

Advanced Placement United States Government Syllabus

This course is taken in the fall semester with a review in the spring semester before the AP testing. This school uses a block schedule in which classes meet three days a week for one hour and twenty minutes. Areas covered in this course are:

Constitutional Underpinnings of the Government, Political Beliefs and Behavior, Political Parties, Interest Groups, Mass Media and Institutions of the National Government, Public Policy and Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Lectures, discussion, papers and projects are used in this class. Current events are vital to understanding the dynamic nature of our government. At the beginning of each class there will be a discuss of the latest happenings. An exam shall follow each chapter and will include short answer questions. At the beginning of the semester an assignment is given to help the transition from history to government. Students are to read a presidential biography and to look specifically for the relationship between the President, other institutions of government, interest groups, the media and the public.

Students will be graded on the tests, papers, projects and classroom participation. The following is the grading scale:

90 and above = A
80 and above = B
70 and above = C
60 and above = D

The texts are *Wilson, James Q and Dilulio John J. American Government 10th ed.*, and the *Student Study Guide for American Government. 19th ed. Boston Houghton Mifflin, 2006* and *Woll, Peter, American Government: Readings and Cases 16th ed.*

Supplemental text used by teacher: *Edwards, Government in America, People, Politics and Policy, AP Edition 12th ed.*

Also used in instruction: *New York Times, Washington Post, Christian Science Monitor, Time, News Week, US News and World Report, PBS, National Public Radio, plus various other sources on the internet.*

An on going assignment for the class is a group assignment concerning the new shortened primary season. Students will divide into groups of four or five and periodically predict what will happen in the next few weeks. Finally in late January they will create a newspaper and in its columns predict the winner.

\Week 1:

Who Governs, Wilson Chapter 1

This introductory chapter will be discussed and there will be no exam.

Weeks 2 and 3:

Wilson Chapter 2 and Woll, The Founding Fathers : A Reform Caucus in Action by Roche and Framing the Constitution by Beard. There will be an exam and a paper comparing the beliefs of Roche and Beard. There will be a discussion of the Constitution with particular emphasis on the Bill of Rights.

Week 4:

Federalism. Wilson Chapter 3 p 49-73 and Woll, A Perspective on Federalism . Discussion, exam and paper. Topic of paper is Federalism the good the bad and the ugly.

Cases to be emphasized:

McCulloch v Maryland
Jones and Laughlin Steel v NLRB

Weeks 5 and 6:

Civil Rights And Civil Liberties. Wilson Chapters 4 and 5 *Woll, Barron v Baltimore, The Fourteenth Amendment , Plessy v Ferguson , Brown v Board* and the study of the incorporation of the *Bill of Rights starting with Gitlow v. New York*

There will be an exam to include short answer questions from affirmative action to future of *Row v Wade* in light of a more conservative Supreme Court .

Other Cases to be featured:

Griswold v. Connecticut
Casey v Planned Parenthood
Gideon v Wainwright
Engel v. Vitale
Lemon v Kurtzman

Weeks 7 and 8:

Public Opinion, Political Parties and Elections Readings Wilson Chapters 7, 8,9 Woll, Federalist 10, Perspectives on American Political Parties, Buckley v Valeo and Myths and Realities about Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002

One of the main sources for this unit is the current developments of the primary race. Is there a change in public opinion that may alter the race? How much money is being raised and how? Are the parties pressuring interest group lobbyists for ever more funds ? How are the candidates molding their campaigns to consolidate their various constituents? Where do the candidates stand or do they make stands on the seminal issues of the day i.e. The war in Iraq, the economy, abortion, and gay marriage? Are the red states or the blue states turning purple?

Students will have an exam and write a paper in which they base prediction who is ahead and who do they think will win.

Weeks 9 and 10:

Interest Groups and the Media, Wilson Chapters 11 and 12 Woll, Madison s Dilemma , The Governmental Process, and the Misplaced Obsession with PACs.

How are the various interest groups presenting and championing their causes? Are they they channeling soft money through the 527s? Are they even causing the campaign to lean toward there issues? How is the media playing the various role that Wilson gives it? There will be an exam with multiple choice and short answers.

Weeks 11 and 12:

Congress, Wilson Chapter 13. Woll, Congressional Government by Woodrow Wilson and If, as Ralph Nader Says, "Congress is The Broken Branch," How Come We Love Our Congressmen So Much?

In this unit the evolution of Congress into its present form will be covered. The elective power of Congress will be covered The House will be contrasted with the Senate. The evolution and importance of committees will be explored. The inevitable clashes with the president will be analyzed. These will include the War Powers Act and The Budget Impoundment and Control Act. And, of course, How a Bill Becomes a Law is a must to learn

Court cases to be emphasized:

McCulloch v. Maryland
Gibbons v. Ogden
Chadha v. INS
Adarand Constructors, Inc v Pena

There will be an exam with multiple choice and short answer and a short paper.

Weeks 13 and 14:

The Presidency, Wilson Chapter 14,. Woll, Federalist 70, Presidential Power and The Presidential Character.

In this unit the evolution of the Presidency will be covered. The source of the power of the office will be probed. The interactions of the President with the other branches of the government will be reviewed.

Court Case to be emphasized:

United States v Nixon

There will be an exam and a paper will be required

Week 15:

The Bureaucracy, Wilson Chapter 15. Woll, constitutional Democracy and Bureaucratic Power.

In this chapter the growth in scope and authority of the Federal Bureaucracy will be covered. There will be an exam.

Weeks 16 and 17;

The Judiciary, Wilson Chapter 16. Woll, Federalist 78 , Judicial Self-Restraint and Elk Grove Unified School District et al. Newton et. al.

In this unit the historical perspective of the Court will be covered. The conflict between the strict-constructional and activists views will be explored. The concept of *stare decisis* and the future of *Roe* in light of the Justice Alito confirmation hearings will be discussed.

Court case to be emphasized:

Marbury v. Madison

Method of evaluation will be an exam. A paper will be written on the Strict-Constructionalist v Activists perspective on the court decisions.

Weeks 18 and 19:

Policy Making, Economic Policy, Social Welfare and Foreign and Military Policy, Wilson Chapters 17, 18, 19 and 20.

This is a rapid paced study of the various governmental policies and the interaction of the various branches of government, the media, interest groups, political parties and the popular opinion. This will also be viewed through the prism of the Presidential Primary. Have any of the candidates taken firm stances on what they feel should be the government's policy?

Of course there will be an exam and a paper entitled, "As a candidate this would be my economic policy"

Week 20:

Review and practice AP exam. There will also be a review in April before the AP exam