



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 an introductory college course. 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 course skills 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

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
- Interactions Among Branches of Government
- Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
- American Political Ideologies and Beliefs
- Political Participation

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

- Required foundational documents, including the Constitution of the United States
- Required 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 relevant service learning 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 Course Skills

- **Skill Category 1: Concept Application:** Apply political concepts and processes to scenarios in context
- **Skill Category 2: SCOTUS Application:** Apply Supreme Court decisions
- **Skill Category 3: Data Analysis:** Analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics
- **Skill Category 4: Source Analysis:** Read, analyze, and interpret foundational documents and other text-based and visual sources
- **Skill Category 5: Argumentation:** 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.

Section II: Free Response | 4 Questions | 100 Minutes | 50% of Exam Score

- FRQ1 Concept Application: Respond to a political scenario, explaining how it relates to a political principle, institution, process, policy, or behavior
- FRQ2 Quantitative Analysis: Analyze quantitative data, identify a trend or pattern, draw a conclusion based on the visual representation, and explain how it relates to a political principle, institution, process, policy, or behavior
- FRQ3 SCOTUS Comparison: Compare a non-required Supreme Court case with a required Supreme Court case, explaining how information from the required case is relevant to that in the non-required one
- FRQ4 Argument Essay: Develop an argument in the form of an essay, using evidence from one or more required foundational documents

Exam Components

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, or elite—best achieves the founders’ intent for American democracy in terms of ensuring a stable government run by the people.

Use at least one piece of evidence from one of the following foundational documents:

- Brutus 1
- Federalist No. 10
- U.S. Constitution

In your response, you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning.
- Support your claim with at least TWO pieces of specific and relevant evidence.
 - ♦ One piece of evidence must come from one of the foundational documents listed above.
 - ♦ A second piece of evidence can come from any other foundational document not used as your first piece of evidence, or it may be from your knowledge of course concepts.
- Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim or thesis.
- Respond to an opposing or alternate perspective using refutation or rebuttal.