

Curriculum Development  
In the Fairfield Public Schools

**FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT

**ADVANCED PLACEMENT**  
**UNITED STATES**  
**GOVERNMENT & POLITICS**

Board of Education Approved 03/25/2008

# **AP UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT & POLITICS**

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## **Social Studies Department Scope and Sequence**

This Advanced Placement course is offered as an elective open to only twelfth graders. Prerequisites for the Advanced Placement level include teacher recommendations and successful completion of required social studies courses in Highlights of Western Civilization, Justice in America, Modern Global Studies, and United States History.

## **Statement of Purpose**

Students must have an extensive knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of citizens to participate in and shape public policy, and contribute to the maintenance of our democratic way of life. AP United States Government and Politics offers such an opportunity to students interested in a rigorous course of study.

The acquisition of a thorough and systematic comprehension of U.S. government and politics requires that students learn facts and concepts and understand typical political processes. Further, students must be guided to use specific information critically in order to evaluate general propositions about government and politics as well as to analyze political relationships between people and institutions and between different institutions.

*Government and Politics*, The College Board, Advanced Placement Program, May 2005

## **Design and Description**

This course is designed to give students an analytical perspective on politics and government. It involves the study of general concepts used to interpret United States government and politics and the analysis of examples. It also requires familiarity with the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas that make up political reality as it relates to the United States system of government. Students will interpret and utilize basic data relevant to government and politics in sustained written arguments. An assessment for each unit will consist of a test constructed in the AP format that is 50% multiple choice and 50% free response. Students are expected to take the AP Exam in May.

## **Course Goals**

Students should:

- understand important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to US government and politics.
- understand typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences (including the components of political behavior, the principles used to explain or justify various government structures and procedures, and the political effects of these structures and procedures).
- analyze and interpret basic data relevant to US government and politics.
- demonstrate an understanding of our American heritage.

## **Essential Questions**

- How do different economic systems affect the allocation of goods and services? (CT)

- How does the study of historical themes help us understand change over time and adapt and respond to new challenges? (CT)
- How does history affect our understanding of the past, present and future? (CT)
- How do global affairs impact the lives of people? (CT)
- How do limited resources affect choices by individuals, households, business and governments? (CT)
- How does study of historical periods, issues and trends affect our understanding of the past, present and future? (CT)
- Why do governments exist and how do they work? (CT)
- How can citizens shape and influence democratic processes and government? (CT)
- How do principles in the United States Constitution impact individual, local, state and national decisions? (CT)

### **Connecticut Social Studies Standards**

Connecticut State Standards are met in the following areas:

- CCS1: *Historical Thinking***
- CCS2: *Local, United States and World History***
- CCS3: *Historical Themes***
- CCS4: *Applying History***
- CCS5: *United States Constitution and Government***
- CCS6: *Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens***
- CCS7: *Political Systems***
- CCS8: *International Relations***
- CCS13: *Limited Resources***
- CCS14: *Economic Systems***

### **Units of Instruction Outline**

- I.** Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government
- II.** Institutions of National Government
- III.** Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
- IV.** Political Beliefs and Behaviors
- V.** Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media
- VI.** Public Policy

### **Common Assessment**

AP Examination

### **Course Materials**

#### **Main Text**

O'Connor, Karen & Sabato, Larry, eds. American Government: Continuity and Change. New York: Pearson Longman, 2004.

#### **Main Supplementary Texts**

Bose, Meena and DiIulio, Jr., John J., eds. Classic Ideas and Current Issues in American Government. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007.

Canon, David T., et al. Faultlines: Debating the Issues in American Politics. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990.

Canon, David T., et al. The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

Hobson, Charles. The Great Chief Justice: John Marshall and the Rule of Law. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1996.

Hofstadter, Richard. The American Political Tradition: and the Men Who Made It. New York: Vintage Books, 1976.

Ladd, Everett C. and Serow, Ann G., eds. The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Baltimore: Lanahan, 2003.

*The New York Times*

Serow, Ann G. and Everett C. Ladd. American Polity, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Baltimore: Lanahan Publishers, Inc, 2003.

Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Political Issues, 14<sup>th</sup> ed. Dubuque: McGraw-Hill Dushkin, 2006.

**Information and Technology Standards (to be added)**

# **UNITS OF STUDY**

## **Unit 1: Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government**

### **Core Topics**

- Political Theories and Ideologies That Led to the Formulation and Adoption of the Constitution.
- Separation of Powers
- Federalism
- Theories of Democratic Government

### **Essential Questions**

- How does the study of historical themes help us understand change over time and adapt and respond to new challenges? (CT)
- How does history affect our understanding of the past, present and future? (CT)
- Why do governments exist and how do they work? (CT)
- How can citizens shape and influence democratic processes and government? (CT)
- How do principles in the United States Constitution impact individual, local, state and national decisions? (CT)

### **Connecticut Performance Standards (CCS)**

Students will:

- 5.9-10.2 explain how the design of the U.S. Constitution is intended to balance and check the powers of the branches of government.
- 5.11-12.3 explain why state and federal courts powers of judicial review reflect the United States view of constitutional government.
- 6.11-12.1 evaluate whether or when their obligations as citizens require that their personal desires, beliefs and interests be subordinated to the public good.
- 7.11-12.2 explain how purposes served by government have implications for the individual and society.

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the political theories and ideologies that led to the formulation and adoption of the Constitution.
- analyze the reasons for the separation of powers and how the balance has changed over the course of American history.
- demonstrate an understanding of the evolution of Federalism.
- demonstrate how democratic government evolves and changes.

### **Focus Questions**

- Why was the separation of powers developed and how is it implemented today?
- What is Federalism and how has the balance of power between state and federal government changed throughout American history?
- How do theories of democratic government evolve and change?

## **Skill Objectives**

Students will:

- evaluate the quality, credibility and reliability of information.
- analyze, interpret and apply complex information from various sources; compare and contrast viewpoints of various sources.
- apply principles to solve authentic problems.
- write structured, thesis-driven essays.
- synthesize information from a variety of sources and cite those sources appropriately.

## **Suggested Activities**

- Class discussions: America’s current political landscape, Constitutional Convention, Americans’ rights, role of Federalism in the United States, and the power of the States.
- Data analysis and interpretation of the US Census
- Read and annotate selections from the Federalist Papers

## **Suggested Materials**

- “Hard Road Ahead: Block Grants and the ‘Devolution Revolution’.” Richard Nathan
- “Laboratories of Democracy.” David Osborne
- “The American Political Tradition.” Richard Hofstadter
- “The Founding Fathers; An Age of Realism.” Richard Hofstadter
- “United States v. Lopez (1995).”

## **Sample Assessments**

- Free response essay
- Meet the Press simulation
- Read and annotate selections from the Federalist Papers

## **Pacing**

4 - 5 weeks

## **Unit 2: Institutions of National Government**

### **Core Topics**

- Major formal and informal institutions
- Relationships among the institutions and varying balances of power
- Linkages between the institutions and public opinion, voters, interest groups, political parties, the media, and sub-national governments

### **Essential Questions**

- How does history affect our understanding of the past, present and future? (CT)
- How do principles in the United States Constitution impact individual, local, state and national decisions? (CT)

### **Connecticut Performance Standards (CCS)**

Students will:

- 5.9-10.2 explain how the design of the U.S. Constitution is intended to balance and check the powers of the branches of government.
- 5.11-12.1 apply an understanding of historical and contemporary conflicts over constitutional principles.

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the formal and informal arrangements of power.
- analyze the relationships among the four institutions: Congress, the presidency, the federal courts, and the bureaucracy.
- demonstrate the linkages between these four institutions and the following: public opinion and voters, interest groups, political parties, the media, and sub-national government.

### **Focus Questions**

- How and why does the operation of formal institutional arrangements of power influence the governmental process?
- How and why does the operation of informal institutional arrangements of power influence the governmental process?
- How and why does the balance of power change among the institutions of government?

### **Skill Objectives**

Students will:

- analyze, interpret and apply complex information from various sources; compare and contrast viewpoints of various sources.
- demonstrate an analysis of cause and effect.
- synthesize information from a variety of sources and cite those sources appropriately.
- write structured, thesis-driven essays.

### **Suggested Activities**

- Analysis of electoral college map
- Congressional committees simulation
- Iron Triangle role play
- Mock trial

### **Suggested Materials**

- “Congress: The Electoral Connection.” David Mayhew.
- “In Praise of Pork.” John Ellwood and Eric Patashnik
- “Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents.” Richard Neustadt
- “Pursuit of Justices.” David Yalof
- “The Court in American Life, from Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Politics.” David O’Brien.
- “The Imperial Presidency.” Arthur Schlesinger
- “The Power to Persuade.” Richard Neustadt.
- “The Rise of the Plebiscitary Presidency.” Craig Rimmerman
- “The Role of the Senate in Judicial Confirmation.” Stephan B. Presser

### **Sample Assessments**

- Mock Trial analysis
- Political cartoons analysis
- Resolution of a significant crisis
- Role Play response
- Simulation response

### **Pacing**

12 to 14 weeks

## **Unit 3: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

### **Core Topics**

- The development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation
- Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
- The impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties

### **Essential Questions**

- How does history affect our understanding of the past, present and future? (CT)
- How does study of historical periods, issues and trends affect our understanding of the past, present and future? (CT)

### **Connecticut Performance Standards (CCS)**

Students will:

- 1.11-12.1 formulate historical questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources.
- 2.11-12.3 explain relationships among the events and trends studied in local, state, national and world history.

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- analyze the beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders.
- analyze the processes by which citizens learn about politics.
- demonstrate an understanding of how public opinion is formed.
- demonstrate the consequences of public opinion.
- analyze the ways in which citizens participate in political life.
- analyze how political beliefs and behaviors are formed.

### **Focus Questions**

- How do beliefs influence opinions about government and its leaders?
- How do citizens learn about politics?
- How is public opinion formed and what are its consequences?
- How do citizens participate in political life?
- How do citizens formulate political beliefs and how does it influence behavior?

### **Skill Objectives**

Students will:

- evaluate the quality, credibility and reliability of information.
- write structured, thesis-driven essays.
- demonstrate techniques to improve performance on multiple choice tests.
- apply principles to solve authentic problems.
- use technology tools to locate, evaluate, collect, and communicate information.

### **Suggested Activities**

- Case Study: Any Supreme Court Case on Civil Liberties
- Discussion: Are Americans' Civil Liberties being protected?
- Primary source interpretation
- Public speaking

### **Suggested Materials**

- “Dissent in *Barbara Grutter v. Lee*.” Justice Clarence Thomas
- “Gideon’s Trumpet.” Anthony Lewis
- “In Defense of Prejudice.” Jonathan Rauch.
- “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Martin L. King., Jr.
- “Rights in an Insecure World: Why National Security and Civil Liberty Are Complements.” Deborah Pearlstein
- “Security versus Civil Liberties.” Richard Posner
- “The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions.” Abraham Lincoln
- “The Rage of a Privileged Class.” Ellis Cose

### **Sample Assessments**

- Data analysis and interpretation of wage gap tables
- Free response writing
- In Depth Analysis of Pertinent Court Cases of Liberties and Rights; ex: *Sheff vs. O’Neill* ( CT Supreme Court Case )
- Seminar Discussion - political beliefs, behaviors, and public opinion.

### **Pacing**

3 – 4 weeks

## **Unit 4: Political Beliefs and Behaviors**

### **Core Topics**

- Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders
- Processes by which citizens learn about politics
- The nature, sources, and consequences of public opinion
- The ways in which citizens vote and otherwise participate in political life
- Factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors

### **Essential Questions**

- How does the study of historical themes help us understand change over time and adapt and respond to new challenges? (CT)
- How does history affect our understanding of the past, present and future? (CT)
- How do principles in the United States Constitution impact individual, local, state and national decisions? (CT)

### **Connecticut Performance Standards (CCS)**

Students will:

- 1.11-12.1 formulate historical questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources.
- 2.11-12.3 explain relationships among the events and trends studied in local, state, national and world history.
- 3.11-12.4 analyze the causes and consequences of major technological turning points in history, e.g., their effects on people, societies, and economies.

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the function, organization, and development political parties and their effect on the political process.
- analyze elections.
- analyze the impact of interest groups on the political process.
- analyze the impact of mass media on the political process.

### **Focus Questions**

- What do polls really mean?
- What is public opinion?
- How do we form political opinions?
- How do we measure public opinion?
- What purposes served by elections?
- How do polling and public opinion affect politicians, politics, and policy?
- Do we vote for the candidate or the campaign?
- How are campaigns and the news media related?
- How does political socialization and other factors influence opinion formation?

## **Skill Objectives**

Students will:

- evaluate the quality, credibility and reliability of information.
- analyze, interpret and apply complex information from various sources.
- compare and contrast viewpoints of various sources.
- demonstrate an analysis of cause and effect.
- write structured, thesis-driven essays.
- demonstrate techniques to improve performance on multiple choice tests.
- use technology tools in constructing models, preparing publications, and producing other creative works.

## **Suggested Activities**

- Case Study: Examine any political poll
- Debate on current issue
- Internet research and interpretation of figures from government websites
- Primary source interpretation of survey questions, election speeches, blogs, campaign ads

## **Suggested Materials**

- “Culture War?” Morris P. Fiorina
- “Even With Campaign Finance Law, Money Talks Louder Than Ever.” Glen Justice
- “Phantom Public.” Walter Lippmann.
- “Polling the Public.” George Gallup
- “Public Opinion and American Democracy.” V.O. Key
- “The Myth of the Vanishing Voter.” Michael P McDonald and Samuel L. Popkin
- “Where Have All the Voters Gone?” Martin Wattenberg

## **Sample Assessments**

- Analysis of polls from gallup.org and other sites
- Data analysis of text tables and maps of voter demographics
- Debate response
- Free response writing
- Research Paper
- Students conduct their own political polls

## **Pacing**

1-2 weeks

## **Unit 5: Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media**

### **Core Topics**

- Political parties and elections
- Interest groups, including political action committees (PACs)
- The mass media

### **Essential Questions**

- How does the study of historical themes help us understand change over time and adapt and respond to new challenges? (CT)
- How does history affect our understanding of the past, present and future? (CT)
- How do principles in the United States Constitution impact individual, local, state and national decisions? (CT)

### **Connecticut Performance Standards (CCS)**

Students will:

- 1.11-12.1 formulate historical questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources.
- 1.11-12.2 evaluate data within the historical, social, political and economic context in which it was created, testing its credibility and evaluating its bias.
- 3.11-12.4 analyze the causes and consequences of major technological turning points in history, e.g., their effects on people, societies, and economies.
- 5.9-10.3 evaluate the contemporary roles of political parties, associations, media groups and public opinion in local, state, and national politics.

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the function, organization, and development political parties and their effect on the political process.
- analyze elections.
- analyze the impact of interest groups on the political process.
- analyze the impact of mass media on the political process.

### **Focus Questions**

- How do the function, organization, and development of political parties influence the political system?
- How does mass media influence government and politics?
- What is the purpose of political parties in the twenty first century?
- What is the best way to get people to vote?
- How do interest groups influence the political process?
- What are the ethical issues behind interest groups?
- What makes an interest group successful?
- What is a political party?
- How does the media impact the political process?

## **Skill Objectives**

Students will:

- synthesize information from a variety of sources and cite those sources appropriately.
- demonstrate techniques to improve performance on multiple choice tests.
- apply principles to solve authentic problems.
- use technology tools in constructing models, preparing publications, and producing other creative works.
- use technology tools to locate, evaluate, collect, and communicate information.

## **Suggested Activities**

- Creation of Students' Own Political Parties
- Debate
- Internet research of interest group websites
- Presidential Campaign Video Ads
- Primary source interpretation of print and on-line media sources
- Public speaking

## **Suggested Materials**

- "An Emerging Republican Majority." Daniel Case
- "Deadlock." Political Staff of the Washington Post
- "I Ain't Got Time to Bleed." Jesse Ventura
- "Spin Cycle: How the White House and the Media Manipulate the News." Howard Kurtz
- "The Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States." James L. Sundquist
- "The Emerging Democratic Majority." John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira
- "The Lobbyists." Jeffrey Birnbaum
- "The Not-So-Swift Mainstream Media." Jonathan V. Vast.
- "The Unpolitical Animal: How Political Science Understands Voters." Louis Menand
- "Who Governs?" Dahl, Robert.

## **Sample Assessments**

- Creation of Students' Own Political Parties
- Free response writing
- Interpretation of political cartoons and maps
- Media Diary – Logged Various Hours of News Programming - Comparison
- Presidential Campaign Video Ads
- Research Paper

## **Pacing**

1-2 weeks

## **Unit 6: Public Policy**

### **Core Topics**

- Policy making in a federal system
- The formation of policy agendas
- The role of institutions in the enactment of policy
- The role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy
- The linkages between policy processes and political institutions, federalism, political parties, interest groups, public opinion, elections, and policy networks

### **Essential Questions**

- How do different economic systems affect the allocation of goods and services? (CT)
- How does history affect our understanding of the past, present and future? (CT)
- How do global affairs impact the lives of people? (CT)

### **Connecticut Performance Standards (CCS)**

Students will:

- 8.11-12.2 identify and analyze the various domestic, political, economic, and social interests, which play roles in the development of foreign policy.
- 8.11-12.3 describe and analyze the process by which foreign policy decisions are developed and executed.
- 14.11-12.2 interpret important statistics about the national economy: the inflation rate, unemployment rate, Gross Domestic Product, and its growth rate.
- 14.11-12.5 analyze the impact of specific government actions in the economy on different groups, including consumers, employees and businesses.

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- explain the role of policy making in a federal system.
- describe how policy agendas are formed.
- describe the role of institutions in the enactment, implementation and interpretation of public policy.
- describe the linkages between policy processes and political institutions, federalism, political parties, interest groups, public opinion, elections, and policy networks.

### **Focus Questions**

- How are policy agendas formed?
- How do some institutions affect the enactment of public policy?
- How do the bureaucracy affect the implementation and interpretation of public policy?
- How are policy processes linked to the following: Political institutions and federalism, Political parties, Interest groups, Public opinion, Elections, and Policy networks?
- What types of social welfare policy do Americans want to see enacted?
- Should the United States practice deficit spending?

### **Skill Objectives**

Students will:

- evaluate the quality, credibility and reliability of information.
- demonstrate effective and appropriate questioning and critical thinking skills.
- synthesize information from a variety of sources and cite those sources appropriately.
- write structured, thesis-driven essays.
- apply principles to solve authentic problems.
- use technology tools in constructing models, preparing publications, and producing other creative works.

### **Suggested Activities**

- Case Study: Any foreign policy initiative not dealing with Iraq
- Opportunity Reconciliation Act (1996)
- Primary source interpretation - Sec. 104 of the Personal Responsibility and Work

### **Suggested Materials**

- “Free to Chose.” Milton Friedman
- “Growing American Inequality: Sources and Remedies.” Gary Burtless
- “Jihad v. McWorld.” Benjamin Barber
- “Nation Building.” Marina Ottway
- “Providing Social Security Benefits in the Future: A Review of the Social Security System and Plans to Reform It.” David C. John
- “The Other America.” Michael Harrington
- “Who Speaks for America?” Eric Alterman

### **Sample Assessments**

- Data Analysis and Interpretation of tables and graphs in text
- Debate
- Each student will analyze a different public policy initiative
- Free Response Writing
- Research
- Teams will create and present new public policy initiatives
- *White Paper*

### **Pacing**

3 - 4 weeks