

AP United States Government & Politics -- Course Syllabus

Text

Schmidt, Steffen W., Mark C. Shelley, and Barbara A Bardes. *American Government and Politics Today*, 2007-8 ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007.

Supplemental Text

Serow, Ann G., and Everett C. Ladd. *The Lanahan Readings in American Polity*, 4th ed. Baltimore, MD: Lanahan Publishers, 2007.

Supplemental Materials—Maps/Charts/Graphs/Cartoons

Supplemental materials for this course include articles from current newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and magazines, such as *Newsweek* and *Time*; videos and documentaries; C-SPAN coverage; and numerous Web sites.

In addition, students will be expected to analyze and interpret data and other information from visual materials such as maps, charts, graphs and cartoons, as these materials are likely to appear as part of free-response questions on the AP Examination. Students will have opportunity to practice these skills in the debates and class discussion assignments indicated on this syllabus. One of the strengths of the text selected for use in this course is the variety and quality of maps, charts, graphs and cartoons included in each chapter. These graphics constitute an important part of the text, and should be treated as an essential part of every reading assignment. Students should be prepared to discuss them in class, and expect to see them as part of free-response questions on unit examinations and the final examination.

Course Expectations

In order to succeed in this course, students must gain a comprehensive understanding of all topics covered in the assigned reading and classroom discussion. Students are expected to complete all assigned reading in advance of the material being discussed in class, and to keep careful notes on all assigned reading and classroom discussions. Students are also encouraged to keep all materials for this course in a three-ring binder.

Careful organization throughout the course will facilitate review, and will become critical when preparing for the AP exam.

Course Evaluation

The final grade in this course will be computed as follows:

Class Participation	10%
Unit Examinations	50%
Final Exam	30%
Final Project	10%

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In order to receive full credit for class participation, students must have no unexcused absences, take initiative to make a meaningful contribution to class discussion, and demonstrate enthusiasm and competence in the class debates. Students are expected to stay current with national politics by reading the front page and editorial page of an “on-line” national newspaper—e.g. the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*, listening to NPR or other radio news programming, and watching national TV news programming, e.g. CNN, PBS, Fox or MSNBC.

Examinations for each of the six units of the course will be weighted as follows: Foundations (10%); Civil Liberties & Civil Rights (10%); Political Beliefs and Behaviors (15%); Political Parties, Interest Groups & Media (15%); Institutions of Government (40%); and Public Policy (10%).

Examinations will consist of multiple choice and free-response questions similar to those on the AP exam. Unit examinations will be 75 minutes in length: 25 minutes to complete 30 multiple choice questions, and 50 minutes to complete two free-response questions. The final examination will be a comprehensive exam, and will be taken in two parts: 45 minutes on the first day to complete 60 multiple choice questions, and 75 minutes on the second day to complete three free-response questions.

Students will also complete a final project in the course following the AP Examination on May 9th. The project will focus on a pending Supreme Court case. Students will become familiar not only with the subject matter content of the case—the relevant constitutional issues and precedents—but also with the judicial process—the way the case made its

way to the Supreme Court. The project will require students to work in teams to prepare a case history and summary briefs, and to present oral arguments.

Course Schedule

Unit 1—Foundations

Focus: What is the purpose of government? What was the Founders’ understanding of constitutional government? What factors influenced their thinking? What are “checks and balances” and why are they important in American politics? How did the Framers respond to the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation? How is their response reflected in the Constitution? What is the “separation of powers” principle, and how is it reflected in the Constitution? How does this principle continue to influence American politics? Who were the Federalists and Anti-Federalists, and how are their different understandings of “republican” government reflected in the Constitution? How is “federalism” reflected in the Constitution? How do issues of federalism continue to effect American politics?

<u>Day/Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
W-8/29	Course Overview/Introduction “What If” Class Discussion: Citizens Were Required to Vote	SSB 2
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F-8/31	Constitutional Foundations Getting Acquainted w/ the AP Exam “What If” Class Discussion: Roe v. Wade was reversed?	SSB 3-25 SSB 28
W-9/5	Origins & Independence Reading <i>The Declaration</i> Class Debate: Subjects v. Citizens	SSB 29-33 SSB A1-A2
F-9/7	Constitutional Developments <i>The Constitution of the United States</i> Class Discussion: <i>Federalist #51</i>	SSB 34-44 SSB A7-A9
T-9/11	The Politics of Ratification Reading <i>The Bill of Rights</i>	SSB 45-47 SSB 69-70

Class Debate: Feds v. Anti-Feds

Th-9/13	Constitutional Evolution <i>Amendments to the Constitution</i> Briefing Court Cases	SSB 48-56 SSB 70-75 SSB A3
M-9/17	Federalism 1: Defining Powers Reading <i>Federalist #10</i> Class Discussion: <i>McCulloch v. Gibbons</i>	SSB 79-91 SSB A4-A7
W-9/19	Federalism 2: Politics of National Power “What If” Class Discussion: Recognition of same-sex marriage was required?	SSB 91-105 SSB 78
F-9/21	Unit Examination	

Unit 2—Civil Liberties/Civil Rights

Focus: What are the institutional guarantees of political and civil rights under the Constitution? How does the national Bill of Rights apply to the states? What constitutes free speech? How does the 1st Amendment “separate” church and state? Do courts “legislate” from the bench? What forms of speech are protected? What is “equal protection” under the law? What is “procedural due process?” What is the constitutional protection for personal privacy? Is affirmative action constitutional? How has the Supreme Court attempted to “balance” the rights of individuals against the rights of the community? What are the most significant cases informing political rights and liberties?

<u>Day/Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
W-9/26	Return/Discuss Unit 1 Examination The Bill of Rights & Incorporation “What If” Class Discussion: The government monitored all e-mails?	SSB 109-111 SSB 108
F-9/28	1 st Amendment: The Religion Clauses Cases: <i>Engel, Lemon, Smith & Boerne</i> Class Debate: Teaching Intelligent Design	SSB 111-118
T-10/2	1 st Amendment: Expression	SSB 118-130

	<p>Cases: <i>Gitlow, Dennis, Brandenburg</i> <i>Nebraska Press Assoc., NY Times v. US</i> <i>Miller, Osborne</i> Class Debate: Is Pornography Protected Speech?</p>	
Th-10/4	<p>Privacy: The Right to be Let Alone Cases: <i>Griswold, Roe, Planned Parenthood</i> Class Debate: Is there a Right to Die?</p>	SSB 130-135
T-10/9	<p>The Rights of the Accused Cases: <i>Miranda, Mapp, Gregg</i> Class Debate: Is the Death Penalty Constitutional?</p>	SSB 135-143
Th-10/11	<p>Slavery's Legacy Cases: <i>Dred Scott, Plessy, Brown</i> Class Debate: Is Affirmative Action Constitutional?</p>	SSB 147-159
M-10/15	<p>Discrimination 1: Womens' Rights Cases: <i>Faragher, Ellerth, Oncale</i> Class Debate: Is it Legal to Pay Women Less?</p>	SSB 159-168
W-10/17	<p>Discrimination 2: Rights of Others Cases: <i>Lau, Bowers, Lawrence</i> "What If" Class Discussion: Immigrants were granted citizenship?</p>	SSB 168-185 SSB 146
F-10/19	Unit Examination	

Unit 3—Political Socialization & Public Opinion

Focus: What is “political socialization” and how are political beliefs acquired? What are the most significant sources of public opinion? What is “political culture?” Can a unique American political culture be identified? What is the “political spectrum?” How do political beliefs define individuals as citizens? What privileges do citizens enjoy? What are the responsibilities of citizenship? What are the most significant factors affecting voter participation? How healthy is the American political system? In the absence of any mention in the Constitution, how did political parties and interest groups become such prominent features of the American political system? What are the most significant differences between Republicans and Democrats? How “democratic” are interest groups? How do interest groups differ from political parties? Which are more important?

<u>Day/Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
T-10/23	Return/Discuss Unit 2 Examination Political Socialization "What If" Class Discussion: Students were required to take a civics exam?	SSB 191-197 SSB 190
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Th-10/25	Political Preferences Making sense of charts & graphs Lippmann, "The Phantom Public" Kammen, "People of Paradox"	SSB 197-203 RAP 383-387 RAP 30-34
M-10/29	Public Opinion Key, "Public Opinion" Cronin, "Direct Democracy"	SSB 203-210 RAP 387-393 RAP 393-400
W-10/31	Political Culture Dahl, "Who Governs" Skocpol, "Diminished Democracy"	SSB 210-218 RAP 88-94 RAP 17-22
F-11/2	Interest Groups Jacobs/Shapiro, "Politicians Don't Pander" "What If" Class Discussion: Retired government employees were barred from interest groups?	SSB 221-234 RAP 401-407 SSB 220
T-11/6	Political Strategies Lowi, "The End of Liberalism" Suro, "Strangers Among Us"	SSB 234-242 RAP 418-424 RAP 441-448
Th-11/8	Lobbying Burnbaum, "The Lobbyist" Class Debate: Is Lobbying Democratic?	SSB 242-247 RAP 424-432
T-11/13	Unit Examination	
Th-11/15	Return/Discuss Unit 3 Examination Looking Ahead: How do interest groups influence political parties and elections?	

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Unit 4—Campaigns, Elections & the Media

Focus: How are candidates selected to run for political office in America? What role is played by party organizations, PACs, and the media in American political campaigns and elections? What are the consequences of the constitutional requirements of the Electoral College on campaigns and elections? How does the Constitution allocate responsibility for elections between state and national governments? How significant a role does federalism play in shaping the outcomes of campaigns and elections? How does the media shape public opinion and affect election outcomes? How does money influence who runs for office and who wins? How democratic is the present system? Does the present system of campaigning and elections need to be reformed?

<u>Day/Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
M-11/26	Political Parties: History Burnham, "Critical Elections" "What If" Class Discussion: Parties were supported only with public money?	SSB 251-263 RAP 511-516 SSB 250
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W-11/28	Political Parties: Functions Garcia, "Latino Politics in America" Class Debate: Voting for a 3 rd Party is throwing your vote away	SSB 263-272 RAP 535-540
F-11/30	Political Parties & Political Change Eggers, "Government 2.0" Class Discussion: Parties, fundraising & the Internet	SSB 272-280 RAP 473-480
T-12/4	Campaigns: The Basics White, "The Values Divide" Class Discussion: Who is ahead & why	SSB 287-293 RAP 541-548
Th-12/6	Campaigns: Money & Influence Ceaser/Busch, "Red Over Blue" Class Debate: Charities should stay out of politics	SSB 293-305 RAP 494-499
M-12/10	Elections Wattenberg, "Where Have the Voters Gone?"	SSB 300-317 RAP 592-598

Class Discussion: Voting by mail

W-12/12	Media: History & Function Sabato, "Feeding Frenzy" "What If" Class Discussion: The media was required to reveal its sources?	SSB 325-341 RAP 574-581 SSB 324
F-12/14	Media & Government Anderson, "South Park Conservatives" Class Discussion: Cyber-Politics	SSB 341-352 RAP 598-603

T-12/18 **Unit Examination**

CHRISTMAS BREAK

Unit 5A—Political Institutions—The Congress

Focus: How does the Constitution provide for the legislative function of the national government? What are the functions, powers, and limitations of the Congress? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the bicameral structure? How is power attained and exercised within each house of Congress? What are the similarities and differences between the two houses? How do the two houses relate to the other branches of the national government? How do they relate to the states and issues of states rights? How have specific events, challenges and crises affected the evolution of congressional powers? What are the most significant challenges confronted by Congress at present?

<u>Day/Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Th-1/3	Return/Discussion Unit 4 Examination Congress: History & Function Wilson, "Congressional Government"	SSB 355-359 RAP 101-107
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M-1/7	Congressional Powers Differences between the House & Senate Sinclair, "The '60 Vote' Senate"	SSB 359-364 RAP 162-168
W-1/9	Congressional Elections & Apportionment	SSB 364-370

	Mayhew, “The Electoral Connection” “What If” Class Discussion: Nonpartisan panels drew congressional districts?	RAP 147-150
F-1/11	Perks & Privileges Class Discussion: What makes a good Congressman/woman or Senator?	SSB 370-375
T-1/15	Leadership & Legislation “How a bill becomes law” Binder, “Stalemate”	SSB 375-380 RAP 156-162
Th-1/17	The Budget Process Starobin, “Pork Lives On” Ellwood/Patashnik, “In Praise of Pork”	SSB 381-387 RAP 180-182 RAP 183-187

Unit 5B—Political Institutions—The President

Focus: How does the Constitution provide for the executive function of the national government? What are the functions and powers—formal and informal—of the presidency? How have presidents used these powers to influence policy? How does the president relate to the other branches of the national government, the federal bureaucracy, and state and local governments? What role does the president play in framing the federal budget? How is the presidency evolving? How have specific historical events, challenges and crises influenced the growth of presidential power? Is it ever legitimate for the president to exercise extra-constitutional powers? Has the presidency become too powerful?

<u>Day/Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
T-1/22	Presidential Roles & Functions Neustadt, “Presidential Power” Rimmerman, “The Plebiscitary Presidency”	SSB 391-398 RAP 199-205 RAP 223-231
Th-1/24	Presidential Roles & Functions (cont.) Mayer, “With the Stroke of a Pen”	SSB 398-405 RAP 231-239
M-1/28	The Presidency: Party and Politics Cronin, “Paradoxes of the Presidency” Class Debate: The president should have the power to authorize domestic surveillance	SSB 406-411 RAP 212-222

W-1/30	The Organization of the Executive Branch Patterson, "The White House Staff" "What If" Class Discussion: There was no executive privilege?	SSB 412-415 RAP 239-246 SSB 390
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F-2/1	The Vice-Presidency Presidential succession and the 24 th Amend. Class Discussion: Cheney and the evolution of the role of the Vice-President	SSB 415-421
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Unit 5C—Political Institutions—The Federal Bureaucracy

Focus: How does the Constitution provide for the bureaucracy of national government? How is public policy made at the national level? What is the role of the federal bureaucracy in formulating and implementing policy? How is the national bureaucracy staffed? How responsible is the bureaucracy to the elected branches of government? How effective is congressional oversight and control of the bureaucracy?

<u>Day/Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
T-2/5	The Federal Bureaucracy Wilson, "Bureaucracy" "What If" Class Discussion: The public graded the federal bureaucracy?	SSB 425-429 RAP 274-279 SSB 424
Th-2/7	Organization of the Bureaucracy Aberbach/Rockman, "In the Web of Politics" Class Debate: Unifying anti-terrorism agencies was the right thing to do after 9/11	SSB 429-436 RAP 256-262
M-2/11	Staffing the Federal Bureaucracy Hecl, "A Government of Strangers"	SSB 436-440 RAP 249-255
W-2/13	Reforming the Bureaucracy Class Discussion: Should whistle-blowing be encouraged?	SSB 440-444
F-2/15	Politics & Policymaking Class Discussion: How responsible is the	SSB 444-450

federal bureaucracy to the democratic process

WINTER BREAK

Unit 5D—Political Institutions—The Federal Courts

Focus: How does the Constitution provide for the judicial function of the national government? How does the constitutional system of courts function? What are the powers and limitations of the federal court system? How do federal courts relate to the other branches of the federal government, and the institutions of state government? How has judicial review influenced the role of the federal courts in the American political system? How have specific historical events, challenges and crises affected the development of the federal judicial system? How is judicial power limited by constitutional and institutional means? What role do courts play in interpreting the Constitution and implementing public policy? What is the proper role for the judicial branch in the public policy process? Is judicial activism consistent with the constitutional role of courts in America? Do courts have a special mandate concerning the protection of civil rights and liberties?

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<u>Day/Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
T-2/26	The American Legal System <i>Federalist #51</i> Class Discussion: Sharia Law	SSB 453-455 RAP 283-287
Th-2/28	The Federal Judicial System Process, Procedures & Jurisdictions	SSB 455-461
M-3/3	The Supreme Court Rostow, "Dem. Character of Judicial Review" O'Brien, "Storm Center"	SSB 461-463 RAP 287-201 RAP 291-296
W-3/5	Judicial Appointments Yalof, "Pursuit of Justices" "What If" Class Discussion: Supreme Court Justices had term limitations?	SSB 464-467 RAP 302-308 SSB 452
F-3/7	Judicial Policymaking Irons, "Brennan v. Rehnquist" Class Debate: Judicial Activism is unconstitutional	SSB 468-473 RAP 296-301

T-3/11	Checks & Limitations on Judicial Power Class Discussion: How does the democratic process limit judicial activism?	SSB 473-479
Th-3/13	Unit 5 Review	
T-3/18	Unit Examination	
Th-3/20	Return/Discuss Unit 5 Examination	

Unit 6—Public Policy

Focus: How is public policy made? Who sets the policy agenda for the nation? How does federalism affect public policy? Who are the most significant “players” in the formation and implementation of public policy? How is monetary policy different from fiscal policy? How do subsidies and entitlements affect national policy? What is the proper role for the national government in social issues such as education, welfare, and crime? How significant a problem is illegal immigration, and what should be the nation’s response? What role should the United States play in the world? How should the nation respond to the threat of international terrorism and nuclear proliferation? How does economic power differ from military power in advancing American interests abroad? What are the most significant foreign threats facing the United States? How should the country respond to such threats?

<u>Day/Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
M-3/24	Domestic Policy Harrington, “The Other America” “What If” Class Discussion: There was universal health care?	SSB 483-496 RAP 607-611 SSB 482
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W-3/26	Immigration, Crime & Drugs Class Debate: No amnesty for illegals	SSB 496-505
F-3/28	The Environment Friedman, “Free to Chose” Class Discussion: Environmental trade-offs	SSB 505-514 RAP 611-617
T-4/1	Economic Policy “What If” Class Discussion: The government was required to have a balanced budget?	SSB 517-526 SSB 516

Th-4/3	World Trade Taxes & Social Security Class Debate: Social Security should be privatized	SSB 526-539
M-4/7	Foreign Policy Barber, "Jihad v. McWorld" "What If" Class Discussion: All American troops were restricted to US soil?	SSB 543-546 RAP 631-639 SSB 542
W-4/9	International Challenges Huntington, "The Clash of Cultures" Johnson, "Blowback"	SSB 546-557 RAP 639-649 RAP 658-664
F-4/11	Making Foreign Policy Nye, "Soft Power" Class Discussion: Russia, China, India— Are these emerging powers friends or foes?	SSB 558-574 RAP 649-657

T-4/15 **Unit Examination**

Th-4/17 Return/Discuss Unit 6 Examination

SPRING BREAK

M-4/28 Comprehensive Course Review

W-4/30 Comprehensive Course Review

F-5/2 AP Prep

M-5/5 **AP EXAMINATION**

T-5/6 Final Project:
Introduction & Overview

F-5/16 Case History due

Th-5/29 Legal Briefs due

W-6/4 Oral Arguments

F-6/6 Course Wrap-Up

