

# **Advanced Placement American Government and Politics**

## **I. Textbook**

Thomas E. Patterson, The American Democracy, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011

## **II. Prerequisites**

Successful completion of Junior History and approval of Junior History instructor

## **III. Course Description**

This college-level course is an introduction to the U.S. government and political system. We will study government institutions and political processes and examine policy choices. The institutions and policies of the government are considered in light of historical change, constitutional procedures, and comparative perspectives.

## **IV. Course Goals**

In preparation for the A.P. Exam, students will:

- Improve their writing skills
- Improve their analytical skills
- Increase the volume and depth of their reading

## **V. Course Objectives**

To achieve the two goals of successfully completing this class and achieving a top score on the A.P. Exam, students will become proficient in the following:

- Foundations of Government
- Institutions of Government
- The Electoral System
- Political Behavior
- The Courts and Our Rights
- Public Policy

## **VI. Course Sequence**

1st Semester

### **1st Quarter**

#### **1. Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government**

- A. Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution
- B. Separation of powers
- C. Federalism
- D. Theories of democratic government

Unit Test

#### **2. Political Beliefs and Behaviors**

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

Unit Test

### **2nd Quarter**

#### **3. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media**

- A. Political parties and elections

1. Functions

2. Organization

3. Development

4. Effects on the political process

5. Electoral laws and systems

B. Interest groups, including political action committees (PACs)

1. The range of interests represented

2. The activities of interest groups

3. The effects of interest groups on the political process

4. The unique characteristics and roles of PACs in the political process

C. The mass media

1. The functions and structures of the media

2. The impacts of media on politics

Unit Test

**Semester Exam**

2nd Semester

**3rd Quarter**

**4. Institutions of National Government: The Congress, the Presidency,**

## **the Bureaucracy, and the Federal Courts**

- A. The major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power
- B. Relationships among these four institutions and varying balances of power
- C. Linkages between institutions and the following:
  - 1. Public opinion and voters
  - 2. Interest groups
  - 3. Political parties
  - 4. The media
  - 5. Subnational governments

## **4th Quarter**

- 5. Public Policy
  - A. Policymaking in a federal system
  - B. The formation of policy agendas
  - C. The role of institutions in the enactment of policy
  - D. The role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation
  - E. Linkages between policy processes and the following:
    - 1. Political institutions and federalism
    - 2. Political parties
    - 3. Interest groups
    - 4. Public opinion
    - 5. Elections
    - 6. Policy networks

Unit Test

## **6. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

- A. The development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation
- B. Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
- C. The impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and Liberties

Unit Test

## **Final Exam**

### VII. Evaluation

Students are given 60-question, 45-minute multiple-choice tests following each unit. These questions have five possible responses, as do questions on the AP Exam. Every two weeks, students write a 25-minute essay in class. These are graded according to a rubric.

### VIII. Supplemental Materials

Readings and other materials will be provided as needed by the instructor