

AP® United States Government and Politics Syllabus

School Profile: Spotswood High School is located in Spotswood Borough, a small suburban residential community located in central New Jersey midway between New York City and Philadelphia. Our 8,500 residents live on 1,472 acres located in the southern half of Middlesex County. This is a solid middle class community where both parents in most families are employed. The residents understand the value of an excellent education and have high aspirations for their children. The high school has served our residents and the districts of Helmetta and Milltown since 1976. The school is accredited by the New Jersey Department of Education. As of 2008, 45% of the graduating class attended 4-year colleges, 39% enrolled in 2-year colleges, 3% went to Business or Technical Schools, while 4% entered the workforce and 9% were undecided.

Personal Philosophy: Government and politics is a critical field of study for young people. Like many other schools, Spotswood High School offers the class as either a junior or senior elective. The course is an elective, but really it is a prerequisite for democratic participation in American society. Since most of the students will turn 18 before they graduate, and reach the age of voter eligibility, they will provide proof that a democracy functions best when its citizens understand how and why the government operates as it does. The AP® U. S. Government and Politics course is a vital part of a student's education.

Course Description: This year long, college-level course prepares students to take the College Board's AP® United States Government and Politics exam. The course is designed to teach students to understand and be able to critically analyze important concepts in American government and politics. As a college-level course, it is rigorous and demanding. It requires that students put forth their best effort on a daily basis, in class, on homework assignments, and while paying attention to the news outside of class. Students are expected to meet the challenges of the course with a work ethic worthy of a college-level course. This includes 10-15 pages of text reading a night, listening to or reading the news to enhance understanding of concepts, spending time outside of class experiencing politics and government in action, and coming to class consistently.

Texts and Materials:

- George C. Edwards, Martin P. Wattenburg, and Robert L. Linesberry. *Government in America: People, Policy*, 14th ed. New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2009.
- Supplementary articles from newspapers, and news magazines, including analysis & interpretation of data from notable polling institutions, like Gallup, National Opinion Research Center, Nielsen Ratings, Zogby International, Rasmussen Reports, USA Today, CNN, Bloomberg, ABC News, AP, FOX News, etc.
- Primary sources, including, but not limited to, John Locke's *Second Treatise*, U. S. Constitution, The Federalist Papers, and Supreme Court Cases.

Daily Homework and Assignments

Students will have nightly homework assignments, primarily reading the textbook, unit projects and research, as well as selected current events topics for discussion.

Course Plan: This course is organized by the following units of study:

- Unit 1—Introducing Government in America
- Unit 2—Constitutional Foundations
- Unit 3—People and Politics
- Unit 4—The Policymakers
- Unit 5—Policies
- Unit 6—State and Local Governments

Unit Objectives & Activities: In each of the designated units students will perform the following objectives and activities:

Unit 1—Introducing Government in America

1. Identify government, politics, and democracy.
 - a. Debate theories of democracy.

2. Debate the scope of government in America.

Unit 2—Constitutional Foundations

1. Examine the origins of the Constitution through the government that failed from 1776-1787, the convention's personalities, philosophies, and issues in Philadelphia, and the ratifying and amending process.
 - a. Evaluate the impact of...
 - i. English heritage
 - ii. economic turmoil
 - iii. equality issues, economic issues and individual rights.
 - iv. James Madison's model.
 - b. Debate the...
 - i. the rigidity of the Constitution
 - ii. frequency of amending the constitution.
 - iii. length of state constitutions.
 - iv. voting age.
2. Define federalism, its constitutional basis, and its intergovernmental relations today.
 - a. Assess federalism's importance.
 - b. Identify national supremacy.
 - c. Trace the obligations of states
 - d. Distinguish between dual and cooperative federalism.
 - e. Identify states' capital punishment differences.
 - f. Debate spending on public education.
3. Trace civil liberties and public policy as shaped by the freedoms outlined in the Bill of Rights (then and now), defendants' rights, and the right to privacy.
 - a. Examine the establishment clause and free exercise clause, including the tolerance for free speech of religious extremists and the case of animal sacrifices.
 - b. Identify free speech, public order, free press, obscenity, libel, slander, and symbolic speech, including the case of the Pentagon Papers, the case of the drive-in theater, and the regulation of the public airwaves.
 - c. Investigate the right to assemble, including the Nazis' march in Skokie.
 - d. Summarize defendants' rights, as well as searches and seizures, self-incrimination, right to counsel, and cruel and unusual punishment, including the case of Ms. Montoya, the case of the enticed farmer trials, the case of the first offender, and the decline of executions.
 - e. Debate the right to privacy, including Northwestern University investigations into wrongful convictions and laws on abortions for minors.
4. Analyze civil rights and public policy as it pertained over the years to racial equality, women, and newly active groups under the civil rights umbrella.
 - a. Trace the developments that extended rights to minority groups, including the era of slavery, reconstruction, re-segregation, as well as obtaining and using the right to vote.
 - b. Investigate how rights were finally extended to women, including the battle for the right to vote, the second feminist wave, wage discrimination, comparable worth, military participation, and sexual harassment, using both the diminished the gap between men's and women's wages and the creation of a male-only draft registration.
 - c. Examine the creation of movements for new groups, such as gays and lesbians, and people with disabilities.
 - d. Debate the establishment affirmative action, including the case of the Santa Clara dispatcher.
 - c. Criticize the respect accorded to minority rights.

Unit 3—People and Politics

1. Scrutinize how Americans learn about politics, how public opinion is measured, what Americans value, and how Americans participate in politics and political action.

- a. Analyze immigrants as a percentage of state populations and assess the American melting pot.
 - i. Analyze and interpret polling data in order to take a position.
 - b. Trace the process of political socialization & political learning over time.
 - i. Analyze and interpret polling data in order to take a position.
 - c. Examine how polls are conducted and the role polls play in revealing political information in the American democracy.
 - i. Analyze and interpret polling data in order to take a position.
 - d. Evaluate policy on illegal immigrants and American's decline of trust in government.
 - e. Distinguish between liberals and conservatives.
 - f. Differentiate between young and old on issues.
 - g. Judge whether people think in ideological terms.
 - i. Analyze and interpret polling data in order to take a position.
 - h. Describe attitudes towards gays and lesbians.
 - i. Identify how Americans participate in politics, including conventions and even protests.
2. Debate public attitudes toward the scope of government, democracy, public opinion & political action.
 3. Trace the development of mass media, including media politics, the way news is reported, its impact on public opinion, and its agenda-setting function.
 - a. Identify the broadcast media, government regulation, cable news and the impact of the internet.
 - b. Describe press freedom around the world, presentation of news, biases in news reporting, individualism, and media democracy.
 4. Assess the impact of political parties in terms of their tasks and role in the electorate, their promises and policy, their historical eras in American History, and their third party impacts.
 - a. Examine the parties, voters, and policy in the Downs Model.
 - b. Trace the organization from grass roots to Washington of local parties, the 50 state system, and national party organizations.
 - c. Investigate the rise and fall of parties from the first party system, to the Jackson's Democrats versus the Whigs, through the two Republican eras, into the New Deal Coalition, up to the Southern realignment and the era of divided part government.
 5. Analyze the nomination and campaign process.
 - a. Trace the process from the decision to run, to the competition for delegates and different possibilities pertaining to convention situations.
 - b. Identify and describe the high-tech media campaign, campaign finance reform and the proliferation of PACs.
 6. Investigate elections and voting behaviors to see how they work, why people vote, how people vote, and how it impacts the Electoral College.
 - a. Examine the first transition of power in 1800 and the bitter fight over economic interests in 1896.
 - b. Compare, explain and attempt to solve the issue of low voter turnout compared to other nations.
 7. Define the role and strategy of interest groups.
 - a. Summarize pluralism, group theory, elites, hyper-pluralism and interest group liberalism.
 - b. Investigate the role of large groups, lobbying, electioneering PACs and the strategies of litigation and going public.
 - c. Distinguish between types of interest groups, including those concerning economics, labor, environment, equality, consumer, public interest, as well as other more obscure interests.

Unit 3—The Policymakers

1. Analyze the structure, purpose and membership of the United States Congress.
 - a. Debate and evaluate the demographics of Congress.
 - b. Examine the advantage of incumbency.
 - c. Investigate the role of party identification.
 - d. Evaluate the validity of term limits.
 - e. Analyze the organization of committees, subcommittees and caucuses.
 - f. Describe the relationship with the President, and the relationship between Houses.
2. Examine the office of the President.

- a. Identify the people who have held the office and the circumstances which brought them there, as well as the circumstances of those who left ‘early.’
 - b. Define the constitutional powers of the presidency, the roles of the vice-president, the cabinet, the executive office, the first lady, and the White House staff.
 - c. Debate the roles a president must fulfill, including Chief Legislator, party leader, chief diplomat, commander-in-chief, crisis manager.
 - d. Evaluate public approval and policy support.
 - i. Analyze and interpret presidential approval rating data in order to take a position.
3. Investigate the federal budget process.
 - a. Define sources of federal revenue, as well as expenditures.
 - i. Explain income tax, social insurance taxes, borrowing, and tax codes.
 - ii. Identify the public sector, big government, the national security state, social service state, incremental-ism and ‘uncontrollable’ expenditures.
 - b. Analyze the budgetary process.
 - i. Describe budgeting politics
 - ii. Distinguish between congressional and presidential budgets
 - iii. Debate the scope of government.
 4. Summarize the federal bureaucracy
 - a. Distinguish between the myths and realities of the federal bureaucracy.
 - b. Identify federal jobs and the organization of cabinet departments, independent regulatory commissions, government corporations, and the independent executive agencies.
 - c. Trace implementation and how best-laid plans sometimes flunk the implementation test.
 - d. Debate regulation in the economy and everyday life.
 5. Analyze the nature, structure and politics of federal courts.
 - a. Identify the participants of the judicial system.
 - b. Explain the district courts and courts of appeal up to the Supreme Court.
 - c. Examine the politics of judicial selection, both in lower courts and the Supreme Court.
 - d. Investigate the background of judges and justices.
 - e. Summarize the courts as policymakers, pertaining to how cases are accepted, how decisions are made and how decisions are implemented.
 - f. Debate original intentions.

Unit 4—Policies

1. Examine the policymaking efforts concerning the economy.
 - a. Examine the effects of inflation and unemployment.
 - b. Investigate the economic policy effects on young workers.
 - c. Trace the monetary policy and ‘the Fed,’ as well as fiscal policy of presidents and parties.
 - d. Analyze the arenas of economic policymaking, including business and public policy, the rise of the consumer lobby, as well as labor and government.
 - e. Debate the relationship between democracy and economic policymaking and the scope of government.
2. Identify and describe the efforts of social welfare policymaking.
 - a. Examine income, poverty, and ‘welfare’ as we know it, reform efforts.
 - b. Investigate immigration policy and reform efforts.
 - c. Debate social security and President George W. Bush’s efforts to reform it.
3. Analyze policymaking for health care and the environment.
 - a. Identify the cost of health care in America.
 - b. Debate the uneven coverage and uneven care.
 - c. Evaluate the role of government in health care and efforts to reform it.
 - d. Describe environmental policy in America.
 - e. Debate energy sources and energy politics.
4. Trace the development of national security policymaking.

- a. Identify the actors, instruments, and policymakers for national security and its relationship with foreign policy.
- b. Examine national security's development from the Cold War, through Détente, then the Reagan rearmament and the final thaw.
- c. Debate the new threats from the war on terror, focusing on Iraq and Afghanistan.
- d. Investigate the politics of defense policy, including spending, personnel, weapons, and reform attempts.
- e. Place national security into the context of a new global agenda.

Unit 5—State and Local Government

1. Investigate state constitutions and their amendment processes.
2. Examine state elections, including gubernatorial and legislative elections.
 - a. Define the job of a governor
 - b. Define the role of other executive officers.
3. Analyze state legislature and state courts, in terms of both organization and selection process.
4. Debate direct democracy
5. Differentiate between types of local governments.
6. Examine state and local finance policy
7. Summarize the nature of democracy at the sub-national level and debate the scope of sub-national government.

Correlation Guide: The following correlates the AP U. S. Government and Politics requirements from the College Board with the textbook to be used in class.

- I. Constitutional Underpinnings of U. S. Government (Chapters 1, 2 & 3)
 - a. Analyze the considerations that influenced the formation and adoption of the U. S. Constitution (pp. 31-55).
 - b. Identify and explain the separation of powers (pp. 49-50).
 - c. Understand and explain federalism (pp. 51-52, 71-96)
 - d. Compare and examine theories of democratic government (pp. 14-17).
 - e. Answer practice Multiple Choice Questions.
 - f. Answer practice Free-Response Questions.
- II. Political Beliefs and Behaviors (Chapters 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11)
 - a. Summarize the beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders (pp. 3-8, 198-203, 210-211).
 - b. Analyze the processes by which citizens learn about politics (pp. 191-195).
 - c. Examine the nature, sources, and consequences of public opinion (pp. 191-195).
 - d. Distinguish the ways in which citizens vote and otherwise participate in public life (pp. 206-210, 305-325).
 - e. Categorize the factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors (pp. 201-205, 317-325).
 - f. Determine personal political ideology and assess impact of beliefs on the purpose of government (pp. 201-205, 317-325).
 - g. Answer practice Multiple Choice Questions.
 - h. Answer practice Free-Response Questions.
- III. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media (Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19 & 20)
 - a. Identify and define the Political parties and how they impact elections (Chapters 8, 9 & 10).
 - i. Describe the functions of political parties (pp. 248-251).
 - ii. Map the structure and organization of political parties (pp. 253-256).
 - iii. Trace the development and evolution of the political parties (pp. 258-267).
 - iv. Analyze the effects political parties have on the political process (pp. 248-251, 257-258, 268-271, 388-391, 416-419).
 - v. Identify and define electoral laws and systems (pp. 278-300, 305-307, 322-323, 367-373, 21.8-21.15).

- vi.
- b. Identify major interest groups, including political action committees (Chapters 11, 12, 17, 19 & 20).
 - i. Categorize the range of interests represented (pp. 336-4342, 348-355, 562, 613-614).
 - ii. Monitor and track the activities of interest groups (pp. 342-348).
 - iii. Analyze the effects of interest groups on the political process (pp. 333-348, 391, 613-614, 20.7).
 - iv. Distinguish the unique characteristics and roles of PACs in the political process (pp. 292-298, 341-342, 345-347, 350-352, 35-356, 371-372).
- c. Explain the Mass Media (Chapters 7, 9 & 13).
 - i. Identify the functions and structures of the media (pp. 218-235).
 - ii. Analyze the impact of media on politics (pp. 223-245, 287-291, 427-435).
- d. Answer practice Multiple Choice Questions.
- e. Answer practice Free-Response Questions.
- IV. Institutions of National Government: The Congress, the President, the Bureaucracy, and the Federal Courts (Chapters 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 & 21)
 - a. Identify the major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power (Chapters 3, 12, 13, 15, 16).
 - i. Define the structure, role & powers of Congress (pp. 363-385).
 - ii. Define the structure, role & powers of the Presidency (pp. 406-427).
 - iii. Summarize the bureaucracy (pp. 471-494).
 - iv. Define the structure, role & powers of the Federal Courts (pp. 75-80, 509-533).
 - b. Trace the relationship among these four institutions, and the varying balances of power (pp. 385-388, 415-427, 495-503, 518-526).
 - c. Analyze the linkages between institutions and the following...(Chapters 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 & 21)
 - i. Public opinion and voters (Chapters 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 21).
 - 1. Congress (pp. 367-373, 389-391).
 - 2. The Presidency (pp. 419-421, 427-432).
 - 3. The bureaucracy (pp. 210-211, 471-476).
 - 4. Federal Courts (pp. 537-541).
 - ii. Interest Groups (Chapters 11, 12, 15 & 16).
 - 1. Congress (pp. 342-348, 391).
 - 2. The Presidency (pp. 342-348).
 - 3. The bureaucracy (pp. 497-503).
 - 4. Federal Courts (pp. 347, 512).
 - iii. Political parties (Chapters 9, 12, 13, 15 & 16).
 - 1. Congress (pp. 388-391).
 - 2. The Presidency (pp. 278-287, 416-419).
 - 3. The bureaucracy (pp. 476-477).
 - 4. Federal Courts (pp. 522-526).
 - iv. The media (Chapters 7, 13 & 16).
 - 1. Congress (pp. 224, 231-235, 236-241).
 - 2. The Presidency (pp. 231-235, 236-241, 432-435).
 - 3. The bureaucracy (pp. 236-241, 530).
 - 4. Federal Courts (pp. 514-518, 21.3-21.40).
 - d. Answer practice Multiple Choice Questions.
 - e. Answer practice Free-Response Questions.
- V. Public Policy (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 & 21)
 - a. Analyze policy making in a federal system (pp. 75-95, 385-388, 21.32-21.34).
 - b. Summarize the formation of policy agendas (pp. 236-239, 388-391, 457-464, 20.20-20.36).

- c. Describe the role of institutions in the enactment of policy (pp. 385-388, 415-427, 457-464, 526-541).
 - d. Identify the role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation (pp. 57-60, 458-459, 479-494, 526-541).
 - e. Trace the linkages between policy processes and the following...(Chapter12)
 - i. Political institutions and federalism (pp. 385-388, 415-427, 457-464, 526-541, 20.7-20.11, 21.32-21.38).
 - ii. Political parties (pp. 249-251, 257-258, 268-271, 388-391).
 - iii. Interest groups (pp. 331-348, 497-503, 558-562, 603-606, 613-615).
 - iv. Public opinion (pp. 10-13, 419-421, 430-432, 613-615).
 - v. Elections (pp. 319-325, 420-421).
 - vi. Policy networks (pp. 497-503).
 - f. Answer practice Multiple Choice Questions.
 - g. Answer practice Free-Response Questions.
- VI. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (Chapters 4, 5 & 16)
- a. Analyze the development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation (pp. 101-139, 145-178, 526-537).
 - b. Examine the knowledge of substantive rights and liberties (pp. 103-137, 149-175).
 - c. The impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties (pp. 103-108, 147-157, 162-164).
 - d. Answer practice Multiple Choice Questions.
 - e. Answer practice Free-Response Questions.