, reasoning processes, and disciplinary practices. Thus, in-class and outside of class assignments will focus on the acquisition of course content and the application of course content to disciplinary practices using reasoning skills.

Overview of Required Course Texts and Additional Resources

Textbook and Online Resources

Each student will check out a copy of the following textbook at the beginning of the course:

Note: *This course utilizes a college-level textbook. The AP Program does not endorse any one textbook for this course. However, students and teachers must have access to a college-level U.S. government and politics textbook. While the College Board has not listed a textbook here, you must identify the text you will use in your class to satisfy this curricular requirement. You may choose a text from the sample textbook list or identify another appropriate college-level textbook. [CR16]*

[CR16] — Students and teachers have access to a college-level U.S. government and politics textbook.

Additionally, students will have access to the following free online resources:

- *AP United States Government and Politics reading skills lessons* – This resource contains all of the required Supreme Court cases and foundational documents, along with close reading and discussion questions and activities.
- *Oyez* – This online database provides succinct and accessible overviews for all Supreme Court cases.
- *The National Constitution Center’s Interactive Constitution* – This online resource is an annotated U.S. Constitution that includes essays from multiple perspectives that frame the debates underlying key clauses and provisions of the U.S. Constitution. The National Constitution Center also has a blog that applies constitutional principles to current events.

Required Supreme Court Cases [CR15: Supreme Court cases]

This course will incorporate the analysis of the following 15 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)

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- *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972)
- *Roe v. Wade* (1973)
- *Shaw v. Reno* (1993)
- *United States v. Lopez* (1995)
- *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010)
- *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (FEC)* (2010)

[CR15] — Students are provided opportunities to analyze the 15 required Supreme Court cases as described in the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework* and connect them to other non-required landmark cases.

For each of these cases, the facts, issues, holdings, and reasoning underlying the majority opinion can be found through the Oyez database online. Oyez also has an app that can be downloaded to smartphones. Students will be required to complete multiple assignments analyzing and comparing these cases with other non-required cases.

[CR15: activity]

[CR15] — Students are provided opportunities to analyze the 15 required Supreme Court cases as described in the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework* and connect them to other non-required landmark cases.

The list above is not an exhaustive list of the Supreme Court cases that will be analyzed and discussed in this course. Additionally, students will have access to the *AP United States Government and Politics Interactive Reader*, which includes information and majority opinion excerpts for cases that complement the required cases, such as:

- *Gonzales v. Raich* (2005) to go along with the analysis of *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819)
- *Heart of Atlanta Motels v. United States* (1964) to go along with the analysis of *United States v. Lopez* (1995)
- *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002) to go along with the analysis of *Engel v. Vitale* (1962)
- *Morse v. Frederick* (2007) to go along with the analysis of *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969)

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”

[CR10] — 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:

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- 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
- Essays from the National Constitution Center’s “Matters of Debate” series (Interactive Constitution resource) to go along with the analysis of the Tenth Amendment

Section #2: Civic Engagement Project – Creating an Interest Group Strategic Plan [CR6] [CR12] [CR14]

The civic engagement project in this course will culminate in students “creating an interest group” and a strategic plan for this interest group that could be used to pursue the enactment and implementation of a solution to a domestic policy problem of interest. Students will create this interest group strategic plan in small groups of two-to-five, and there will be a research benchmark in each unit of the course that will require students to connect course content to their interest group’s policy solution and plan. At the conclusion of Unit 5, students will present their interest group strategic plan to their peers and a panel of Social Studies teachers and field questions about the viability and effectiveness of their plan.

A timeline for this project and the research benchmarks underlying this project are outlined in each unit of the Course Outline.

[CR6] — The course integrates public policy within each unit.

[CR12] — The course provides opportunities to apply course concepts and Supreme Court decisions in real-world contexts or scenarios.

[CR14] — Students are provided with an opportunity to engage in a political science research or applied civics project tied to the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework* that culminates in a presentation of findings.

Section #3: Course Outline

This section provides a breakdown of each of the course’s five units. Included in each breakdown is an overview of unit topics, big ideas, learning objectives, key terms, and connections to the required foundational sources and required Supreme Court cases. Each breakdown also includes a sampling of activities and assignments used during the unit and the Civic Engagement Project tasks that fall under the unit.

Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy [CR1]

(19 instructional days)

[CR1] — The course includes the Foundations of American Democracy Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

Essential Questions:

- How did the founders of the U.S. Constitution attempt to protect individual liberty, while also promoting public order and safety?
- How have theory, debate, and compromise influenced the U.S. Constitutional system?

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- How does the development and interpretation of the Constitution influence policies that impact citizens and residents of the U.S.?

Topic 1.1: Ideals of Democracy

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-1.A)

Key Terms: Limited Government, Natural Rights, Popular Sovereignty, Republicanism, Social Contract

Foundational Documents: The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States

Topic 1.2: Types of Democracy

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-1.B)

Key Terms: Participatory Democracy, Pluralist Democracy, Elite Democracy

Foundational Documents: Excerpts from *Federalist No. 10* and excerpts from *Brutus No. 1*

Topic 1.3: Government Power and Individual Rights

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-1.A)

Key Terms: Faction, Federalist, Anti-Federalist, Federalism, Checks and Balances, Separation of Powers

Foundational Documents: Excerpts from *Federalist No. 10* and excerpts from *Brutus No. 1*

Topic 1.4: Challenges of the Articles of Confederation

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-1.B)

Key Terms: Articles of Confederation, Shays's Rebellion

Foundational Documents: Excerpts from the Articles of Confederation

Topic 1.5: Ratification of the U.S. Constitution

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-1.C)

Key Terms: Great Compromise, Electoral College, Three-Fifths Compromise, Amendment Process

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States

Topic 1.6: Principles of American Government

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-1.A)

Key Terms: Congress, the President, Federal Judiciary, Checks and Balances, Separation of Powers

Foundational Documents: Excerpts from *Federalist No. 51*

Topic 1.7: Relationship Between the States and the Federal Government

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-1.B)

Key Terms: Checks and Balances, Separation of Powers

Topic 1.8: Constitutional Interpretations of Federalism

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-2.A)

Key Terms: Federalism, Concurrent Powers, Federal Revenue Sharing, Mandates

Categorical Grants, Block Grants

Topic 1.9: Federalism in Action

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-2.B)

Key Terms: Federalism, Tenth Amendment, Fourteenth Amendment, Commerce Clause, Necessary and Proper Clause, Enumerated Powers, Implied Powers, Separation of Powers, Policymaking

Required Cases: *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819), *United States v. Lopez* (1995)

Sample Activities and Assignments for Unit 1

Articles of Confederation versus U.S. Constitution Case Study:

- **Framing Question:** To what extent does the U.S. Constitution fix the problems of the Articles of Confederation without creating a new set of problems?
- **Activity Summary:** Students start by reading excerpts from the Articles of Confederation (Articles 2, 3, 6, and 9), the Constitution of the United States (Article 1, Section 8), and *Federalist No. 51*. Students will compare national government and state government power and structure under both constitutions, along with explanations for why power should be divided in these different ways. After the comparison is complete, students will read a narrative overview of Shays’s Rebellion, apply both constitutions in addressing Shays’s Rebellion, and argue for which constitution better addresses the problems underlying Shays’s Rebellion. The debrief of this discussion will push students to explain why Shays’s Rebellion fueled the debate for greater federal government power. Then, students will apply both constitutions in addressing the current federalism policy debate underlying the legalization of marijuana and argue for which constitution better addresses the federalism dimension of the legalization of marijuana policy debate. Students will then answer and discuss the framing question. **[CR6] [CR8] [CR10: activity]**
- **Additional Sources:** Students will analyze a map on *Vox* depicting different state laws regarding the legalization of marijuana (“Where is marijuana legal”). Students will describe the topic conveyed in the map, describe the perspective of the corresponding description in the article, explain how the elements of the visual relate to federalism and the centralization versus decentralization debate underlying the Articles of Confederation versus the U.S. Constitution, and explain the implications of the visual with respect to the framing question. Students will also read a brief overview of the Controlled Substances Act of 1970 and an overview from the holding in *Gonzales v. Raich* (2005). **[CR11]**
- **Learning Objective Alignment:** CON-1.B, CON-2.A, CON-2.B

[CR6] — The course integrates public policy within each unit.

[CR8] — The course provides opportunities to analyze and compare political concepts.

[CR10] — 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.

[CR11] — The course provides opportunities to analyze and interpret visual information to explain how the elements of the visual illustrate or relate to political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.

Assignment – Current Event Notebook:

- **Assignment Summary:** Throughout the course of the year, students will keep a current events journal to encourage them to stay up-to-date on political current events and as a mechanism for practicing making connections between course content and real-world situations. The current events notebook will include sections for each unit of the course. Students will complete two-to-three current events assignments in their journal each unit.
 - For each current event article: Students will provide a brief summary of the current event article that they read, describe any bias within the source that might undermine its credibility, and make a prediction based on the events discussed in the article, supported by evidence in the article. Then, students will explain how the event discussed in the article either relates to (1) one of the big ideas in the course, (2) one of the required Supreme Court cases, or (3) one of the foundational documents.
 - Additionally: For each section of the course other than the institutions of national government (e.g., “Interest Groups and Political Parties”), students will identify and explain one way in which that institution has or could impact the events discussed in the article. **[CR7] [CR10: activity] [CR12]**

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- **Sources:** Students will be encouraged to find articles from a variety of online political news websites including *CNN*, *Politico*, *The Hill*, *Fox News*, *New York Times*, *Axios*, and *The Washington Post*. Students can also find articles on other political news sites, including the National Constitution Center’s *Constitution Daily* blog.

[CR7] — The course addresses the big ideas by connecting enduring understandings across one or more units.

[CR10] — 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.

[CR12] — The course provides opportunities to apply course concepts and Supreme Court decisions in real-world contexts or scenarios.

Civic Engagement Project Task 1: Selecting a Domestic Policy Problem of Interest

Deadline: The End of Unit 1

Student Output: For the first benchmark of the interest group project, students will submit a written report that:

- A. Identifies the members of their group.
- B. Identifies and describes a domestic policy area and policy problem the group would like to explore and try to solve.
- C. Explains the significance of the policy problem by describing how key stakeholders in this issue will be affected if the problem is not solved.

Students will use the policy chapters from the textbook and online resources, such as the *Brookings Institute* or the *Pew Research Center*, to complete this first benchmark. Domestic policy areas students will be encouraged to select from include fiscal policy, monetary policy, healthcare policy, education policy, environmental/energy policy, immigration policy, or civil rights policy. The instructor will work with students to craft their policy problem of interest in an objective, non-partisan manner.

Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of Government [CR2]

(34 instructional days)

[CR2] — The course includes the Interactions Among Branches of Government Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

Essential Questions:

- How do the branches of the national government compete and cooperate in order to govern?
- To what extent have changes in the powers of each branch affected how responsive and accountable the national government is in the 21st century?

Topic 2.1: Congress: The Senate and the House of Representatives

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-3.A)

Key Terms: Senate, House, Chamber Sizes, Constituencies, Term-Lengths in Congress, Enumerated Powers (including Passing a Budget, Raising Revenue, Coining Money, Declaring War, and Maintaining Armed Forces), Implied Powers, Necessary and Proper Clause

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States

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Topic 2.2: Structures, Powers, and Functions of Congress

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-3.B)

Key Terms: Policy-Making Process, Congressional Standing Committees, Speaker of the House, President of the Senate, Party Leadership in Congress, Committee Leadership, Filibuster and Cloture, Holds, Unanimous Consent, Rules Committee, Committee of the Whole, Discharge Petitions, Treaty Ratification, Confirmation, Federal Budget, Discretionary Spending, Mandatory Spending, Entitlement Spending, Tax Revenues, Budget Deficit, Pork Barrel, Logrolling

Topic 2.3: Congressional Behavior

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-3.C)

Key Terms: Party Polarization, Gerrymandering, Redistricting, “One Person, One Vote,” Divided Government, Lame-Duck, Trustee, Delegate, Politico

Required Cases: Baker v. Carr (1961), Shaw v. Reno (1993)

Topic 2.4: Roles and Powers of the President

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-4.A)

Key Terms: Formal Powers, Informal Powers, Vetoes and Pocket Vetoes, Commander-in-Chief, Treaties, Executive Agreements, Executive Orders, Signing Statements

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States

Topic 2.5: Checks on the President

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-4.B)

Key Terms: Appointments (Cabinet Members, Ambassadors, White House Staff, Federal Judges), Executive Orders

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States

Topic 2.6: Expansion of Presidential Power

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-4.C)

Key Terms: Twenty-Second Amendment, Formal Powers, Informal Powers

Foundational Documents: *Federalist No. 70*

Topic 2.7: Presidential Communication

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-4.D)

Key Terms: State of the Union, Bully Pulpit

Topic 2.8: The Judicial Branch

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-5.A)

Key Terms: Judicial Review

Foundational Documents and Required Cases: The Constitution of the United States of America, *Federalist No. 78*, Marbury v. Madison (1803)

Topic 2.9: Legitimacy of the Judicial Branch

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-5.B)

Key Terms: Life Tenure, Precedent, Stare Decisis, Appointment and Confirmation

Topic 2.10: The Court in Action

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-5.B)

AP® United States Government and Politics: Sample Syllabus 1

Key Terms: Judicial Review, Judicial Activism, Judicial Restraint

Topic 2.11: Checks on the Judicial Branch

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-5.B, CON-5.C)

Key Terms: Constitutional Amendments, Appointment and Confirmation, Court Jurisdiction, Implementation of Court Rulings

Topic 2.12: The Bureaucracy

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-2.A)

Key Terms: Regulations, Fines, Congressional Testimony, Issue Network, Iron Triangles, Political Patronage, Civil Service, Merit System

Topic 2.13: Discretionary and Rule-Making Authority

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-2.B)

Key Terms: Bureaucratic Discretion, Rule-Making, Policy Implementation

Topic 2.14: Holding the Bureaucracy Accountable

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-2.C)

Key Terms: Oversight (Committee Hearings and Power of the Purse)

Topic 2.15: Policy and the Branches of Government

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-2.E)

Sample Activities and Assignments for Unit 2

The Constitutionality of the 2010 Texas Redistricting Plan:

- **Framing Question:** Develop an argument regarding whether the 2010 Texas redistricting plan is constitutional.
- **Secondary Framing Question:** Explain the implications of gerrymandering.
- **Activity Summary:** Students will begin by analyzing *The Washington Post* infographic on gerrymandering to distill a conceptual definition of the term. Students will then analyze and compare the Supreme Court rulings in *Baker v. Carr* (1961), *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), and *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) to determine the constitutional basis of court challenges over redistricting and identify and describe the constitutional rules and parameters for redistricting. Students will then apply these rules and the rules discussed in the article accompanying the infographic to the Texas 2010 redistricting map and data (linked below) to develop an argument regarding whether the 2010 Texas redistricting plan is constitutional. After engaging in a discussion around this question, students will write an essay in which they develop their argument about the constitutionality of the redistricting scheme and explain the potential implications that this debate has on congressional decision-making and the incumbency advantage phenomena. **[CR10: activity] [CR12] [CR13] [CR15: activity]**
- **Additional Sources:** *The Washington Post* Gerrymandering Infographic (“This is the Best Explanation of Gerrymandering You Will Ever See”), Texas Congressional District Data Showing Overall Population and Latino Population by District (“Mapping the Latin Electorate by Congressional District”), Texas 2010 Congressional Redistricting Maps from GovTrack.us.
- **Learning Objective Alignment:** CON-3.C, PRD-2.C

AP® United States Government and Politics: Sample Syllabus 1

[CR10] — 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.

[CR12] — The course provides opportunities to apply course concepts and Supreme Court decisions in real-world contexts or scenarios.

[CR13] — The course provides opportunities to develop an argument in the form of an essay, supported by relevant evidence, about a concept described in the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework*.

[CR15] — Students are provided opportunities to analyze the 15 required Supreme Court cases as described in the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework* and connect them to other non-required landmark cases.

Simulation – Standing Committee Mark-Up:

- **Framing Question:** Develop an argument that explains whether the legislative process best represents an example of participatory democracy, pluralist democracy, or elite democracy.
- **Activity Summary:** Students will be assigned different roles representing individuals or institutions that could influence the mark-up process and passage of a bill out of a congressional standing committee, along with a basic draft of a paragraph-long bill that proposes entitlement reform as a means of decreasing the federal budget deficit. Roles in the simulation include Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, Majority Party Members of Ways and Means, Minority Party Members of Ways and Means, Party Leadership in the House, Party Leadership in the Senate, interest groups representing various perspectives on the bill, relevant bureaucratic agency leaders (e.g., Social Security Administration), and the President of the United States. The Chair of the Ways and Means Committee will make decisions throughout the simulation, such as whether to pigeonhole the bill, whether to calendar the bill for mark-up, or whether to refer the bill to subcommittee. Regardless of this decision, the Ways and Means Committee will engage in a mark-up process of the bill as different representatives within the committee attempt to logroll and actors and institutions outside of the committee attempt to influence the bill and pursue their interests as the bill works its way through the committee process. Students will then learn about the rest of the legislative process and use evidence from this simulation, along with evidence from foundational documents such as the U.S. Constitution and *Federalist No. 51*, to develop a thesis that answers the framing question and supports this thesis with evidence. [CR6] [CR7] [CR8] CR13]
- **Learning Objective Alignment:** LOR-1.B, CON-3.B, CON-3.C, PMI-5.E

[CR6] — The course integrates public policy within each unit.

[CR7] — The course addresses the big ideas by connecting enduring understandings across one or more units.

[CR8] — The course provides opportunities to analyze and compare political concepts.

[CR13] — The course provides opportunities to develop an argument in the form of an essay, supported by relevant evidence, about a concept described in the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework*.

Civic Engagement Project Task 2: Domestic Policy and Federalism

Deadline: About two-to-three weeks after the start of Unit 2

Student Output: The goal for this second benchmark is for students to connect what they learn in Unit 1 about federalism to their policy problem and begin exploring potential solutions to their policy problem. For this benchmark, students will submit a written report that:

- A. Identifies the government powers relevant to their policy problem and explains whether these powers are best classified as enumerated, implied, reserved, or concurrent.

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- B. Explains the relationship between their policy problem and Constitutional provisions that frame federalism, including the Tenth Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment, the Supremacy Clause, the Necessary and Proper Clause, and the enumerated powers in Article 1, Section 8.
- C. Explains the relationship between federalism and the policy problem and whether, overall, the policy problem is more influenced by the national government or state governments.
- D. Explains at least one advantage and one disadvantage that federalism and checks and balances in the national government poses for interest groups seeking to influence government policy on this policy problem.

Students will also find one text-based qualitative source related to their policy problem from an online source that focuses on politics and policy, such as the National Constitution Center’s *Constitution Daily Blog*, *FiveThirtyEight*, or *Politico*. Students will describe the author’s claim(s), perspectives, assumptions, and reasoning, explain how the source relates to their policy problem, and respond to the author’s claim. **[CR10: activity]**

[CR10] — 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.

Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights [CR3]

(18 instructional days)

[CR3] — The course includes the Civil Liberties and Civil Rights Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

Essential Questions:

- To what extent do the U.S. Constitution and its amendments protect against undue government infringement on essential liberties and from invidious discrimination?
- How have U.S. Supreme Court rulings defined civil liberties and civil rights?

Topic 3.1: The Bill of Rights

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-2.A and LOR-2.B)

Key Terms: Bill of Rights, Civil Liberties

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States

Topic 3.2: First Amendment - Freedom of Religion

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-2.C)

Key Terms: Establishment Clause, Free Exercise Clause

Foundational Documents and Required Cases: The Constitution of the United States, *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972)

Topic 3.3: First Amendment - Freedom of Speech

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-2.C)

Key Terms: Symbolic Speech, Limits on Speech – Time, Manner, and Place Regulations, Defamatory, Offensive, and Obscene Gestures, “Clear and Present Danger”

Foundational Documents and Required Cases: The Constitution of the United States, *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), *Schenck v. United States* (1919)

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Topic 3.4: First Amendment - Freedom of the Press

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-2.C)

Key Terms: Prior Restraint

Foundational Documents and Required Cases: The Constitution of the United States, New York Times Co. v. United States (1971)

Topic 3.5: Second Amendment - Right to Bear Arms

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-2.C)

Key Terms: Second Amendment

Foundational Documents and Required Cases: The Constitution of the United States, McDonald v. Chicago (2010)

Topic 3.6: Amendments - Balancing Individual Freedom with Public Order and Safety

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-2.D)

Key Terms: Second Amendment, Fourth Amendment, Eighth Amendment

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States

Topic 3.7: Selective Incorporation

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-3.A)

Key Terms: Selective Incorporation, Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment

Foundational Documents and Required Cases: The Constitution of the United States, McDonald v. Chicago (2010)

Topic 3.8: Amendments - Due Process and the Rights of the Accused

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-3.B)

Key Terms: Selective Incorporation, Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, Miranda Rule, Miranda v. Arizona (1966), Public Safety Exception, Right to Legal Counsel, Right to Speedy and Public Trial, Right to Impartial Jury, Protection Against Warrantless Searches, Exclusionary Rule

Foundational Documents and Required Cases: The Constitution of the United States, Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)

Topic 3.9: Amendments - Due Process and the Right to Privacy

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Liberty and Order (LOR-3.B)

Key Terms: Ninth Amendment, Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment

Foundational Documents and Required Cases: The Constitution of the United States, Roe v. Wade (1973)

Topic 3.10: Social Movements and Equal Protection

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD-1.A)

Key Terms: Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, Civil Rights, National Organization for Women (NOW), Pro-Life Movement

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States, “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

Topic 3.11: Government Responses to Social Movements

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-3.A)

Key Terms: The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, the Voting Rights Act of 1965

Required Cases: Brown v. Board of Education (1954)

Topic 3.12: Balancing Minority and Majority Rights

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-6.A)

Key Terms: Public Accommodation Laws, Majority-Minority Districts

Required Cases: Brown v. Board of Education (1954)

Topic 3.13: Affirmative Action

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Constitutionalism (CON-6.A)

Key Terms: Affirmative Action

Sample Activities and Assignments for Unit 3

Argument and Discussion – Who is Most Responsible for Advancing Civil Rights since the 1950s?:

- **Framing Question:** Argue whether Congress, the U.S. Supreme Court, or social movements are most responsible for the advancement of civil rights since the 1950s.
- **Activity Summary:** First, students will analyze the role of specific laws, U.S. Supreme Court rulings, and social movements in either advancing or hindering civil rights since the 1950s. U.S. Supreme Court cases students could analyze and use as evidence include: Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), Brown v. Board of Education (1954), Sweatt v. Painter (1950), Heart of Atlanta Motel, Inc. v. United States (1964), Shaw v. Reno (1993), Craig v. Boren (1976), Griswold v. Connecticut (1965), and Roe v. Wade (1973). Congressional actions that students could analyze and use include The Civil Rights Act of 1964, The Voting Rights Act of 1965, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, the Twenty-Fourth Amendment, and the Equal Rights Amendment. Social movements students will analyze include the African American Civil Rights Movement, led by Dr. Martin Luther King (this analysis will include excerpts from “Letter from Birmingham Jail”) and the National Organization for Women. After explaining the role of Congressional actions, U.S. Supreme Court rulings, and social movements in advancing civil rights since the 1950s, students will be divided into groups, and each group will be assigned to argue on behalf of either Congress, the U.S. Supreme Court, or social movements. At the conclusion of the discussion in which each group represents their assigned perspective, students will focus on Practice 6 (the use of refutation, concession, and rebuttal in responding to opposing or alternative perspectives) based on the points that various groups highlighted during the discussion. [CR8] [CR15: activity]
- **Learning Objective Alignment:** PRD-1.A, PMI-3.A, CON-6.A

[CR8] — The course provides opportunities to analyze and compare political concepts.

[CR15] — Students are provided opportunities to analyze the 15 required Supreme Court cases as described in the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework* and connect them to other non-required landmark cases.

Mock Oral Arguments – Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission:

- **Framing Question:** Constitutionally, how do we balance the civil liberties of an individual with the civil rights of a group when the two come into conflict with one another?
- **Activity Summary:** Students will frame the mock trial by first reading the overview of the Free Exercise Clause from the National Constitution Center’s Interactive Constitution and explaining how cases such as Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972), Employment Division v. Smith (1990), Reynolds v. United States (1878), and Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah (1993) have shaped the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the Free Exercise Clause. Students will then be divided into three groups – petitioners, respondents, and Supreme Court justices. Within these groups, students will be assigned roles such as chief justice, lead attorney, and paralegal. Students will be given an overview of the facts of the case from

Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission, along with a set of the constitutional questions underlying the case, including the extent to which the relevant provision from the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act is constitutional under the Tenth Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment, whether the creation of a wedding cake is expression protected under the First Amendment’s Freedom of Speech, and whether the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act can compel the cake shop owner to produce a cake that violates his sincerely held religious beliefs under the Free Exercise Clause pursuant with similar federal public accommodation laws that compel businesses, under the Commerce Clause, to not discriminate against protected classifications of individuals. Students will have one day to prepare their arguments, one day to rehearse their statements and practice for cross-examination, and then the Supreme Court mock oral arguments will take place. Students will then reflect on how factors such as precedent and stare decisis, the ideological composition of the Supreme Court, and judicial activism and restraint might influence how the course rules in this case. [CR6] [CR7] [CR8] [CR12] [CR15: activity]

- **Additional Sources:** Gedicks, Frederick, and Michael McConnell. “The Free Exercise Clause.” National Constitution Center.
- **Learning Objective Alignment:** CON-5.B, LOR-2.C, LOR-3.A, CON-6.A

[CR6] — The course integrates public policy within each unit.

[CR7] — The course addresses the big ideas by connecting enduring understandings across one or more units.

[CR8] — The course provides opportunities to analyze and compare political concepts.

[CR12] — The course provides opportunities to apply course concepts and Supreme Court decisions in real-world contexts or scenarios.

[CR15] — Students are provided opportunities to analyze the 15 required Supreme Court cases as described in the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework* and connect them to other non-required landmark cases.

Civic Engagement Project Task 3: Domestic Policy and the Institutions of the Federal Government

Deadline: About two weeks after the start of Unit 3

Student Output: The goal for this third benchmark is for students to connect what they learn in Unit 2 about the institutions of the federal government to their policy problem and begin determining which institution of government should be targeted if the interest group wants to push for change related to their policy problem. For this benchmark, students will submit a written report that addresses the following for each of the institutions of the federal government (e.g., Congress, the president, the federal judiciary, and the federal bureaucracy):

- Identify and describe at least ONE power that each federal government institution can use to influence your policy problem. Explain how each of these powers influence the policy problem.
- Identify at least ONE specific landmark action that each federal government institution has taken in your policy area and explain how each action influences your policy problem.
- Explain at least ONE way in which the influence of each federal government institution over your policy problem can be limited by one of the other federal government institutions.
- Explain how at least ONE of the following concepts might limit or enhance your interest group’s ability to influence the policy problem – divided government, gerrymandering, and iron triangle.
- Make an argument in written form, supported by evidence, concerning which institution of the federal government your interest group should target in seeking to influence policy related to your policy problem.

[CR13]

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Students will also find a visual source related to their policy problem. This visual source can take the form of a political cartoon from a news website, such as *U.S. News & World Report* or *The Week* news magazine, or an infographic from a news website, such as *The Washington Post* or the *New York Times*. Students will describe the topic and perspective conveyed in the visual and explain how the elements of the visual are related to their policy problem and how the visual impacts their view of the problem. [CR11]

[CR13] — The course provides opportunities to develop an argument in the form of an essay, supported by relevant evidence, about a concept described in the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework*.

[CR11] — The course provides opportunities to analyze and interpret visual information to explain how the elements of the visual illustrate or relate to political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.

Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs [CR4]

(13 instructional days)

[CR4] — The course includes the American Political Ideologies and Beliefs Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

Essential Questions:

- How are American political beliefs formed and how do they evolve over time?
- How do political ideology and core values influence government policy making?

Topic 4.1: American Attitudes about Government and Politics

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Methods of Political Analysis (MPA-1.A)

Key Terms: Individualism, Equality of Opportunity, Free Enterprise, Rule of Law, Limited Government

Topic 4.2: Political Socialization

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Methods of Political Analysis (MPA-1)

Key Terms: Political Socialization, Political Culture

Topic 4.3: Changes in Ideology

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Methods of Political Analysis (MPA-1)

Topic 4.4: Influence of Political Events on Ideology

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Methods of Political Analysis (MPA-1)

Topic 4.5: Measuring Public Opinion

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Methods of Political Analysis (MPA-2)

Key Terms: Opinion Polls, Tracking Polls, Exit Polls, Sampling Techniques, Sampling Error

Topic 4.6: Evaluating Public Opinion Data

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Methods of Political Analysis (MPA-2.B)

Topic 4.7: Ideologies of Political Parties

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-4.A)

Key Terms: Democratic Party, Republican Party, Conservative Ideology, Liberal Ideology

Topic 4.8: Ideology and Policy-Making

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-4.B)

Topic 4.9: Ideology and Economic Policy

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-4.C, PMI-4.D)

Key Terms: Liberal Ideology, Conservative Ideology, Libertarian Ideology, Keynesian Economics, Supply-Side Economics, Fiscal Policy, Monetary Policy, the Federal Reserve

Topic 4.10: Ideology and Social Policy

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-4.E, PMI-4.F)

Key Terms: Liberal Ideology, Conservative Ideology, Libertarian Ideology

Sample Activities and Assignments for Unit 4

Political Culture and Political Ideology Party Platform Analysis:

- **Framing Question:** Which force will ultimately prevail – The core values that unite us or the attitudes and ideological beliefs that divide us?
- **Activity Summary:** Students will first explain how excerpts from Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* help to describe core American political values such as individualism, equality of opportunity, free enterprise, rule of law, limited government, and popular sovereignty. Students will then analyze excerpts from the most recent Republican Party Platform and Democratic Party Platform and explain how excerpts from both party platforms connect to these core American political values. Next, students will compare the attitudes and ideological beliefs of both parties with respect to these core values before answering and discussing the framing question, using their understanding of their policy from the civics engagement process and data on political polarization and public opinion with regards to core American political values as additional evidence in answering the question. [CR6] [CR10: activity]
- **Additional Sources:** 2016 Republican Party Platform, 2016 Democratic Party Platform, Data on Political Polarization (“Political Polarization in the American Public.” *Pew Research Center*, June 12, 2014), Public Opinion Data (“Republicans less likely than Democrats to see major role for govt on health care, poverty assistance.” *Pew Research Center*, November 20, 2015)
- **Learning Objective Alignment:** MPA-1.A, PMI-4

[CR6] — The course integrates public policy within each unit.

[CR10] — 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.

Polling Lessons Learned from The Literary Digest 1936 Presidential Election Poll:

- **Framing Question:** Under what circumstances should a public opinion poll be considered reliable and accurate?
- **Activity Summary:** Students will start by evaluating the polling methods used in *The Literary Digest* 1936 Presidential Election Poll, which predicted inaccurately that Alf Landon would defeat FDR. The poll mailed out 10,000,000 questionnaires, in the form of postcards, to subscribers of *The Literary Digest*, and the postcard consisted of a mock ballot that 2,300,000 subscribers to *The Literary Digest* voluntarily submitted. Students will determine the type of poll and update the sampling methods to make the poll more reliable. Students will then apply their takeaways from the evaluation of this poll to a series of 2016 presidential election polls and develop an explanation as to why polling in 2016 consistently struggled to

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project the outcome of both the party nomination and general elections and how these struggles might influence polling's use in campaigns and policy decisions. [CR9] [CR12]

- **Learning Objective Alignment:** MPA-2.A, MPA-2.B

[CR9] — The course provides opportunities to analyze and interpret quantitative data to explain what the data implies or illustrates about political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.

[CR12] — The course provides opportunities to apply course concepts and Supreme Court decisions in real-world contexts or scenarios.

Civic Engagement Task 4: The Connection Between Influencing Domestic Policy, Civil Liberties, and Civil Rights

Deadline: About two weeks after the start of Unit 4

Student Output: The goal for this fourth benchmark is for students to both analyze civil liberties or civil rights issues underlying their policy problem and to analyze how interpretations of civil liberties protect and limit interest groups as they seek to influence domestic policy. For this benchmark, students will submit a written report that:

- A. Explains the relationship between their policy problem and civil liberties, and as appropriate, identifies the specific provisions in the Bill of Rights that relate to their policy problem and explains how these provisions are related to the policy problem.
- B. Explains the relationship between their policy problem and civil rights.
- C. Explains how at least ONE Supreme Court case related to civil liberties or civil rights protects or enhances their interest group's ability to influence policy.
- D. Explains how at least ONE Supreme Court case related to civil liberties or civil rights limits their interest group's ability to influence policy.
- E. Describes at least ONE lesson, strategy, or idea their interest group can borrow from "Letter from Birmingham Jail," the National Organization for Women, or the pro-life movement in terms of how to successfully influence government policy.

Unit 5: Political Participation [CR5]

(26 instructional days)

[CR5] — The course includes the Political Participation Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

Essential Questions:

- How have changes in technology influenced political communication and behavior?
- Why do levels of participation and influence in politics vary?
- How effective are the various methods of political participation in shaping public policies?

Topic 5.1: Voting Rights and Models of Voting Behavior

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (MPA-3.A, MPA-3.B)

Key Terms: Fifteenth Amendment, Seventeenth Amendment, Nineteenth Amendment, Twenty-Fourth Amendment, Twenty-Sixth Amendment, Voting Rights Act of 1965, Rational Choice Voting, Retrospective Voting, Prospective Voting, Party-Line Voting

AP® United States Government and Politics: Sample Syllabus 1

Foundational Documents: The Constitution of the United States

Topic 5.2: Voter Turnout

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (MPA-3.C)

Key Terms: Voter Turnout, Vote Choice, Political Efficacy, Voter Registration, Compulsory Voting, Mid-Term Elections, Presidential Elections, Relationship Between Demographics and Voter Turnout, Relationship Between Demographics and Vote Choice

Topic 5.3: Political Parties

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-5.A, PMI-5.B)

Key Terms: Linkage Institutions, Political Parties, Party Platforms, Committee and Party Leadership in Legislatures

Topic 5.4: How and Why Political Parties Change and Adapt

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-5.C)

Key Terms: Candidate-Centric Campaigns, Direct Primaries, Critical Elections, Realignments, Campaign Finance

Topic 5.5: Third-Party Politics

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-5.D)

Key Terms: Proportional System, Winner-Take-All System, Party Platforms

Topic 5.6: Interest Groups Influencing Policy-Making

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-5.E, PMI-5.F)

Key Terms: Iron Triangle, Issue Networks, “Free Rider” Problem

Topic 5.7: Groups Influencing Policy Outcomes

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI-5.G)

Key Terms: Single-Issue Groups, Ideological/Social Movements, Protest Movements, Professional Organizations, Federal Budget Process

Topic 5.8: Electing a President

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD-2.A, PRD-2.B)

Key Terms: Incumbency Advantage, Open and Closed Primaries, Caucuses, Party Conventions, Electoral College, Winner-Take-All, National Popular Vote

Topic 5.9: Congressional Elections

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD-2.C)

Key Terms: Incumbency Advantage, Open and Closed Primaries, Caucuses, Presidential Elections, Mid-Term Elections

Topic 5.10: Modern Campaigns

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD-2.D)

Key Terms: Political Consultants, Campaign Finance, Social Media

Topic 5.11: Campaign Finance

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD-2.E)

AP® United States Government and Politics: Sample Syllabus 1

Key Terms: Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, Soft Money, “Stand by Your Ad” provision, PACs and Super PACs

Required Case: Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)

Topic 5.12: The Media

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD-3.A)

Key Terms: Horseshoe Journalism, Media as a Gatekeeper

Topic 5.13: Changing Media

Big Idea and Learning Objective: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD-3.B)

Key Terms: Media Bias, Partisan News Sites, Ideologically Oriented Programming

Sample Activities and Assignments for Unit 5

Campaign Strategy Simulation:

- **Framing Question:** How do demographic trends in political ideology, party affiliation, and voter turnout affect campaign strategy?
- **Activity Summary:** Students will be assigned roles as campaign management for one of the major political parties in an upcoming mid-term Congressional election. Students will be given demographic profiles for three typical members of the eligible voting population, with information provided on the three individuals’ race/ethnicity, religion, gender, income, age, education, occupation category, and geographic region. Using exit poll data from the most recent presidential election and mid-term Congressional election, along with an infographic and data on voter turnout levels by demographic, students will develop a campaign strategy for the upcoming mid-term Congressional election. This strategy will outline which of the three demographic profiles are most likely to vote Republican and Democrat along with which profile is most likely to be moderate, while also accounting for which profiles are most likely to vote and least likely to vote and why. Students will then explain how their campaign strategy might be different during a presidential election year or a primary election versus a general election. **[CR9]**
- **Additional Sources:** Exit Poll Data (Huang, Jon, et al. “Election 2016: Exit Polls.” *New York Times*, November 8, 2016.), Voter Turnout Infographic (Gray, Emma. “Voter Turnout Graphic Shows Women, Older People Most Likely to Come Out on Election Day.” *Huffington Post*, August 17, 2012.)
- **Learning Objective Alignment:** MPA-3.C, PMI-5.B, PMI-5.C, PRD-2.C

[CR9] — The course provides opportunities to analyze and interpret quantitative data to explain what the data implies or illustrates about political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.

Creating a Policy or Strategy to Increase Voter Turnout:

- **Framing Question:** Why do so many eligible voters find it “irrational” to vote, and what could either the federal government, state governments, or linkage institutions do to make the benefits of voting outweigh the costs for more voters?
- **Activity Summary:** This activity frames the potential problem of low voter turnout through the lens of economic rationality. Students first consider the different factors that influence an individual’s decision to vote (attitudinal factors, government requirements, and institutional forces) and how these factors impact either the costs of voting or the benefits of voting. Then, in small groups, students either take on the role of an interest group or political party planning a “get out the vote” drive or the state or federal government looking to craft a policy to increase voter turnout (like Motor Voter). Students will design a policy or

strategy, explaining how their plan will either raise the benefits or lower the costs of voting for more voters and whether their plan is constitutional (if they take the perspective of the state or federal government). The first part of the activity will culminate in students presenting their policy or plan to the class. Students will then consider the implications of higher voter turnout in terms of changes in election outcomes and policies by considering what would happen if the U.S. adopted compulsory voting laws or policies similar to the ones designed by the students.

- **Additional Sources:** Map and Data on Photo ID Laws across different states (“Voter Identification Requirements.” *National Conference of State Legislatures*, June 5, 2017), and Map on the Relationship Between Same Day Registration and Voter Turnout (“Interactive map: Does same-day registration affect voter turnout in the U.S.?” *PBS*, October 4, 2015).
- **Learning Objective Alignment:** MPA-3.B, MPA-3.C, PMI-5.B, PMI-5.C, PMI-5.E

Assignment – Concept-Mapping:

- **Assignment Summary:** Concept-mapping is an assignment that students will complete at various points throughout the course in the lead-up to summative assessments. In constructing a concept-map, students will place a quote, a piece of text, data, a visual, a foundational political concept, or a unit essential question in the center of the concept map. Students are then given a set of key terms that they visually connect back to the center of the concept map or the other terms on the concept map. Students must include a description for each term and a brief explanation on each line connecting terms.

Civic Engagement Project Task 5: Domestic Policy, Public Opinion, and Political Ideology [CR4]

Deadline: About two weeks after the start of Unit 5

Student Output: The goal for this fifth benchmark is for students to analyze the relationship between their domestic policy problem and both public opinion and political ideology. For this benchmark, students will submit a written report that:

- A. Presents two public opinion polls from a polling service or website, such as Gallup, the *Pew Research Center*, a news website, or *FiveThirtyEight*, that present public opinion data related to their policy problem. Students will describe the data presented in each poll, describe patterns and trends in the data, draw at least one conclusion based on the data, explain how the data relates to their policy problem, and account for any differences in the data presented by both polls. Students will also evaluate the reliability and veracity of the polls by analyzing their sampling techniques and question types. [CR9]
- B. Describes the stance of the Republican Party, Democratic Party, and ONE third party as it relates to the policy problem based on the information presented in the most recent national party platforms. Students will also explain the relationship between the Republican Party’s stance and conservatism, the Democratic Party’s stance and liberalism, and the relationship between the stance of the third party and the two major parties.
- C. Explains how individual political beliefs related to their topic develop as well as how the policy problem is related to ONE of the core values underlying American political culture (e.g., individualism, equality of opportunity, free enterprise, rule of law, limited government) and how the major parties differ in their attitudes towards this core value.
- D. Explains how the information researched in this benchmark might influence the strategic approach of the interest group in attempting to influence policy around the policy problem.

[CR4] — The course includes the American Political Ideologies and Beliefs Unit and addresses all related big ideas (BIs) and enduring understandings (EUs).

[CR9] — The course provides opportunities to analyze and interpret quantitative data to explain what the data implies or illustrates about political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.

Civic Engagement Project Task 6: Final Presentations [CR7] [CR8] [CR14]

Deadline: Presentations will begin about one week after Unit 5

Student Output: Students will synthesize the research on their domestic policy problem that they researched throughout the year and the course content on linkage institutions in Unit 5 to create a visual presentation (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, tri-fold poster board, video) that presents a strategic plan that their interest group should take to push government to solve the policy problem. This presentation should include:

- A. A description of the policy area and problem the interest group is seeking to influence.
- B. A description of the policy solution that the interest group would like to see enacted and an explanation of how this solution solves the policy problem.
- C. An identification of the specific institutions of government the interest group is going to lobby and an explanation of why these institutions are the most important to lobby on this issue.
- D. A description of the specific strategies the interest group is going to use to influence the policy problem and an explanation of why these strategies are the most effective in this context.
- E. A description of at least TWO challenges the interest group is likely to encounter (e.g., shifts in public opinion, party polarization on the issue, Constitutional challenges, challenges related to media coverage and exposure) and an explanation of how the interest group plans to overcome these challenges.

Groups will present their interest group’s strategic plan for approximately 10–12 minutes. Groups will then field questions from their peers and a panel of social studies teachers regarding the accuracy, effectiveness, and viability of their interest group strategic plan.

[CR7] — The course addresses the big ideas by connecting enduring understandings across one or more units.

[CR8] — The course provides opportunities to analyze and compare political concepts.

[CR14] — Students are provided with an opportunity to engage in a political science research or applied civics project tied to the *AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum Framework* that culminates in a presentation of findings.