

AP[®] U.S. Government and Politics

About the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®])

The Advanced Placement Program[®] has enabled millions of students to take college-level courses and earn college credit, advanced placement, or both, while still in high school. AP Exams are given each year in May. Students who earn a qualifying score on an AP Exam are typically eligible, in college, to receive credit, placement into advanced courses, or both. Every aspect of AP course and exam development is the result of collaboration between AP teachers and college faculty. They work together to develop AP courses and exams, set scoring standards, and score the exams. College faculty review every AP teacher's course syllabus.

AP Government Program

The AP Program offers two government courses: AP U.S. Government and Politics and AP Comparative Government and Politics. Each course is designed to be equivalent to a one semester introductory college course. There is no prescribed sequence of study or course length. Both courses are designed to be half-year courses, although some high schools teach them as full-year courses. A school may offer one or both courses.

AP U.S. Government and Politics Course Overview

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 behavior. 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.

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.

AP U.S. Government and Politics Course Content

COURSE UNITS

The AP U.S. Government and Politics course is organized around five units, which focus on major topics in U.S. government and politics. The units are:

- Foundations of American Democracy
- Interaction Among Branches of Government
- Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
- American Political Ideologies and Beliefs; and
- Political Participation

Foundational documents and Supreme Court cases are an integral part of the course and necessary for students to understand the philosophical underpinnings, significant legal precedents, and political values of the U.S. political system and may serve as the focus of AP Exam questions. The course requires study of:

- 11 foundational documents, including the U.S. Constitution
- 15 landmark Supreme Court cases

POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH OR APPLIED CIVICS PROJECT

The required project adds a civic component to the course, engaging students in exploring how they can affect, and are affected by, government and politics throughout their lives. The project might have students collect data on a teacher-approved political science topic, participate in a community service activity, or observe and report on the policymaking process of a governing body. Students should plan a presentation that relates their experiences or findings to what they are learning in the course.

AP U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES

Practice 1: Apply political concepts and processes to scenarios in context

Practice 2: Apply Supreme Court decisions

Practice 3: Analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics

Practice 4: Read, analyze, and interpret foundational documents and other text-based and visual sources

Practice 5: Develop an argument in essay format

AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam Structure

AP U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS EXAM: 3 HOURS

Assessment Overview

The AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam measures students' understanding of required content. Students must be able to define, compare, explain, and interpret political concepts, policies, processes, perspectives, and behaviors that characterize the U.S. political system.

Format of Assessment

Section I: Multiple Choice | 55 Questions | 80 Minutes | 50% of Exam Score

- **Quantitative Analysis:** five sets of stimulus based questions, each set contains two to three questions.
- **Text-based Analysis:** two sets of questions; one set based on a foundational document, the other based on a primary or secondary source. Each set contains three to four questions.
- **Visual Source Analysis:** three sets of stimulus based questions, each set contains two questions.
- **Individual multiple choice questions:** approximately 30 questions that require students to describe, explain, and compare political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors, including questions about required Supreme Court cases and foundational documents.
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Section II: Free Response | 4 Questions | 100 Minutes | 50% of Exam Score

- **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 for the visual representation, and explain how it 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

AP U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

Sample Multiple-Choice Question

Which of the following actions by public school students would most likely be protected symbolic speech based on the precedent established by *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969)?

- (A) Leading prayers over the school's public address system
- (B) Publishing an editorial in the school newspaper
- (C) Protesting a school board decision by disrupting a school assembly
- (D) Wearing t-shirts objecting to a school board decision

Correct Answer: D

Sample Free-Response Question

Develop an argument that explains which of the three models of representative democracy — participatory, pluralist, and elite — best achieves the founders' intent for American democracy in terms of ensuring a stable government run by the people.

In your essay, you must:

- Articulate a defensible claim or thesis that responds to the prompt and establishes a line of reasoning
- Support your claim with at least TWO pieces of accurate and relevant information:
 - ◆ one piece of evidence from one of the following foundational documents:
 - Brutus 1
 - Federalist No. 10
 - U.S. Constitution
 - ◆ one piece of evidence from another foundational document on the list above or from your study of the electoral process
- Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim/thesis
- Respond to an opposing or alternative perspective using refutation, concession, or rebuttal