

# AP United States Government and Politics

## Zoo Academy

Omaha Public Schools/Papillion La Vista Community Schools

**Instructor:** Kyle Tredinnick  
**E-mail:** [kyle.tredinnick@ops.org](mailto:kyle.tredinnick@ops.org)  
**Office Phone Number:** (402) 829-5880  
**Teacher Websites:** [www.mrtredinnick.com/us-government](http://www.mrtredinnick.com/us-government)  
**Term:** Fall 2016  
**Meeting Time:** A2  
**Schoology Access Code:**



## I. Course Overview

This semester long course will guide students through an introductory examination of the political structures that form the foundations of the government of the United States. Through an analysis of the different ideas, beliefs, groups, and institutions students will become more familiar with the structure and function of the country's government. By examining different theoretical approaches, and examples of prior political procedures students will gain a better understanding of the methods and reasoning for the operation of the United States Government. Throughout the course students will be required to stay informed of current events (using a variety of internet, television, and print news sources) as they pertain to the current political climate in the United States. This course is meant to have the rigor of a freshman or sophomore level college course and upon completion of the course students will be given the opportunity to take the Advanced Placement test for the possibility of earning college credit.

### Course Unit Guide:

- Unit I: *Constitutional Underpinnings of the United States Government*
- Unit II: *Political Beliefs and Behaviors*
- Unit III: *Political Parties, Interests Groups, and Mass Media*
- Unit IV: *Institutions of National Government*
- Unit V: *Public Policy*
- Unit VI: *Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*
- Unit VII: *Review and Test Preparation*

## II. Content Objectives

- a. Students will be able to describe and compare important facts, concepts (such as checks and balances and federalism,), and theories pertaining to U.S. government and Politics
- b. Students will be able to explain 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 effect of these structures and procedures).
- c. Students will be able to explain the functions and developmental changes in Political Parties and the role they have in the political process.
- d. Students will be able to interpret basic data relevant to U.S. government and politics (including data presented in charts, tables, and other formats).
- e. Students will be able to critically analyze relevant theories and concepts, apply them appropriately, and develop their concepts across curriculum

- f. Students will be able to identify core American values and trace how these values were developed historically by analyzing primary documents, such as the U.S. Constitution, and contemporary pieces of writing.
- g. Students will be able to explain the role interest groups play in the selection of candidates, the development of policy, and the avenues they provide for citizen participation.
- h. Students will be able to distinguish the roles and functions of the Congress, Judiciary, Presidency, and the Federal Bureaucracy
- i. Students will be able to discuss the relevance of mass media in elections, governing, and politics in general
- j. Students will be able to connect demographic information to trends and patterns in political participation.

### III. Readings and Study Materials

- a. Steffen W. Schmidt, et. al. American Government & Politics Today. 2010-2011 ed. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2011.
- b. News Stories, Current Events, and Resources from various sources:
  - Domestic News Agencies
    - C-SPAN, CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, National Public Radio, Politico, The Daily Show, The Washington Post, The New York Times
  - International News Agencies
    - Al-Jazeera, Associated Press, BBC, CCTV, Sputnik
  - Specialized Political Reporters
    - Gallup, Govtrack, Pew Research Center, TED Education
  - Governmental Agencies
    - the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, the Green Party, Whitehouse.gov, the Supreme Court, the National Constitution Center
  - Supplemental Readings
    - Madison, James, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay. *The Federalist Papers*. 1787-1788.
    - "Free Printable Pocket Constitution Booklets." *Constitution Booklet*. N.p., 2012. Web. 26 June 2012. <<http://constitutionbooklet.com/>>.
    - We the People Foundation. *The Citizen and the constitution*. 7th ed. Calabasa, CA: Center for Civic Education, 2000. Print.

### IV. Weekly Course Plan

#### Unit I: *Constitutional Underpinnings of the United States Government* (Weeks 1-3)

##### Unit I Readings:

- The United States Constitution
- The Federalists Papers

##### Unit I Discussion Topics:

The Democratic Republic	Constitutional Underpinnings & Federalism
Why is government necessary? How is the US government different from other forms of government? What kind of democracy do we have (majoritarianism, elitism, pluralism)? What are American	How did American colonists come to rebel against their British rulers? What political values were set forth in the Declaration of Independence? Were those values reflected in American society at the time? Are they reflected in society now? Why did the Articles of Confederation fail? What political values were set forth in the Constitution? What compromises were made to get the Constitution ratified (Great Compromise, 3/5 Compromise, Bill of Rights)? How do the three branches balance power horizontally? How does Federalism balance power

political values? Which political ideology do you identify with?	vertically? What conflicts have arose surrounding federal distribution of power (McCulloch v. Maryland, Gibbons v. Ogden, Civil War, dual federalism, cooperative federalism, etc.)?
--	--

Unit I Topics:

- Theories of Democratic Government
  - o Influences from Outside Sources
    - Greeks, Romans, English, Iroquois
  - o Different ideas on government
    - Different types of governments and variations of democracies
  - o Ideas of citizen’s roles within a democracy
- Key principles of Constitution
  - o Republicanism
  - o Limited Government
  - o Popular Sovereignty
  - o Checks and Balances
  - o Federalism
  - o Separation of Power
- Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution
  - o Compromises
  - o Articles of Confederation
  - o Experience as part of British Empire
  - o Bill of Rights
  - o Federalism and States Rights

Unit Specific Assignment: Students will examine the federalist papers for arguments for and against the passage of a new constitution.

Unit Specific Assignment: Students will examine the U.S. Constitution in order to find key principles.

**Unit II: *Political Beliefs and Behaviors*** (Weeks 3-4)

Unit II Readings:

Unit II Discussion Topics:

Public Opinion and Political Socialization	Campaigns, Elections, and Voting Behavior
How is public opinion formed? Who influences a person’s political socialization? What do demographics tell us about a person’s likelihood to vote? What are the advantages and disadvantages of opinion polls? How does public opinion affect the political process	Who can run for office? What kinds of strategies do modern campaigns use? How are campaigns financed and what regulations and controversies surround campaign financing? How do you become a candidate in the first place (primaries, caucuses, national convention, electoral college)? How are elections conducted? Who gets to vote? How do voters decide who to vote for? Why don’t some Americans vote?

Unit II Topics:

- Citizenship
  - o Beliefs citizens hold about their government and its leaders
    - Role of media and societal opinion in shaping opinions
    - The nature, sources, and consequences of civic education
    - Factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors
      - Political Socialization
      - Political Culture
      - Demographic Factors

- Public Opinion
  - Civic education
    - Process by which citizens learn about politics
    - Role of schools and public education in civic engagement
- Voting
  - Voting Trends
  - Voting Patterns
  - Voter Demographics
    - Connections between different demographic groups and civic participation

Unit Specific Assignment: Students will analyze voting trends and patterns from the 2012 election as a way to try to predict the results for the 2016 election using public opinion polls and data analysis.

Unit Specific Assignment: Students will design, conduct, and analyze their own public opinion poll.

**Unit III: *Political Parties, Interests Groups, and Mass Media*** (Weeks 5-7)

Unit III Readings:

- Available readings from the Republican Party, the Democratic Party, the Green Party, and the Libertarian Party

Unit III Discussion Topics:

Political Parties	Interest Groups	Mass Media
What is a political party and what is its function? How have political parties influenced politics throughout history. How are political parties organized on each level of government? Why has the two-party system endured? What is the role of third parties in the US today?	What are the most influential interest groups and social movements in the US right now? What are the different types of interest groups? What kinds of strategies do interest groups use to gain political influence? How do interest groups influence public policy? What are lobbyists and how are they regulated?	What role do media play in politics? Who controls what information is distributed by the media? Do the media help or hinder the political process?

Unit III Topics:

- Interest Groups including Political Action Committees (PACs)
  - The range of interests represented
  - The activities of interest groups
  - The effects of interest groups on the political process
  - The unique characteristics and roles of PACs in the political process
  - Role of PACs in avenue for citizens to select candidates
  - Role of PACs in formulating political policy
- Political Parties
  - Role in Election Process
  - Functions
  - Organization
  - Development
  - Effects on the political process
  - Electoral Laws and Systems
  - Research Paper on Role of Political Parties as part of Political Process
- Mass Media
  - The Function and Structures of News Media
  - The effect of News Media on politics
  - The News Media industry and its consequences

- Role in influencing public opinion

Unit Specific Assignment: Students will compare data, political cartoons, and polls from a variety of news sources in order to uncover bias and establish credibility of news agencies.

Unit Specific Assignment: Students will complete a research paper that analyzes the role of political parties as part of the political process using a variety of secondary sources which they will present in written form.

**Unit IV: *Institutions of National Government* (Weeks 8-12)**

Unit IV Readings:

Unit IV Discussion Topics:

The Executive Branch	The Legislative Branch	The Judicial Branch
What is the nature and function of the Bureaucracy of the US government? How is the bureaucracy organized? How are civil servants hired/appointed? What challenges does the bureaucracy face? How are bureaucrats involved with policymaking? Who can become President? How is the President elected (electoral college)? What roles does the President serve in? What powers does the President have and do you think the President overreaches that power? What are the roles of the cabinet and the Executive Office of the President? What is the role of the Vice President?	What is the nature and functions of Congress? What are the powers of Congress? What is the difference between the House and the Senate? How are congress-people elected? How are representatives apportioned? How are committees structured? Who leads the House and Senate? How is the budget decided? How does a bill become a law?	What are the sources of American law? What is the hierarchy of courts, from the local level to the federal level? How do different courts work together and what is the role of each (district court, appellate court, supreme court, etc.)? Which cases reach the Supreme Court? How are Federal judges selected? What is the relationship between the Supreme Court and policymaking? What checks do the other branches have on the court?

Unit IV Topics:

- The major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power
  - Explicit and implied powers
- Relationships among these four institutions and varying balances of power
- Linkages between institutions and the following
  - Public Opinion and Voters
  - Interest Groups
  - Political Parties
  - The Media
  - State and Local Government

Unit Specific Assignment: Students will analyze a variety of sources (including speeches, political cartoons, and political commentary) to assess the effectiveness of the United States federal bureaucracy.

Unit Specific Assignment: Students will examine a current case working through the Supreme Court and try to predict the ruling of the case based on their understanding of the Constitution.

**Unit V: *Public Policy* (Weeks 13-15)**

Unit V Readings:

- State of the Union Transcript

Unit V Discussion Topics:

## Policy Making

What is the process for building policy (formulation, adoption, implementation, evaluation)? What are current domestic and economic policy controversies (immigration, energy & environment, fiscal & monetary policy, tax policy, moral issues)? What are some of the challenges of world politics and foreign policy? Who makes foreign policy? How has foreign policy influenced history?

### Unit V Topics:

- Policy making in a Federal system
  - o Goals and actions of states versus Federal government
- The Formation of policy agendas
  - o Presentation of agendas to public in the State of the Union
- The role of institutions in the enactment of policy
  - o Role of the branches of government
  - o The federal bureaucracies' role in enforcing policy
  - o The role of the courts in the interpretation of policy
- Public Policy
  - o Current domestic policy agendas
    - Analysis of the Affordable Care Act
    - Ex. Abortion, Transgender Rights, Immigration
- Foreign Policy
  - o Current foreign agendas
    - Ex. Sanctions of Syria, North Korea, and Iran, SALT Treaties

Unit Specific Assignment: Throughout the course of the semester students will need to keep a notebook containing news articles, and other bits information about current events connected to the United States' public and foreign policy with included student analysis of each event. Students will periodically be required to orally share the most recent contents of their binders with the class.

Unit Specific Assignment: Students will analyze the State of the Union Speech that has most recently been given to identify Public and Foreign Policy agendas.

### **Unit VI: *Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*** (Weeks 16-17)

#### Unit VI Readings:

#### Unit VI Discussion Topics:

## Civil Rights and Liberties

What are the rights granted in the Bill of Rights? What are their limits? How is freedom of expression guaranteed and how is it limited (speech, religion, assembly, expression)? What is the relationship between Civil Liberties and National Security? What is the relationship between the rights of the accused and the rights of society? In what ways is privacy protected? What are civil rights? How have civil rights been denied and granted throughout American history? How has racial and gender inequality been redressed in recent decades?

### Unit VI Topics:

- The development of civil rights and civil liberties by judicial interpretation
  - o Brown v. Board of Education
- Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
  - o Specific emphasis on rights granted by constitutional amendments
    - Rights and liberties enabled through the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> Amendments

- The impact of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties
- Civil Rights Movements
  - African American Rights Movement
    - Segregation and Desegregation
    - Modern connection to Black Lives Matter
  - Native American Rights Movement
  - Women’s Rights Movement

Unit Specific Assignment: Analysis of Brown v. Board Education in which students will explain the constitutional issues being decided and why the court decided the way that it did.

**Unit VII: Review and Test Preparation** (Weeks 18-19)

Unit VII Readings: Review all readings

Unit VII Topics:

- Strategies for the FRQ
- Strategies for Multiple Choice
- General Test suggestions and reminders
- Practice Test

**AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam – 8:00 a.m., Thursday May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

\* Schedule is tentative and subject to change

\* Additional Readings & Maps may be used throughout the course of the semester

**V. Evaluation**

- a. Assignments: Students will be required to do assignments in class that will checked for completion, or collected and graded. These assignments are designed to enrich, supplement, and extend the students’ knowledge of the materials to help further prepare the students for the AP examination.
- b. Tests/Quizzes: The format of the tests will follow sections of the AP Exam as much as possible. Tests will be a way to measure the students’ mastery of the materials and help prepare them for the AP Exam. Testing formats will rotate between multiple choices, Free-Response Questions. In order to give students as much practice as possible each end of unit test (a total of 6 tests) will include Multiple Choice and Free Response Questions.
  - a. Free-Response Question - Students will be given a selection of essay style questions in which they will have to answer a thematic style question.
  - b. Multiple Choice – Students are given a choice of responses, in many cases more than one of the choices may be correct. In this situation students will need to come up with a most correct answer
- c. Grading Scales:

Omaha Public Schools	Papillion La Vista Community Schools
A = 3.51 – 4.00	A = 100% - 90%
A- = 3.01 – 3.50	B = 89% - 80%
B = 2.51 – 3.00	C = 79% - 70%
B- = 2.01 – 2.50	D = 69% – 60%
C = 1.51 – 2.00	F = 59% - 0%
D = 0.76 - 1.50	
F = 0.00 – 0.75	

d. Assessments and Weights:

Assessment Type	Category Weight (%) OPS/PAPLV
<b>Summative Assessment:</b> assessments/assignments are major end of learning unit tests or projects, (e.g., a research paper, an oral report with a power point, science fair project). Summative assignments are graded for accuracy. Summative assignments assess the student's progress on grade level standards.	65% / 70%
<b>Formative Assessment:</b> assessments/assignments are done for learning. They are minor assignments, (e.g., a three paragraph essay, written responses to guiding questions over an assigned reading, completion of a comparison contrast matrix). Formative assignments are graded for accuracy and descriptive feedback is provided. Descriptive feedback provides the student with the necessary information to improve their learning. Formative work is at the student's instructional level and/or grade level standards.	35% / 30%

- e. Multipliers: All assignments will be the standard x1 multiplier unless otherwise stated. Assignments will be listed in the gradebook with labeling as either a formative or summative assignment, and any special multiplier will be explained in the explanation of the assignment. All end of unit examinations will be counted as a Summative Assessment with a x2 multiplier.

## VI. **Course Requirements**

- a. Redoing/Revising Coursework: Students are allowed redos and revisions of coursework for full credit during that unit of study. Scores for student work after retaking, revising or redoing will not be averaged with the first attempt at coursework or assessment but will replace the original student score.
- b. Late Coursework: Students are expected to complete missing coursework. Late coursework is accepted for full credit until the end of the unit. Once late coursework is turned in, the zero will be replaced with the score earned by the student. Late work completed during the unit of study will not result in a reduction in grade. Work that is not turned in during the unit of study will receive a score of zero.
- c. Missing Coursework: Work not turned in at all will receive a score of M. An M is weighted the same as a zero in the gradebook. Students have until the end of the unit to hand in any missing assignments. Accommodations due to extended illnesses are to be arranged with the teacher.
- d. Academic Dishonesty/Cheating: Any students caught cheating, or attempting to cheat, will be given an automatic zero on the assignment. Further action may be taken depending on the situation.

## VII. The Advance Placement Examination

The AP Exam is based on college-level course content. Students are to demonstrate knowledge of the political systems of the United States Government

The exam is divided into 2 sections:

Part I: Multiple Choice (45 minutes)

60 questions

Part II: Free Response Questions (100 Minutes)

Four questions in Quasi-Essay Form

Topic	Percent
Constitutional Underpinnings of the United States government	5-15%
Political Beliefs and Behaviors	10-20%
Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media	10-20%
Institutions of National Government	35-45%
Public Policy	5-15%
Civil Rights and Liberties	5-15%