

APGoPo : 2019 Course and Exam Updates

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Overview & Purpose

AP U.S Government and Politics provides a college-level, nonpartisan introduction to key political concepts, ideas, institutions, policies, interactions, roles, and behaviors that characterize the constitutional system and political culture of the United States. Students will study U.S foundational documents, Supreme Court decisions, and other texts and visuals to gain an understanding of the relationships and interactions among political institutions, processes and behaviors. They will also engage in disciplinary practices that require them to read and interpret data, make comparisons and applications, and develop evidence-based arguments. In addition, they will complete a political science research or applied civics project.

College Course Requirement

AP U.S Government and Politics is equivalent to a one-semester introductory college course in U.S government.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisite courses for AP U.S Government and Politics. Students should be able to read a college-level textbook and write grammatically correct, complete sentences.

Project Opportunities (consider only 1)

1. Research a local, state or national issue related to a political principle. Propose potential options or alternatives. Develop an argument that describes the intended outcome of the option, explains how it would be implemented and refutes opposing arguments.
2. Select a political issue and research how that issue is being framed and reported on in multiple media outlets. Use this investigation to develop a framework for discerning false, misleading, or biased information, including determining criteria for what makes a source credible.
3. Identify and research an issue of current debate. Attend a school board or city council, or local government meeting related to that issue. Observe and document policy making processes and outcomes.
4. During an election season, research important issues, voter perspectives, and policies impacting a particular elected position. Assume the role of campaign consultant(s) who must advise candidates currently running for office.

Exam Components

Multiple-Choice Questions

Section I of the AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam consists of 55 multiple-choice questions, including:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Analysis and application of quantitative-based source material
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Analysis and application of text-based (primary and secondary) sources
- **Visual Analysis:** Analysis and application of qualitative visual information
- **Concept Application:** Explanation of the application of the political concepts in context
- **Comparison:** Explanation of the similarities and differences of political concepts
- **Knowledge:** Identification and definition of political principles, processes, institutions, policies and behaviors

Multiple-choice questions will contain four answer options. A student's total score on the multiple-choice section is based on the number of questions answered correctly. Points are not deducted for incorrect answers or unanswered questions.

Free-Response Questions

Section II of the exam consists of four questions that prompt students to:

- **Concept Application:** Respond to a political scenario, explaining how it relates to a political principle, institution, process, policy, or behavior
- **Quantitative Analysis:** Analyze quantitative data, identify a trend or pattern, draw a conclusion from the visual representation, and explain how the data relates to a political principle, institution, process, policy, or behavior
- **SCOTUS Comparison:** Compare a nonrequired Supreme Court case with a required Supreme Court case, explaining how information from the required case is relevant to that in the nonrequired one
- **Argument Essay:** Develop an argument in the form of an essay, using evidence from one or more required foundational documents

All five Big Ideas (see below) as well as the required content presented in all five units of instruction are subject to being assessed in Section II as a whole. At least one free-response question will assess one or more learning objectives that pertain to public policy. All four free-response questions are weighted equally; however it is recommended that students spend 20 minutes of exam time on each of the first three questions, and 40 minutes on the argumentative essay.

In the argumentative essay question, students are given a prompt that can have more than one possible response. They will be asked to write a defensible claim or thesis that responds to the question and establishes a line of reasoning (the response cannot earn a point for simply restating the prompt)

They must then cite and describe one piece of evidence from a list of fundamental documents. To earn additional points students must identify a second piece of specific and relevant evidence, making sure they explain how or why both pieces support the claim or thesis. To complete their essay students must identify an opposing or alternative perspective, demonstrate a correct understanding of it, refute, concede, or rebut that perspectives.

I. AP U.S Government and Politics Exam

Exam Overview

The AP U.S Government and Politics Exam is three hours long, divided into two sections as shown in the table below:

Section	# of Questions	Timing	% of Total Exam Score
I. Multiple Choice	55 Questions	1 hour and 20 minutes	50%
II. Free Response	4 Questions	1 hour and 40 minutes	50%
Concept Application		20 minutes (suggested)	12.5%
Quantitative Analysis		20 minutes (suggested)	12.5%
SCOTUS Comparison		20 minutes (suggested)	12.5%
Argument Essay		40 (suggested)	12.5%

Time Management

Students need to budget their time wisely so that they can complete all parts of the exam. They will be able to move from Section I to Section II only after the one hour and 20 minutes time for Section I is completed and their responses to the multiple-choice questions are collected.

Time management is especially important with regard to Section II, which consists of four essay questions. It is recommended that students spend 20 minutes on each of the first three questions, for a total of one hour, and then an additional 40 minutes to develop and write the argumentative essay in response to question 4. Even though proctors will announce the time remaining in this section, students are not forced to move from one question to another.

II. The Big “I’s” or Ideas

The big ideas described below are intended to illustrate distinctive features and processes in U.S government and politics as well as how political scientists study political behavior.

CON for Constitutionalism- The U.S Constitution establishes a system of checks and branches of government and allocates power between federal and state governments. This system is based on the rule of law and the balance majority rule and minority rights.

LOR for Liberty and Order- Governmental laws and policies balancing order and liberty are based on the U.S Constitution and have been interpreted differently over time

PRD for Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy- Popular sovereignty, individualism, and republicanism are important considerations of U.S laws and policy making and assume citizens will engage and participate.

PMI for Competing Policy-Making Interests- Multiple actors and institutions interact to produce and implement possible policies

MPA for Methods of Political Analysis- Using various types of analyses, political scientists measure how U.S political behavior, attitudes, ideologies, institutions are shaped by a number of factors over time.

III. Require Foundational Documents

The following lists represents the required readings for the course as they relate to the enduring understandings.

Required primary documents

1. *The Declaration of Independence* ([full text](#), [article](#), [video](#))
2. *The Articles of Confederation* ([full text](#), [article](#), [video](#))
3. *The Constitution of the United States* ([full text](#), [brief video](#), [deep dive video](#))
4. *Federalist No. 10* ([full text](#), [video part 1](#), [video part 2](#))
5. *Brutus No. 1* ([full text](#), [video](#))
6. *Federalist No. 51* ([full text](#), [article](#), [video](#))
7. *Federalist No. 70* ([full text](#), [video](#))
8. *Federalist No. 78* ([full text](#), [article](#))
9. *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* ([full text](#), [video](#))

IV. Required Supreme Court Cases

The following list represents required Supreme Court Cases and their holdings as related to the enduring understandings in the content outline.

AP U.S Government and Policies students should be familiar with the structure and functions on the U.S Supreme Court, as well as how the court renders the decisions. This includes how holdings are decided and that justices who are in the minority often write dissents that express their opinions on the case and the Constitutional questions. While students will not need to know any dissenting (or concurring) opinions from the required cases, it is important for students to understand the role of dissenting opinions, especially as they relate to future cases on similar issues.

McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)

Established supremacy of the U.S Constitution and federal laws over state laws

United States vs. Lopez (1995)

Congress may not use the commerce clause to make possession of a gun in a school zone a federal crime

Engel vs. Vitale (1962)

School sponsorship of religious activities violates the establishment clause

Wisconsin vs. Yoder (1972)

Compelling Amish students to attend school past the eighth grade violates the free exercise clause

Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969)

Public school students have the right wear black armbands in school to protest the Vietnam War

New York Times Co. vs. United States (1971)

Bolstered the freedom of the press, establishing a “heavy presumption against prior restraint” even in cases involving national security

Schenck vs. United States (1919)

Speech creating a “clear and present danger” is not protected by the First Amendment

Gideon vs. Wainwright (1963)

Guaranteed the right to an attorney for the poor or indigent in a state felony case

Roe vs. Wade (1973)

Extended the right of privacy to a woman’s decision to have an abortion

McDonald vs. Chicago (2010)

The Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms for self-defense is applicable to the states

Brown vs. Board of Education (1954)

Race-based school segregation violates the equal protection clause

Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission (2010)

Political spending by corporations, associations, labor unions is a form protected speech under the First Amendment

Baker vs. Carr (1961)

Opened the door to equal protection challenges to redistricting and the development of the “one person, one vote” doctrine by ruling that challenges to redistricting did not raise “political questions” that would keep federal courts from viewing such challenges

Shaw vs. Reno (1993)

Majority minority districts, created under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, may be constitutionally challenged by voters if race is the only factor used in creating the district

Marbury vs. Madison (1803)

Established the principle of judicial review empowering the Supreme Court to nullify an act of the legislative or executive branch that violates the Constitution

