

AP United States Government and Politics (APGOV-061-Too2)

Syllabus

What You Should Already Know

There are no prerequisites for this course. However, there are some preliminary assessments to help you be aware of the course requirements.

You are required to take the orientation quiz before you continue to ensure that you are ready to begin the course, and then you need to complete the course pretest to measure what you already know. Neither item counts toward your course grade, and you are not expected to know most of what is on the pretest.

Course Learning Outcomes

This course is based on the learning objectives that are associated with the “big ideas” and “enduring understandings” listed in the AP U.S. Government and Politics curriculum framework. Big ideas focus on major concepts in the U.S. government. Enduring understandings (EUs) focus on a particular aspect of a big idea to highlight the level of understanding required for AP students to be successful. EUs are numbered to correspond with the big ideas; for example, EU 1.A is the first concept under big idea 1.

Big Ideas

- **Constitutional Democracy:** The U.S. Constitution arose out of important historical and philosophical ideas and preferences regarding popular sovereignty and limited government. To address competing states’ visions for the allocation

of governmental authority, compromises were made during the Constitutional Convention and ratification debates, and these compromises have frequently been the source of debate and negotiation in U.S. politics over the proper balance between federal and state power and between liberty and social order.

- **Civil Liberties, Civil Rights:** Through the U.S. Constitution, but primarily through the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment, citizens and groups have attempted to restrict national and state governments from unduly infringing upon individual rights and from denying equal protection under the law. Sometimes the Supreme Court has handed down decisions that protect both public order and individual freedom, and at other times the court has set precedents protecting one at the expense of the other.
- **American Political Culture and Beliefs:** American political beliefs are shaped by founding ideals, core values, and the changing demographics of the citizenry. These beliefs about government, politics, and the individual's role in the political system influence the creation of ideological trends that span decades impacting public policies.
- **Political Participation:** Governing is achieved directly through citizen participation and indirectly through linkage institutions (e.g., political parties, interest groups, and mass media) that inform, organize, and mobilize support to influence government and politics, resulting in many venues for citizen influence on policy making.
- **Interaction Among Branches:** Because power is widely distributed and checks prevent one branch from usurping powers from the others, institutional actors are in the position where they must both compete and cooperate in order to govern.

Enduring Understandings (EUs)

1.A. A balance between governmental power and individual rights has been a hallmark of American political development.

1.B. The writing and ratification of the Constitution emerged from the debate about weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation and was the product of important compromises.

1.C. The Constitution creates a complex and competitive policy-making process to

ensure the people's will is accurately represented and that freedom is preserved.

1.D. Federalism reflects the dynamic distribution of power between national and state governments.

2.A. Provisions of the Bill of Rights are continually being interpreted to balance the power of government and the civil liberties of individuals.

2.B. The due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment has been interpreted to prevent the states from infringing upon basic liberties.

2.C. The Fourteenth Amendment's "equal protection clause" has often been used to support the advancement of equality.

3.A. Citizen beliefs about government are shaped by the intersection of demographics, political culture, and dynamic social change.

3.B. Widely held political ideologies shape policy debates and choices in American politics.

4.A. Public opinion is measured through scientific polling, and the results of public opinion polls influence public policies and institutions.

4.B. The various forms of media provide citizens with political information and influence the ways in which they participate politically.

4.C. Political parties, interest groups, and social movements provide opportunities for participation and influence how people relate to the government.

4.D. Although laws and amendments have expanded voting rights in the U.S., voting participation varies widely from election to election.

4.E. The impact of federal policies on campaigning and electoral rules continues to be contested by both sides of the political spectrum.

5.A. The republican ideal in the U.S. is manifested in the structure and operation of the legislative branch.

5.B. The presidency has been enhanced beyond its expressed constitutional powers.

5.C. The design of the judicial branch protects the court's independence as a branch of

government, and the emergence and use of judicial review remains a powerful judicial practice.

5.D. The federal bureaucracy is a powerful institution implementing federal policies with sometimes questionable accountability.

Course Materials

Textbook

Glen Krutz, *American Government*, OpenStax College, 2016.

You can download the PDF, view the text online, or purchase a printed copy through [the OpenStax site](#).

Be aware that the file size is 31MB if you use the download option.

Assignments

There are 10 units in this course, each consisting of several lessons. Each lesson contains a textbook reading assignment, course readings, and a self-check quiz; the self-checks are ungraded questions that will help you measure your comprehension of the lessons and prepare for the unit quizzes and the final exam.

Unit Quizzes

Each unit has a unit quiz. These quizzes test your ability to analyze and interpret the reading selections. Unit quizzes are each worth 3 percent of your overall course grade, amounting to 30 percent total.

Cumulative Reviews

There are also two cumulative reviews (one after unit 5 for units 1–5 and one after unit 10 for the whole course), which are worth a total of 4 percent of the grade.

Like the unit quizzes, these computer-graded assignments consist of multiple-choice questions that will test your understanding of the concepts learned in the course. The first covers the concepts learned in units 1–5; the second covers the concepts learned in units 1–10. Because these assignments cover concepts from several different units, they are longer than the normal unit quizzes. However, they are worth a smaller percentage of your grade to help you relax and use them as refreshers on the important course concepts.

To prepare for these cumulative review assignments, review all of the self-check and unit quiz questions from the previous units, and make sure you review the readings from each lesson. These assignments do count toward your final grade.

Written Assignments

You will be completing written assignments for each unit throughout the course. Some units have instructor-graded assignments; other units have self-scored assignments.

The instructor-graded assignments are worth a total of 34 percent of your course grade. Unit 2 Assignment - 6%, Unit 5 Assignment 1 - 4%, Unit 5 Assignment 2 - 4%, Unit 7 Assignment - 6%, Unit 8 Assignment - 3%, Unit 10 Assignment - 12%. They will help you apply what you have learned in the unit and will prepare you for the written portion of the AP exam.

You will also have self-scored assignments, which are worth a total of 8 percent of your course grade. You will select your score based on the guidelines that are provided with each assignment, and the instructor will spot-check your work on these review items.

You will need to submit the assignments in the modules throughout the course before taking the final exam.

Course Resources

Appendix materials are available in the Course Resources folder and may be helpful in completing your assignments and preparing for the AP exam.

- Appendix A contains links to the required foundational documents, including the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights and Amendments XI to XXVI, *Brutus* No. 1, *The Federalist Papers*, and *Letter to Birmingham Jail*.
- Appendix B contains a listing of the 19 required Supreme Court cases, along with the lesson coverage and textbook reading references for them.
- Appendix C contains additional AP exam preparation information from the College Board website.

Additionally, the Course Resources folder includes a general discussion board and a course wiki. The discussion board allows students to talk about course topics with each other; the wiki is designed for the instructor to post information that may provide enrichment or to post relevant information for the course.

Exams

The final exam is worth 24 percent of your grade and covers reading selections and discussion material that you will study in the course. It consists of about 50 multiple-choice questions.

Grading

Your grade in this course is composed of your unit quiz scores, assignment scores, and final exam score. The following table shows the percentages for each assignment.

Assignment	Percentage
Unit 1 Quiz	3%
Unit 2 Quiz	3%
Unit 3 Quiz	3%
Unit 4 Quiz	3%
Unit 5 Quiz	3%
Cumulative Review 1	2%
Unit 6 Quiz	3%
Unit 7 Quiz	3%
Unit 8 Quiz	3%
Unit 9 Quiz	3%
Unit 10 Quiz	3%
Cumulative Review 2	2%
Instructor-Graded Assignment Submissions	34%
Self-Scored Assignment Submissions (8 at 1% each)	8%
Final Exam	24%

Grading Scale	
A	93–100
A–	90–92
B+	87–89
B	83–86
B–	80–82
C+	77–79
C	73–76
C–	70–72
D+	67–69
D	63–66
D–	60–62
E (fail)	59 or below