

# AP United States Government and Politics Syllabus

## Curricular Requirements

CR1	The teacher and students have access to a college-level U.S. government and politics textbook and news media sources from multiple perspectives.	See pages: 2, 6, 21
CR2	The course includes the required foundational documents and required Supreme Court cases as described in the AP Course and Exam Description.	See pages: 2, 5, 7, 12
CR3	The course is structured to incorporate the big ideas and required content outlined in each of the units described in the AP Course and Exam Description.	See pages: 2, 3, 6, 12, 17, 19
CR4	The course provides opportunities for students to develop Skill Category 1: Concept Application -apply political concepts and processes to scenarios in context.	See pages: 7, 8, 9, 17, 18, 20, 21
CR5	The course provides opportunities for students to develop Skill Category 2: SCOTUS Application-apply Supreme Court decisions.	See pages: 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19
CR6	The course provides opportunities for students to develop Skill 3: Data Analysis-analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics.	See pages: 11, 21
CR7	The course provides opportunities for students to develop the text-based analysis skills in Skill Category 4: Source Analysis- read, analyze, and interpret visual sources.	See pages: 5, 6, 13, 18, 21
CR8	The course provides opportunities for students to develop the visual course analysis skills in Skill Category 4: Source Analysis-read, analyze, and interpret visual sources.	See pages: 9, 21
CR9	The course provides opportunities for students to develop Skill Category 5 Argumentation-develop an argument in essay format.	See pages: 11, 20
CR10	Students are provided with an opportunity to engage in a political science research or applied civics project tied to the AP Course and Exam Description that culminates in a presentation of findings.	See page: 6

## Course Description

AP US Government and Politics is a semester-long, college-level course designed to prepare students for the Advanced Placement (AP) US Government and Politics exam. The goal of this

course is to explore and analyze important concepts of US government and politics. By the end of this course, students will have an understanding of the US Constitution and political system. Students will demonstrate their understanding and acquisition of skills through written work, project-based activities, and practice exams.

## Course Materials

### Primary Textbook

Wilson, James Q., et al. *American Government: Institutions & Policies*. 18th ed., Cengage Learning, 2025 **CR1**

## Topics of Study

This course is organized into six topics of study. Students are encouraged to make comparative analyses of issues, events, and ideas discussed both inside and outside the course.

### Topic 1: Foundations of American Democracy **CR3**

(Big Ideas: Constitutionalism, Liberty and Order, Competing Policymaking Interests)

- The study of American government and the influence of the Enlightenment
- Principles and ideals of the Constitution and Preamble
- The significance of federalism in the Constitution
- Debates between Federalists and Anti-Federalists
- The balance of power between state and federal governments

### Topic 2: Interactions among Branches of Government **CR3**

(Big Ideas: Constitutionalism, Competing Policymaking Interests)

- The roles and responsibilities of Congress
- Influences on congressional behavior
- The role of the presidency and its powers
- The federal bureaucracy
- The structure and purpose of the judicial branch

### Topic 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights **CR3**

(Big Ideas: Constitutionalism, Liberty and Order, Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy, Competing Policymaking Interests)

- The need for and purpose of the Bill of Rights
- The protection of freedom of religion, speech, and expression, and the right to due process
- Rights ensured by the Second, Fourth, Eighth, and 14th Amendments
- Significant Supreme Court decisions related to civil rights
- Impacts of Supreme Court decisions on minority rights
- The extension of voting rights
- The role and impact of nonviolent protest

### Topic 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs **CR3**

(Big Ideas: Competing Policymaking Interests, Methods of Political Analysis)

- Political perspectives
- The role of public opinion in American politics
- Political parties and their platforms

## **Topic 5: Political Participation** CR3

(Big Ideas: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy, Competing Policymaking Interests, Methods of Political Analysis)

- American political culture
- The political participation of American citizens
- Campaigns and elections
- The role and impacts of interest groups and lobbying
- The relationship between the media and politics

## **Key Readings and Activities**

### **Readings**

Students will be asked to complete reading activities to build on key concepts, analyze and interpret data, and establish real-world connections.

Reading materials will appear in the textbook and other primary and secondary sources, including contemporary news sources, throughout the course.

### **Writing Assignments**

Students will have frequent writing assignments that require them to analyze primary and secondary sources; draw comparisons; argue and support opinions; identify similarities and differences among events, groups of people, and places; and identify causes and effects. Foundational US documents will be focal points throughout the course as students complete these writing assignments.

Throughout the course, students will practice analyzing information related to US government and politics by writing responses to short-answer questions. Students will also respond to several free-response questions throughout the course. These analytical and interpretive questions are in the same format as those on the AP US Government and Politics exam.

### **Projects**

Students will research and analyze Supreme Court decisions throughout the course and complete other projects that provide opportunities to apply their learning, such as writing an opening statement about policy for a presidential candidate.

In a culturally relevant project related to media literacy, students will select a political issue and research how multiple media outlets are framing it and reporting on it. They will then use this investigation to develop a framework for discerning false, misleading, or biased information, and determining criteria for what makes a source credible.

## **Course Outline**

Each unit has three main learning objectives:

1. Answer a series of guiding questions.
2. Identify a set of key terms.
3. Answer multiple-choice questions or write responses to free-response questions based on the AP US Government and Politics goals and the content contained in the topic outline.

The key topics, readings, and assignments for each unit are designed to help students succeed on the AP US Government and Politics exam.

## **Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy**

**Big Ideas: Constitutionalism, Liberty and Order, Competing Policymaking Interests** CR3

### **Topics**

- The Enlightenment
- The US Constitution
- Federalism
- Balance of power

### **Readings**

Wilson et al.:

- Chapter 1: "The Study of American Government"
- Chapter 2: "The Constitution"
- Chapter 3: "Federalism"

Other: CR2

- The Constitution
- The Declaration of Independence
- *Second Treatise of Civil Government* by John Locke
- "Framing the Constitution" by Charles A. Beard
- *Federalist*, no. 16;
- *Federalist* 10
- *Brutus*, no. 1
- *McCulloch v. Maryland*
- *Federalist*, no. 51

### **Assignments**

**Students will respond to the following prompts in short writing assignments:**

- There are three primary types of democracies: participatory democracies, pluralist democracies, and elite democracies. Select one of the three systems and create an evidence-based claim as to why it is the best, or most effective, form of democracy. Include and defend at least two arguments. Include and rebut at least one counterargument.

- The debate over whether to approve the new US government was muted in some states, and quite fierce in others. Imagining yourself as a delegate from a state like New York, make a claim as to whether the Constitution should be ratified. Use clear and specific evidence, and draw from at least two sources to support your perspective. Include at least one counterargument and a rebuttal.
- For most of US history, federalism consisted of a dual system, often referred to as layer-cake federalism. In the 1930s, federalism shifted to a more cooperative system, often called marble cake federalism because the lines of responsibility between the federal government and the states became unclear. Considering the benefits and drawbacks of the current system, should the federal government and the states continue in the same partnership, or move back to a dual system? Use at least two clear and specific arguments to support your perspective. Include at least one counterargument and a rebuttal.
- After reading *Federalist*, no. 10, and *Brutus*, no. 1, create a claim as to whether you think the United States should be a federal government or a confederation of states. Make at least two arguments to defend your claim. Include at least one counterargument and a rebuttal. **CR7**

**Students will respond to the following free-response-question prompt:**

- The American system of government has historically been referred to as an “experiment in democracy” that blends elements of thought on self-rule with historical and philosophical thought.
  - a. Describe two historical examples of self-rule or democratic rule from which the Framers of the US Constitution drew inspiration. Connect each example to one of these elements of American democracy.
    - Voting and election
    - Limits on government power
  - b. Explain how Enlightenment philosophy influenced the Framers in their drafting of these key documents.
    - The Declaration of Independence
    - The US Constitution
  - c. Explain the purpose of government as accepted by the Framers, and identify one major influence on the development of that purpose.

**Students will also be asked to do the following:**

- Analyze the purpose and justification of the Declaration of Independence.
- Write about the principles of the Constitution. **CR7**
- Analyze Supreme Court cases, including *McCulloch v. Maryland* and *United States v. Lopez*, and the impacts of each decision. **CR5**
- Read and understand the importance of foundational documents. **CR7**
- Imagine they are a congressional aide and assist your representative in preparing for a

debate on the budget by researching the public opinion of your constituents. Based on what you find, choose one side of the issue: providing more money for defense or providing funds for a federal grant. Use a variety of online sources to research the topic, develop an argument, create a presentation, and present argument and findings.

**CR10**

## **Unit 2: Interactions among Branches of Government**

**Big Ideas: Constitutionalism, Competing Policymaking Interests** **CR3**

### **Topics**

- Congress
- The presidency
- Federal bureaucracy
- The judiciary

### **Readings**

Wilson et al.:

- Chapter 13: "Congress"
- Chapter 14: "The Presidency"
- Chapter 15: "The Bureaucracy"
- Chapter 16: "The Judiciary"

Other: **CR2**

- *Federalist*, no. 70
- The 22nd Amendment of the Constitution
- *Federalist*, no. 78
- "The 'Judicial Power' and the Power of Judicial Review" by Richard W. Garnett
- Article III of the Constitution

### **Assignments**

**Students will respond to the following prompts in short writing assignments:**

- A member of the House of Representatives has introduced a piece of legislation to raise the minimum wage. The legislation is stalled in committee. The representative believes that if the legislation can reach the floor, it will more than likely pass. **CR4**
  - a. Identify an action that the representative can take to attempt to move the bill to the floor.
  - b. In the context of the scenario, explain how the action described in part A would affect the representative's relationship with congressional leadership.
  - c. In the context of the scenario, explain how the interaction between the member of Congress and congressional leadership is affected by party affiliation.

- The US Constitution empowers both houses of Congress to establish rules and procedures for the transaction of legislative business. Senators generally have a range of actions they can take to support or oppose a piece of legislation. A particular member of the majority party in the Senate is opposed to a piece of legislation introduced by the majority party. **CR4**
  - a. Identify an action that the senator can take to make it more difficult for the majority party to pass this piece of legislation.
  - b. In the context of the scenario, explain how the majority party would most likely respond to the action taken in part A.
  - c. The president belongs to the same party as the Senate's majority party, and the midterm election is six months away. In the context of the scenario, explain how these two factors would affect the interaction between the senator and the majority party.
- Voters elect a president from one party and a majority Congress from another party. The president, claiming a mandate from voters, nominates a Supreme Court justice who, while aligned with the president's ideology, is very controversial. Reaction from the Senate has been generally negative. **CR4**
  - a. Describe the likely outcome of a judicial nomination submitted by the president.
  - b. In the context of the scenario, explain an action that the president could take in response to the outcome described in part A.
  - c. In the context of the scenario, explain how the actions of both the president and Congress would be affected if seven of the eight current justices were of the same party and ideology as the president.
- A member of Congress was recently elected by a very wide margin. The representative does not anticipate any strong opposition in either the primary election or the general election. A piece of legislation that does not directly affect the representative's district has been introduced. The media are not reporting on this piece of legislation. **CR4**
  - a. Describe the role conception in which the representative is most likely to engage.
  - b. In the context of the scenario, explain how the representative's vote is affected by party leadership in Congress.
  - c. In the context of the scenario, explain how interest groups might affect the representative's vote on the legislation and the position of the majority party.
- The president is negotiating a trade agreement with another country. The process produces a treaty, which the president sends to the Senate for ratification. However, while a majority of the Senate pledges support, the treaty does not receive the two-

thirds majority vote required by the Constitution. **CR4**

- a. Based on the power that the Constitution gives the president, identify an action that the president can take to try to secure the policy objectives.
  - b. In the context of the scenario, explain how the action described in part A would affect the power distribution between the House of Representatives and the Senate.
  - c. In the context of the scenario, explain how the interaction between Congress and the president is affected by the existence of social media.
- Some Americans believe that bureaucracy is inefficient and wastes tax money.
    - a. Using the following claim, create an evidence-based argument as to the value of federal bureaucracy. Include and defend at least three arguments. Remember to use examples specific to departments, agencies, commissions, or government corporations. Include and rebut at least one counterargument.

“The federal bureaucracy provides many valuable functions and is an integral part of the US system of government.”
  - Should judges cultivate a more strict-constructionist or liberal-constructionist judicial philosophy? Also, should judges with the philosophy you select be more judicially restrained or judicially active?
    - Create a unified and cohesive argument.
    - Form a claim by selecting one option from each of the two questions above.
    - Include and defend at least two arguments for each claim.
    - For question two, include and rebut at least one counterargument.

**Students will respond to the following free-response question prompts:**

- In *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* (2006), the Supreme Court considered whether it had jurisdiction under the Detainee Treatment Act (DTA) of 2005 to consider the habeas corpus petition of Salim Hamdan, who was being held at Guantanamo Bay. Although the dissent argued that the court did not have jurisdiction, a 6–3 majority Supreme Court decided that it did, and proceeded to rule on the merits. **CR5**
  - a. Suppose that the federal government wished to strip the Supreme Court of jurisdiction in all habeas corpus petitions of all individuals being held at Guantanamo Bay. Discuss what actions the president or Congress could take to do so. Discuss the potential basis for such power.
  - b. In the context of the scenario, discuss how such actions by the federal government would promote or interfere with the separation of powers, and discuss the potential constitutionality of any such actions.
- Use the information graphic provided to answer the questions. **CR8**



- a. From 1981 to 2016, which opposition Congress was most willing to confirm the president's appointees, and who was the president? Which opposition was the least willing, and who was the president?
  - b. Identify a consequence of an oppositional president and Senate, and draw a conclusion therefrom.
  - c. Discuss the principles of the separation of powers based on your answer to part B.
- In *Easley v. Cromartie* (2001), the Supreme Court considered the constitutionality of North Carolina's 12th Congressional District's 1997 boundaries for the fourth time. Evidence showed that the district's shape was unusual, as was its splitting of towns and counties and its high African American voting population (47 percent). The lower court found that the district was unconstitutional because race (rather than the desire to protect Democratic incumbents) was the predominant factor in the drawing of the boundaries, and that voters were therefore being segregated by race.

The lower court based its determination in part on its finding that the legislature had excluded many heavily Democratic precincts from District 12, even when those precincts immediately bordered District 12 and would have established a far more compact district. For example, the legislature included precincts that were 40–100 percent African American and excluded precincts where the African American population was less than 35 percent but in which 54–76 percent of voters were registered Democrats.

The Supreme Court held that no constitutional violation had occurred and found that the district had been drawn for political purposes; i.e., to elect a Democrat. The Supreme Court stated the following in its ruling:

Evidence that blacks constitute even a supermajority in one congressional district while amounting to less than a plurality in a neighboring district will not, by itself, suffice to prove that a jurisdiction was motivated by race in drawing its district lines when the evidence also shows a high correlation between race and party preference. . . .

. . . If district lines merely correlate with race because they are drawn on the basis of political affiliation, which correlates with race, there is no racial classification to justify. . . .

As we said before, the problem with this evidence is that it focuses upon party registration, not upon voting behavior. . . . In part this is because white voters registered as Democrats "cross-over" to vote for a Republican candidate more often than do African-Americans, who register and vote Democratic between 95% and 97% of the time. . . . A legislature trying to secure a safe Democratic seat is interested in Democratic voting behavior. Hence, a legislature may, by placing reliable Democratic precincts within a district without regard to race, end

up with a district containing more heavily African-American precincts, but the reasons would be political rather than racial. . . .

. . . In a case such as this one where majority-minority districts (or the approximate equivalent) are at issue and where racial identification correlates highly with political affiliation, the party attacking the legislatively drawn boundaries must show at the least that the legislature could have achieved its legitimate political objectives in alternative ways that are comparably consistent with traditional districting principles. That party must also show that those districting alternatives would have brought about significantly greater racial balance. **CR5**

- a. Identify the constitutional clause that is common to both *Shaw v. Reno* and *Easley v. Cromartie*.
  - b. Based on the constitutional clause identified in part A, explain why the facts elucidated in *Easley v. Cromartie* might have led to a different holding than the holding in *Shaw v. Reno*.
  - c. Describe an action that members of the public who disagree with the holding in *Easley v. Cromartie* could take to limit its impact.
- The US Constitution originally said that senators would be selected by state legislatures. Per the terms of the 17th Amendment, senators are now elected directly by the citizens of their respective states. The party balance in the 115th Congress (2017–19) is 51 Republicans, 47 Democrats, and 2 Independents, who caucus with the Democrats. As of January 2018, Republicans had control of the legislatures in 31 states; Democrats had control in 14; control was split in 4; and Nebraska was officially nonpartisan. Develop an argument for or against repealing the 17th Amendment. **CR9**

In your essay, you must:

- articulate a defensible claim or thesis that responds to the prompt and establishes a line of reasoning.
- use your knowledge of federalism, the constitutional position of the US Senate, partisan politics, checks and balances, voting rights, and the history of redistricting or gerrymandering to address the current status of the US Senate and the potential effect of such a repeal.
- use reasoning to show how your evidence supports your claim or thesis.
- use refutation, concession, or rebuttal to respond to an opposing alternative or perspective.

**Students will also be asked to do the following:**

- Interpret data shown on the map labeled, “Apportionment of the US House of Representatives Based on the 2010 Census” CR6
- Develop a congressional budget presentation.
- Create a multimedia presentation on the impact of communication on the presidency.
- Analyze the decisions and impacts of Supreme Court cases, including *Shaw v. Reno*, *Baker v. Carr*, and *Marbury v. Madison*. CR5
- Analyze key foundational documents.

### Unit 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

**Big Ideas: Constitutionalism, Liberty and Order, Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy, Competing Policymaking Interests** CR3

#### Topics

- Civil liberties and the Bill of Rights
- Freedom of religion, speech, and expression
- Due process
- The Second, Fourth, Eighth, and 14th Amendments
- The Supreme Court and civil rights
- The effects of Supreme Court decisions on minority rights
- Nonviolent protest

#### Readings

Wilson et al.:

- Chapter 5: “Civil Liberties”
- Chapter 6: “Civil Rights”

Other: CR2

- “The Nationalization of the Bill of Rights” by Peter Woll
- *Plessy v. Ferguson*
- *Brown v. Board of Education*
- *Engel v. Vitale*
- “The Establishment Clause: Common Interpretation” by Marci A. Hamilton and Michael McConnell
- “The Right to Privacy” by Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis
- “Affirmative Action Background”
- *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*
- *District of Columbia et al v. Heller*
- “The First Amendment and Freedom of Speech”
- “Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution”
- “Sixth Amendment of the United States Constitution”
- *Gideon v. Wainwright*

- “Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution”
- “Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution”
- “United States: Gun Ownership and the Supreme Court”
- “Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution”

## Assignments

Students will respond to the following prompts in short writing assignments:

- A common aspect of many civil rights issues is a discussion of equality of results versus equality of opportunity. Keeping this in mind, evaluate the practice of affirmative action. Use legal precedent to support your conclusions.
- The Fifth Amendment contains one of the Constitution’s two due process clauses. The other is in the 14th Amendment.
  - a. Describe a principle of American government that explains why the Constitution contains two due process clauses.
  - b. Explain what the Fifth Amendment’s due process clause requires for criminal prosecutions.
  - c. Explain the relationship between natural rights and the due process clause.
- Students will provide responses to the following:
  - a. Describe the requirements of the Fourth Amendment with regard to search and seizure. **CR7**
  - b. Explain in what circumstances a law-enforcement official can conduct a search without following the requirements of the Fourth Amendment.
  - c. Explain how the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the Fourth Amendment has evolved over time.
- Students will provide responses to the following:
  - a. Define civil liberties.
  - b. Identify the primary clause of the 14th Amendment that has been used to extend civil liberties.
  - c. Describe the impact of selective incorporation on federalism in the United States.
- Students will provide responses to the following:
  - a. Explain why states were not obligated to follow the provisions of the Second Amendment until 2010, even though they had to follow the provisions of the First Amendment.
  - b. In *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), the Supreme Court decided that Washington, DC, could not prohibit the general public from owning handguns. Explain why the court’s decision did not require states to abide by the provision. **CR5**

- c. Describe under what circumstances a state or locality may prohibit firearm ownership.

**Students will respond to the following free-response question prompts:**

- The State of Pennsylvania had passed a law requiring public schools to recite the Lord's Prayer and read Bible verses each morning. To comply with the legislative mandate, Abington School District directed schools to conduct the morning exercise via the public-address system. If a school did not have a public-address system, the homeroom teacher was to conduct the exercises with students. Students who did not want to participate could be excused from the room.

In *Abington Township School District v. Schempp* (1963), the US Supreme Court struck down the law as a violation of the Constitution. The court stated that, since the school district's employees were agents of the State of Pennsylvania, they could not direct or encourage students to perform any religious activity.

The court stated the following:

Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be affected consistently with the First Amendment. But the exercises here do not fall into those categories. They are religious exercises, required by the States in violation of the command of the First Amendment. **CR5**

- a. Identify the constitutional clause that is common to both *Abington v. Schempp* and *Engel v. Vitale*.
  - b. Based on the constitutional clause identified in part A, explain why the facts of *Engel v. Vitale* and *Abington v. Schempp* led to a similar holding in both cases.
  - c. Describe an action that members of the public could take to limit the impact of *Abington v. Schempp* if they disagreed with the court's decision.
- Members of the Native American Church use peyote (a hallucinogenic drug) in religious ceremonies. Oregon has banned the possession, use, and sale of peyote. Alfred Smith and Galen Black, who were members of the Native American Church, lost their jobs after it was revealed that they had been using peyote in religious rituals. Upon losing their jobs, they applied for unemployment benefits from the State of Oregon. The state denied them the benefits because their dismissal was based on illegally consuming a prohibited drug.

In *Oregon v. Smith*, the Supreme Court ruled that Smith and Black were not entitled to unemployment benefits because Oregon had the right to ban the use of peyote, even for religious ceremonies, and to deny unemployment benefits to those who had been fired for using the drug. The court made the following statement:

The government's ability to enforce generally applicable prohibitions of socially

harmful conduct, like its ability to carry out other aspects of public policy, “cannot depend on measuring the effects of a governmental action on a religious objector’s spiritual development.” . . . . To make an individual’s obligation to obey such a law contingent upon the law’s coincidence with his religious beliefs, except where the State’s interest is “compelling”—permitting him, by virtue of his beliefs, “to become a law unto himself” . . . —contradicts both constitutional tradition and common sense. **CR5**

- a. Identify the constitutional clause that is common to both *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972) and *Oregon v. Smith* (1989).
  - b. Based on the constitutional clause identified in part A, explain why the facts of *Wisconsin v. Yoder* led to a different holding than the holding in *Oregon v. Smith*.
  - c. Describe an action that members of the state legislature could take if they disagreed with the decision in *Oregon v. Smith*.
- Students at Hazelwood East High School published a newspaper, the *Spectrum*, as part of their journalism program. In the last issue of the newspaper, they had planned to print a story on teenage pregnancy and a story on divorce. Upon prepublication review, the principal of the school took issue with these stories. The principal believed that the story on divorce did not adequately present all of the relevant facts associated with the couple in question. He was also concerned that the identities of the pregnant students would be discovered, even though the students’ names had been changed in the article. Finally, the principal thought that the stories were not appropriate for younger students. He directed students to revise the stories before publishing them. However, due to publication schedules, there was not enough time to revise the articles, and they were dropped from the last edition of the paper.

The Supreme Court ruled that the school could exercise prior restraint if the decision to do so was “reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns.” In this case, the court ruled that the school’s actions were reasonable because they related to issues of fairness, privacy, and the appropriateness of a subject in an educational setting. Consequently, the court did not deem the administration’s action to be at odds with the First Amendment. **CR5**

- a. Identify the constitutional provision that is common to both *New York Times v. United States* and *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier*.
- b. Based on the constitutional clause identified in part A, explain why the facts of *New York Times v. United States* and *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* led to a different holding in both cases.
- c. Describe an action that the state legislature could take to limit the impact of *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* if they disagreed with the court’s decision.

- Allan Bakke was a white applicant to the University of California at Davis Medical School. After being denied admission, he learned that 16 of the 100 positions available for first-year medical students were reserved for members of minority groups. Bakke's test scores were higher than those of the minorities who were admitted under the university's affirmative action program.

In the resulting case, the court ruled that the quotas were unconstitutional. Justice Powell wrote the following in the majority opinion:

Racial and ethnic classifications of any sort are inherently suspect and call for the most exacting judicial scrutiny. While the goal of achieving a diverse student body is sufficiently compelling to justify consideration of race in admissions decisions under some circumstances, petitioner's special admissions program, which forecloses consideration to persons like respondent, is unnecessary to the achievement of this compelling goal, and therefore invalid under the Equal Protection Clause.

The court had decided that affirmative action itself was constitutional. Race is one of many factors that can be considered for purposes of admission. **CR5**

- Identify the constitutional provision that is common to both *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Bakke v. California*.
- Based on the constitutional clause identified in part A, explain why the facts of *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Bakke v. California* led to a different holding in both cases.
- Describe an action that Congress could take to limit the impact of *Bakke v. California* if they disagreed with the court's decision.

#### **Students will also be asked to do the following:**

- Analyze editorial cartoons that address the rights in the first amendment. **CR8**
- Analyze Supreme Court cases, including *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, *Engel v. Vitale*, *New York Times v. United States*, *Schenck v. United States*, *Tinker v. Des Moines*, *Gideon v. Wainwright*, and *McDonald v. Chicago*. **CR5**
- Create a multimedia presentation on the 14th Amendment and social movements.
- Research affirmative action and draft a court decision on the implementation of affirmative action.
- Understand the strategy of gerrymandering and analyze gerrymandering cases taken before the Supreme Court.

## **Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs**

### **Big Ideas: Competing Policymaking Interests, Methods of Political Analysis** **CR3**

#### **Topics**

- Political perspectives
- Public opinion
- Political parties

## Readings

Wilson et al.:

- Chapter 7: "Public Opinion"
- Chapter 9: "Political Parties"

Other:

- "Keynesian Economics and Monetarism"
- "Party Government" by E.E. Schattschneider
- "Government by Discussion" by Sir Ernest Barker

## Assignments

**Students will respond to the following prompts in short writing assignments:**

- Students will provide responses to the following:
  - a. Define political socialization.
  - b. Contrast generational and life-cycle effects on political socialization.
  - c. Describe the impact of parents and family on a person's socialization.
- Describe three ways that political parties affect the US political system.

**Students will respond to the following free-response question prompts:**

- A news company conducts a poll to predict the outcome of an upcoming presidential election. Reporters go to a shopping mall and ask five hundred people which candidate they intend to vote for. These are the results of the poll: **CR4**

Candidate A: 52%

Candidate B: 48%

  - a. Describe a potential problem with relying on the results of the poll.
  - b. In the context of the scenario, explain an action the media company can take to increase the poll's accuracy.
  - c. In the context of the scenario, explain how the poll results can affect the outcome of the election in that state.
- Bob is an 18-year-old student. His parents are both registered voters and members of the Democratic Party. Their ideological identification is center-left, and they vote in nearly every election. **CR4**
  - a. Describe why Bob's voting behavior will likely mirror that of his parents.
  - b. In the context of the scenario, explain why Bob's ideological preferences may



shift over time.

- c. In the context of the scenario, explain how Bob's completion of a college degree may influence his voting preferences.
- A group of citizens believe that neither of the two major parties reflects their political views. Consequently, they form a political party to nominate candidates for public office. These candidates promise that, if they are elected, they will pursue the group's policy preferences. The group's ideological orientation is left of center. **CR4**
  - a. Describe the reason there are only two major political parties in the United States.
  - b. In the context of the scenario, explain the most likely outcome for the party's candidates in the general election.
  - c. In the context of the scenario, explain how the group's presence in the general election will affect the Democratic Party's success.
- Mary wants to run for the US Congress. She is ideologically libertarian and a member of the Republican Party. Seeking her party's nomination, she pays the filing fee and submits her declaration of candidacy to state election officials. **CR4**
  - a. Describe why Mary is running for office as a Republican even though she is ideologically libertarian.
  - b. In the context of the scenario, explain the level of support that her party will give her for the primary election.
  - c. In the context of the scenario, explain how the phenomenon of candidate-centered campaigns affects the support Mary will receive from her party for the general election.

**Students will also be asked to do the following:**

- Investigate two key economic theories using the two provided readings—Keynesian economics and monetarism—and how they have influenced politics and policy-making. **CR7**

## **Unit 5: Institutions of National Government**

**Big Ideas: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy, Competing Policymaking Interests, Methods of Political Analysis** **CR3**

### **Topics**

- American political culture
- Political participation
- Political parties
- Voting
- Elections and campaigns
- Interest groups and lobbying

- The media and politics

## Readings

Wilson et al.:

- Chapter 4: "American Political Culture"
- Chapter 8: "Political Participation"
- Chapter 10: "Elections and Campaigns"
- Chapter 11: "Interest Groups"
- Chapter 12: "The Media"

Other:

- "Winning the Vote: A History of Voting Rights" by Steven Mintz
- "A Theory of Critical Elections" and "The Responsible Electorate" by V.O. Key, Jr.
- "The Role of Interest Groups in Government" by Pendleton Herring
- "Misplaced Obsession with PACs" by Larry J. Sabato

## Assignments

**Students will respond to the following prompts in short writing assignments:**

- Identify and discuss elements of the American view of the political system.
- How has the American electorate changed since the first presidential election? Identify three major expansions of the franchise since the election of 1788.
- In *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*, the US Supreme Court found limits on aggregate individual contributions (i.e., aggregate limits on political giving by an individual) to be unconstitutional. However, the court left intact the limits on contributions an individual can make to an individual campaign. Why did the court do this? **CR5**
- Why do presidential campaigns matter?
- Explain how the Iron Triangle represents connections between:
  - a. interest groups and congressional committees.
  - b. congressional committees and bureaucratic agencies.
  - c. bureaucratic agencies and interest groups.
- What is a linkage institution? Explain two ways that the media functions as a linkage institution.

**Students will respond to the following free-response question prompts:**

- The legitimacy of the US political system is based on citizen participation. One of the principal ways that citizens participate in the United States is through voting. Is Congress or the Supreme Court more responsible for the expansion of the right to vote in the United States? Present an argument for your choice. **CR9**

In your essay, you must do the following:

- Articulate a defensible claim or thesis that responds to the prompt and establishes a line of reasoning.
  - Use at least one piece of evidence from the list below.
    - a. 15th Amendment
    - b. 19th Amendment
    - c. "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
  - Use a second piece of evidence from a different source on the list above OR from your knowledge of Congress or the Supreme Court.
  - Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim/thesis.
  - Use refutation, concession, or rebuttal to respond to an opposing or alternative perspective.
- A president prepares for a reelection campaign during the last part of their first term. There have been several negative stories in the media about the administration's policies, which the president believes have being overly critical. **CR4**
    - a. Describe an action that the president can take to improve how they are portrayal in the media.
    - b. In the context of the scenario, explain why some media outlets might portray the president in a positive manner while other media outlets portray them negatively.
    - c. Explain how polling conducted by media outlets affects elections.
  - A person desires to run for the US House of Representatives. **CR4**
    - a. Describe the process the person must undertake to secure a party nomination.
    - b. In the context of the scenario, explain how political action committees will affect the process described in part A.
    - c. Explain how the process described in part B affects representatives' behavior.
  - A special interest group wants the federal government to increase pollution controls on manufacturing plants. **CR4**
    - a. Describe how the free-rider effect will affect the group's success.
    - b. In the context of the scenario, explain how the interest group will attempt to influence the legislative process.
    - c. In the context of the scenario, explain why the interest group might seek to achieve its policy goals through the bureaucracy rather than through Congress.

**Students will also be asked to do the following:**

- Analyze voting districts to determine whether there is evidence of gerrymandering or not. (Skill Category 4) **CR8**
- Analyze data on a table relating to candidate support by education and income levels. **CR6**

- Analyze data relating to the future viability of Social Security and Medicare. They will review data gathered by the Congressional Budget Office, the US Census Bureau, and the Social Security Administration. **CR6**
- Read a Close Reader that explains how to analyze the credibility and reliability of media using both examples and non-examples of each. Then, students will analyze excerpts from various news media sources from multiple perspectives to include: New York Times, ABC News, Fox News, NPR Online, Wall Street Journal, and Reuters. **CR1 CR7**
- Select a current political issue and research the issue across various media sources, such as print and online newspapers, television stations and their websites, news websites, blogs, journals, social media, and podcasts. For each one, they will determine the reliability and credibility of each source and will provide examples to justify their determination. News media sources determined by students.
- Consider how political actors (the media, the military, political parties, protest movements, government agencies, and special interest groups) other than elected officials influence political decisions.
- Analyze an excerpt from “*Gerrymandering Is the Biggest Obstacle to Genuine Democracy in the United States. So Why Is No One Protesting?*” Brian Klaas, Washington Post to determine the perspective of the author. **CR1 CR7**

## Unit 6: Exam Prep and Review

This unit will help students prepare for the AP US Government and Politics exam.

### Topics

Students will learn exam strategies, practice test-taking techniques on exam-like questions, and review content covered in the five units.

- Exam Strategies
- Unit 1 Review
- Unit 2 Review
- Unit 3 Review
- Unit 4 Review
- Unit 5 Review
- Practice Exam I
- Practice Exam II

### Readings

There are no assigned readings in this unit, but students are encouraged to review their notes and reread any previously assigned readings, as needed.

### Assignments

Students will complete two practice exams that follow the same structure as the AP US Government and Politics exam.

Both practice exams consist of:

- four free-response questions (FRQs).
- 60 multiple-choice questions.