

AP® United States Government & Politics
College Park High School
www.geocities.com/cphspolisci

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FALL SEMESTER, 2008. Welcome! I look forward to exploring the discipline of political science and government with each of you, and assisting you with other academic problems or concerns. I will be available before and after school, and during lunch if necessary.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: During this course, we will examine various historical, philosophical, and legal aspects of our government, to gain a fuller understanding of how we as a nation fit into a rapidly changing world. Using the “4 Theories of American Government” as a theme, we will explore the numerous institutions and processes which comprise our system of government.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: By the completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a *basic* understanding of some of the concepts and terminology used in the philosophy of social science and political science.
2. Identify and explain the four most commonly debated theories used to describe our system of government.
3. Identify the historical context and the philosophies of those who framed the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
4. Understand the dynamics of our “separation of powers” and the institutions (the courts, the executive, the legislature, and the media) that comprise them.
5. Identify the principles of federalism, and identify how state and local governments differ from those at the federal level.
6. Analyze and *critically* evaluate some of the important and contemporary issues in the world today, based on 1 – 5 above.
7. Demonstrate the necessary test-taking skills and strategies for success on the AP Government exam given in May of 2009.

COURSE TEXTS: James Q. Wilson and John J. Dilulio, Jr. *American Government*. The instructor will provide other assigned readings from Miroff, Seidelman & Swanstrom’s, *Debating Democracy: A Reader in American Politics*, plus numerous supplementary articles. **[CR8]**

COURSE METHODOLOGY: Class will consist primarily of lectures and class discussions, which will serve to amplify and clarify text materials. Students will also be expected to do a significant amount of reading, long and complex research projects to include quantitative and visually presented information **[CR7]**, and chapter quizzes **[CR9]**, in preparation for the AP Government exam in May. Student progress will be evaluated through class exams and written essays.

EXAMINATION/EVALUATION: Attendance is mandatory and will be formally taken at each session. Students should be prepared to do a significant amount of written essays and practice AP quizzes. Purchase of an AP exam guide (Barron’s, ARCO, or Kaplan) is *strongly* recommended. Homework will consist of working on research papers and practice AP drills. There is no mid-term but you should plan on the final exam in January to be cumulative. Class participation in discussions is strongly encouraged. Student participation in class is an indicator of interest and shows that the student is keeping up with the assigned readings. Grades will break out over a normal letter grade percentage scale (100-90% = “A”, 89-80% = “B”, etc...) and I will supply you with a grade formula so you will always know your grade. Assignment weights will be the following:

5% - Documentary Video Participation	5% - Class Participation
15% - Multiple Choice Quizzes [CR9]	30% - Written Research Projects [CR9]
25% - Final Exam	20% - Final Research Thesis [CR9]

No extra credit projects will be allowed in this course.

COURSE OUTLINE – AP U.S. GOVERNMENT

Expect to spend approximately one week per lecture!!! Some videos will not be shown in their entirety.

AG = American Government (class text) / MSS = Miroff, Seidelman, Swanstrom / PWR = Personalized Website Readings.

Introduction To and Description Of the Course.

Content Goals: Students will begin with a brief description of the topics we'll be covering this semester, to include a discussion of politics and the current condition of democracy in America. We should also take any questions, comments, or concerns found in the syllabus.

Readings: AG – Chapters 1 (pp. 1 – 15) and 4 (pp. 75 – 96) and 22 (pp. 576 – 587).

MSS – Chapter 2: Democracy: Overrated or Undervalued? (Mueller, “Democracy’s Romantic Myths” and Loeb, “The Active Citizen”). [CR8]

Video: *People Like Us: Social Class in America.*

LECTURE ONE: Politics in a Changing Society.

Content Goals: Students will examine in broad overview the nature of democracy and capitalism and discuss the relationship that exists between the two. Is it a “marriage made in heaven” as many textbooks (including yours) would suggest? Within that framework, students will begin to look at several theories of American government which compete with the traditional democratic view, especially pluralism and elite theory, and discuss the legitimacy and viability of each. Other cultural concepts will be introduced and debated such as the ideology of individualism and the notion of the American dream.

Readings: MSS – Chapter 5: Political Economy: How Democratic is the Free Market Economy? (Friedman, “Capitalism and Freedom” and Bowles and Edwards, “The Market Erodes Democratic Government”). [CR8]

Video: *People Like Us: Social Class in America.*

Materials: “Social Stratification” poster analysis; the impact of money on politics; graph of the American political spectrum – ideologies and parties.

LECTURE TWO: The Founders and the Constitution.

Content Goals: In the next section, students will take a step back and look at some of the early documents (focusing on The Declaration and The Constitution) associated with American democracy. An important precedent will be to analyze some of the early thinkers (Hobbes and Locke prominently, but others too) and discuss what impact their philosophies had on the writing of these documents. Students will also critically evaluate the motives of the founders by reviewing some later historical analysis by Beard on possible economic motivations for adopting the Constitution. In the end was it a legal, political, or economic document? Finally, a discussion of whether many contemporary problems might actually be *rooted* in the Constitution and what, if anything, should be done about it.

Readings: AG – Chapter 2 (pp. 16 – 47). [CR1]

MSS – Chapter 1: The Founding: Debating the Constitution. (Madison, “Federalist No. 10” and Brutus, “Anti-federalist Paper, 18 October 1787”).

Video: *The Corporation.*

Materials: Chart of 50 State breakdown of Electoral College vote in 2004; map of the 13 colonies in the ratification of the Constitution.

Writing / Research Project One: *Describe the structure of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and outline its historical and philosophical antecedents. Why did the Founders abandon the Articles of Confederation and start over with this new system? What were their legal, political, and economic motivations? An outline and specific instructions can be found on the class website.* [CR7] and [CR9]

LECTURE THREE: *The Federal System: Structure and Dynamics.*

Content Goals: For students, this will be a relatively brief examination of the differences between centralized and federal democracies and the advantages and disadvantages to both. Included will be a discussion of Cohen and Rogers' thesis of "American exceptionalism" and the six basic factors which contribute to this model. Students will examine the notion of whether the principle of federalism makes it difficult for people in the U.S. to politically organize themselves? Was it purposely designed that way?

Readings: AG – Chapter 3 (pp. 48 – 74). [CR1]

PWR – (Cohen and Rogers, "American Exceptionalism and the Politics of Fragmentation"). [CR8]

Video: *A Fish Story.*

Materials: Charts showing the "lines of power" in the three systems of government; Articles within the Constitution which deal directly with the relationship between federal and state government (i.e. Article 1, secs. 8, 10; Article IV, secs. 1, 2, 3, 4; Article V; charts showing federal grants to state and local governments; graphic illustrations of the changing purpose of federal grants to state and local government (1960 – 2003).

LECTURE FOUR: *The Congress: Institutions and Processes.*

Content Goals: Students are now going to analyze the different branches of government, starting with the legislative branch, which includes the Senate and the House of Representatives. Some of the concepts students will master will be the effect of party affiliation and discipline, leadership roles, the importance of committees, the various sources of legislation, and the various powers of the legislative branch. In addition to this more institutionalized approach, students will focus on some critical questions about how well this branch of government conforms to traditional democratic theories. Does "the people's branch" really serve the people? If not, who do they serve?

Readings: AG – Chapter 13 (pp. 316 – 366). [CR4]

MSS – Chapter 13: Congress: Can It Serve the Public Good? (Fiorina, "The Rise of the Washington Establishment" and Bessette, "Congress and Deliberative Democracy"). [CR8]

Video: *A Perfect Candidate.*

Materials: Charts detailing the powers of Congress; Blacks, Hispanics, and Women in Congress, 1971-2006; chart examining the percentage of incumbents reelected to Congress; Congressional Caucus poster; graphic illustrations of how bills become laws.

LECTURE FIVE: *The Executive Branch.*

Content Goals: The next branch of government students will examine is the executive, the office and bureaucracy of the president. Students will examine some of the more important roles of the president as outlined in the Constitution, and contrast that to parliamentary systems with prime ministers. They will also discuss the concept of the "bully pulpit" and maybe have a debate related to how effectively it has been utilized by presidents historically, and in the contemporary period. Some of the other concepts examined will be the problem of "groupthink" in the executive cabinet, and the power of the executive vis-à-vis the other two branches. Looking at Miroff and Genovese's theories will help us to answer whether the executive speaks for "the people," or whether the structure of our political economy imposes limitations on what the president can do.

Readings: AG – Chapter 14 (pp. 367 – 408). [CR4]

PWR – (Genovese, "The Limits of Presidential Power" and Miroff, "The Presidential Spectacle). [CR8]

Video: *So Goes the Nation.*

Materials: Graphs which detail the difference between presidents and prime ministers; a graphic illustration of the United States as it looks based on electoral votes per state; an examination of the cabinet departments; charts examining presidential popularity going back to Truman; presidential vetoes, 1789 – 2004.

LECTURE SIX: *The Federal Judiciary.*

Content Goals: The last branch students will analyze will be the judicial branch, with extra emphasis on the Supreme Court. Students should begin by familiarizing themselves with one fundamental concept – judicial review – and ask why Americans have largely ignored this unusual, some would say, usurpation, of power by one branch. Students will also examine the various types of opinions given by the court, different types of law, and the principles of judicial activism and restraint. An important contemporary issue to discuss and debate will be the USA PATRIOT ACT, why and how it came into being and the different perspectives on its constitutionality.

Readings: AG – Chapter 16 (pp. 437 – 466). [CR4]

MSS – Chapter 15: the Judiciary: What Should Its Role Be in a Democracy? (Meese III, “A Jurisprudence of Original Intention” and Brennan Jr., “Reading The Constitution as Twentieth-Century Americans”). [CR8]

Video: *Justice for Sale.*

Materials: The “story” of *Marbury v. Madison*; chart showing U.S. District and Appellate Courts; chart showing female and minority judicial appointments 1963 – 2003; organizational chart of the jurisdiction of the federal courts; patterns of public confidence in the Court, 1974 – 2003.

Writing / Research Project Two: *Using the “Four Theories of American Government” provide a working description of the three branches of government and compare and contrast how the different theories explain the democratic nature of each branch. An outline and specific instructions can be found on the class website.* [CR7] and [CR9]

LECTURE SEVEN: *Governmental Bureaucracy.*

Content Goals: The text authors postulate that no discussion of American government is complete without an examination of the bureaucracies that are part and parcel to it. A fourth theory of American government – “hyperpluralism” – will be a big part of the student’s analysis as they look at the various bureaucracies within government. Students will look at other aspects too, from the principles of hierarchy and formal rules, to problems of “policy triangles” and “agency capture.” Has the expanding role of government in the 20th century been good or bad for democracy in the U.S.?

Readings: AG – Chapter 15 (pp. 409 – 436). [CR4]

Video: *The Secret Government and scenes from Brazil.*

Materials: Pie chart showing the federal bureaucracy today; charts showing federal bureaucracies use in expenditures, employment, and regulations; charts showing the characteristics of federal civilian employees, 1960 – 1999, such as sex, race, employing agency, and location.

LECTURE EIGHT: *Public Opinion and the Mass Media.*

Content Goals: Sometimes called the “fourth branch” of government, the mass media in the U.S. will constitute a significant part of our discussion of American democracy. Students will ask: what is “public opinion” and where and how does it develop? Does the existence of the First Amendment of the Constitution really mean that the press is “free”? Rounding out our discussion of such traditional concepts as “agenda setting” and the “priming effect,” will be the introduction of a very provocative thesis on how the mass media really operate put forth by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky in the 1980’s. Called the “propaganda model” of the news, it has stirred a vibrant debate about the true nature and role that the mass media plays in this country and increasingly, around the world.

Readings: AG – Chapters 7 (pp. 154 – 176) and 12 (pp. 291 – 314). [CR2] and [CR3]

PWR – (Chomsky, “Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda” and Bennett, “News Content and Illusion: Four Information Biases That Matter”). [CR8]

Video: *Constructing Public Opinion and Independent Intervention: Breaking Silence.*

Materials: Charts showing generational gaps on the issues; charts examining religious and gender influences on issues; ideological self-identification; chart showing young people’s interest in political news 1940 – 1995; chart describing the public perception of accuracy in media.

LECTURE NINE: *American Political Parties.*

Content Goals: Students will note in this unit that although they are not mentioned in the Constitution, political parties have become an important force in American politics today. So students will begin with a brief look at how parties are organized in the U.S.; the concept of “critical” elections and divided government, along with how the liberal/conservative dichotomy plays out in terms of party identification. However, a significant portion of the class discussion will be devoted to analyzing third parties in the two-party system, especially the question of whether the structure of our system creates obstacles to third party electoral success. Would more of a multi-party design bring more democracy to our government?

Readings: AG – Chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 177 – 229). [CR2] and [CR3]

PWR – (Piven and Cloward, “Why Americans Still Don’t Vote” and Sifry, “Finding the Lost Voters”). [CR8]

Video: *Third Party: Political Alternatives in the Age of Duopoly.*

Materials: Chart showing the decline in party identification, 1952 – 2002; cleavages and continuity in the two-party system; characteristics of the party delegates; chart examining the types of minor parties.

LECTURE TEN: *Voting and Elections.*

Content Goals: Students will ask: Does the United States have low voter turnout when compared with other democracies? If so, why is that the case? These are two important questions that students will be examining in this section of the American electoral process. Here we will ask some critical questions about the structure of single-member district pluralities. Would the more widespread practice of “proportional representation” improve the system – make it more democratic? Would adopting the practice of instant runoff voting (IRV) eliminate the “spoiler” problem in American elections? These and other questions will be discussed and debated in this section. Students will also discuss the new technology of electronic voting – its promises and pitfalls.

Readings: AG – Chapter 10 (pp. 230 – 263). [CR2] and [CR7]

MSS – Chapter 11: Campaigns and Elections: Organized Money Versus (Dis)Organized People? (Smith, “Free Speech Requires Campaign Money” and Clawson et. al., “Dollars and Votes”). [CR8]

PWR – (Amy, “The Case for Proportional Representation”). [CR8]

Video: *Hacking Democracy.*

Materials: Chart showing the election of 2004, by County; partisan division of the presidential vote in the nation, 1856 – 2004; simulation of IRV in class for the 2004 presidential vote: how would the outcome have been different?

LECTURE ELEVEN: *Political Interest Groups.*

Content Goals: Students will begin to appreciate and understand that these various groupings form the core of what political scientists call the “engaged” public. What are they and why did Madison fear they were “dangerous to a healthy republic”? Students will concentrate on some of the more important thinkers who examine these groups, primarily under the theoretical underpinnings of pluralism. Students will also examine the concepts of group legitimacy, access and influence, economic, single-issue and public interest groups, and the proverbial “free-rider” problem. They will then profile a very important interest group in the news – the neoconservatives, and their Project for a New American Century.

Readings: AG – Chapter 11 (pp. 264 – 290). [CR2] and [CR7]

PWR – (Shorris, “Ignoble Liars: Leo Strauss, George Bush, and the Philosophy of Mass Deception”). [CR8]

Video: *Hijacking Catastrophe.*

Materials: Public-interest law firms and think tanks in Washington; charts showing the decline in union membership; spending by political action committees (PACs), 2003 – 2004; internet access for an examination of the Project for a New American Century website.

LECTURE TWELVE: *The Public Policy Process.*

Content Goals: From this point, students will begin to “switch gears” so to speak from discussing theory, and begin an examination of how *policy* is made in the United States. Students will begin with some basics: what is policy and what are the major types; who are the primary actors influencing policy, and what are the different models used by political scientists to describe how policy is actually made; and what are “tradeoffs” and “unintended consequences” of policymaking? As a project for this section, we’ll critically examine the phenomenon of illegal immigration in this country and discuss what policies should be adopted or rejected to deal with it.

Readings: AG – Chapter 17 (pp. 468 – 490). [CR5]

PWR – (Auster, “Mass Immigration: Its Effects on Our Culture” and Kennedy, “A Nation of Immigrants”). [CR8]

Video: *Farmingville.*

Materials: A chart which examines the difference between majoritarian, client, entrepreneurial, and interest group politics; charts which examine the various groups who have emigrated to American society during its history; internet access for various immigration policy websites.

LECTURE THIRTEEN: *Economic, Social, and Environmental Policy.*

Content Goals: Students will understand that possibly the most important type of policymaking revolves around economic questions. As such, students will look at the four major types of economic policy debated in the U.S. along with some of the more important bureaucracies that draw up those policies. Students will settle the debate about the budgetary process and whether military spending, entitlement payments to individuals, or paying off interest on the national debt is in our best interests. Students will also briefly examine questions surrounding welfare legitimacy and current environmental problems related to suburban sprawl.

Readings: AG – Chapters 18 and 19 (pp. 491 – 528) and 21 (pp. 559 – 574). [CR5]

MSS – Chapter 12: *Local Democracy: Is Suburban Sprawl the Realization or Violation of Democratic Values?* (Easterbrook, “Suburban Myth” and Swanstrom, “The Case Against Sprawl”). [CR8]

Video: *The End of Suburbia: Oil Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream.*

Materials: Chart: the national debt as percentage of GDP, 1960 – 2008; Chart: actual budget deficit or surplus with the president’s projection made five years earlier; chart: the tools by which the Federal Reserve Board implements monetary policy; chart: history of the national debt; chart: tax burdens in democratic nations (top 20); Powerpoint presentation on oil depletion by Dr. Colin Campbell.

Writing / Research Project Three: *One of the most (if not the most) important challenges for policymakers in the 21st century, will be to create a sensible and coherent energy policy. After 150 years of having oil as the focal point of policy, some argue that the “fossil fuel age” is coming to an abrupt close. Evaluate the evidence concerning the “peak oil” phenomenon and make some suggestions as to whether our current policies are anachronistic and possibly dangerous, for the U.S., and for the world community. An outline and specific instructions can be found on the class website. [CR7] and [CR9]*

LECTURE FOURTEEN: *Civil Liberties and Civil Rights.*

Content Goals: Here students will note that as a policy issue, nothing tops a discussion of “rights” in a constitutional democracy. From the drug war to gay marriage to affirmative action, the question of how best to protect people’s liberties under the Bill of Rights is continually evolving. In addition to looking at these issues and more, we’ll examine various concepts such as due process and the writ of habeas corpus; the “establishment” clause and clear and present danger tests; the “fighting words” doctrine and prior restraint.

Readings: AG – Chapters 5 and 6 (pp. 97 – 152). [CR6]

MSS – Chapter 6: Civil Liberties: Does the First Amendment Permit Religious Expression in Public Institutions? (Monsma, “Positive Neutrality: Letting Religious Freedom Ring” and Frankel, “Piety Versus ‘Secular Humanism’: A Phony War”).

Also Chapter 7: Civil Rights: How Far Have We Progressed? (Thernstrom and Thernstrom, “One Nation, Indivisible” and Shipler, “A Country of Strangers”).

Video: *The ACLU Files.*

Materials: Chart showing landmark cases of free speech and free press; A “How Would You Decide” exercise involving six Supreme Court cases; chart examination of landmark cases involving civil rights; chart: key provisions of major civil rights laws; more discussion of landmark cases involving affirmative action, women’s rights, gay rights, and privacy and abortion.

LECTURE FIFTEEN: *United States Foreign and Military Policy.*

Content Goals: Being a global superpower has meant that our choices on foreign policy issues truly have global consequences. First, students should examine the kinds of foreign policy as described by the textbook author (majoritarian, client, interest group, entrepreneurial). Of the purported goals of U.S. foreign policy (national security, free and open trade, world peace, democracy, and concern for humanity), how should students tease apart these priorities when it comes to formulating policy? When it comes to our national interest, students should ask: is it better for us to approach the world as idealists or realists? How do we even define our national interest? Along with these very important questions, students will also examine some basic concepts such as deterrence and massive retaliation, arms control, containment strategies, trade, proliferation of WMDs, and preemptive warfare. Finally, students will analyze U.S. foreign policy in the context of 9-11, and ask some critical questions about American foreign policy in the age of terrorism.

Readings: AG – Chapter 20 (pp. 603 – 650). [CR5]

MSS – Chapter 18: U.S. Foreign Policy; What Should It Be After September 11? (Krauthammer, “The Real New World Order” and Barber, “On Terrorism and the New Democratic Realism”). [CR8]

Video: *Why We Fight.*

Materials: Chart: shifting patterns of leadership in foreign policy (periods of White House, Secretary of State dominance); landmark cases in foreign affairs; chart: popular reactions to foreign policy crises; chart: how the public and elite see foreign policy, 2004; chart: trends in military spending; public sentiment on defense spending.