



AP U.S. GOVERNMENT

SOC303 — 0.5 Credit

Course Description

This course will survey the complex subjects of U.S. government and politics. We will analyze in some detail the processes and institutions (both formal and informal) through which the political system functions and policy decisions are made. This analysis will include the constitutional structure of government, participatory politics, the formal institutions of power, the extra constitutional influences on those institutions, and public policy and individual rights and liberties.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course you will:

- Express ideas clearly in writing.
- Work individually and with classmates to research political issues.
- Interpret and apply data from original documents such as court cases and bills.
- Write to persuade with evidence.
- Develop essay responses that include a clear, defensible thesis statement and supporting evidence.
- Raise and explore questions about policies, institutions, beliefs, and actions in a political science context.
- Evaluate secondary materials, such as scholarly works or statistical analyses.
- Explain the foundations and underpinnings of democratic government.
- Demonstrate comprehension of documents essential to American government and politics.
- Evaluate the importance of federalism in the political operation of the nation.
- Describe the nature of American political parties and their role in the election process.
- Analyze the patterns of voter behavior.
- Describe the functions and workings of policy making institutions (Congress, the Presidency, the Courts, and the Bureaucracy).
- Analyze the major developments in civil rights and civil liberties in America.

Prerequisites

Successful completion of U.S. History from 1700 to the present.

Course Length

One semester

Required Text

Edwards, Wattenberg, Lineberry, *Government in America, AP* EDITION*, Prentice Hall, ISBN #0321195051; *American Government: Readings and Cases*, ISBN #0321329776.

Course Outline

Underpinnings and Documents of American Government

Constitutional Beginnings

- American Democracy
- English and Enlightenment Traditions

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American Documents

- Documents from the Revolution and Beyond
- Constitution Building
- The Constitution
- The Bill of Rights

American Federalism

- Layer Cake Federalism

The Institutions of Government

Political Beliefs, Behaviors in Parties, Campaigns, and Elections

Political Parties and Voting Behavior

- Party Function and Structure
- Party Identification
- Voting Behavior and Intensity

Elections

- Financial Participation in Elections
- Congressional Elections
- Presidential Elections
- Evolution of Federalism

The Legislative Branch

- Structure of the House of Representatives
- Structure of the Senate
- Passage of a Bill

The Executive Branch

- The Nature of a President
- Presidential Roles
- The White House
- Presidential Politics, Polls, and the Press
- The Budget

The Bureaucracy

- The Nature of the Bureaucracy
- The Cabinet
- Other Bureaucratic Bodies
- Checks on the Bureaucracy

The Judiciary

- The Federal Court System
- Historical Supreme Courts
- The Nature of the Supreme Court
- The Modern Supreme Court

Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Civil Liberties: The Bill of Rights Today

- Incorporation
- The Establishment Clause
- The Free Exercise Clause
- Freedom of Speech
- Freedom of the Press
- The Fourth Amendment
- Due Process and Criminal Rights

Civil Rights

- Civil War Amendments and the Civil Rights Movement
- Post-WWII Civil Rights Legislation