

Murrieta Valley Unified School District
High School Course Outline
April 2013

Department: Social Science
Course Title: Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics
Course Number: 1701
Grade Level: 12
Prerequisites: Permission of Instructor
Length of Course: Year
UC/CSU (A-F) Requirement: A

I. Goals

The students will:

- A. Examine federalism and separation of powers as embodied by the Constitution.
- B. Describe the ideologies of the Framers and identify the theoretical perspectives such as democratic theory, republicanism, pluralism, and elitism.
- C. Identify the variety of political beliefs and explain how they are formed, how they evolve, and the processes by which they are transmitted.
- D. Explain why U.S. citizens hold certain beliefs about politics and why various factors perpetuate or change these beliefs.
- E. Analyze the ways in which political culture, including demographic features, affects and informs political participation.
- F. Describe the history of political parties and party reforms, as well as factors that have affected the rise and fall of parties in the American political system.
- G. Identify the roles played by major parties, third parties, interest groups, and PACs in the electoral process.
- H. Explain the affect that the media has on voters, campaigns, election outcomes, candidate images, and agenda development.

- I. Analyze the formal and informal powers and functions of the major political institutions in the United States.
- J. Describe factors that can affect the balance of powers between the branches, and the relationship of the branches to parties, groups, media, and state and local governments.
- K. Explain the interactions between institutions in the formation and implementation of political agendas and policy
- L. Report on the development of individual rights and liberties in America, especially noting the workings and key decisions of the Supreme Court.
- M. Compare and Contrast the strengths and weaknesses of an activist role by the Court.

This course is consistent with the California State Social Science Framework and the requirements of the College Board to prepare students for the Advanced Placement Exam in Government.

II. Outline of Content for Major Areas of Study

- A. Constitutional Underpinnings of U.S. Government
 - 1. Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution
 - 2. Separation of Powers
 - 3. Federalism
 - 4. Theories of democratic government
- B. Political Beliefs and Behaviors
 - 1. Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders
 - 2. Processes by which citizens learn about politics
 - 3. The nature, sources, and consequences of public opinion
 - 4. The ways in which citizens vote and otherwise participate in political life
 - 5. Factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors
- C. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media
 - 1. Political parties and elections
 - a. Functions
 - b. Organizations
 - c. Development
 - d. Effects on the political process
 - e. Electoral laws and systems
 - 2. Interest groups, including political action committees
 - a. The range of interests represented
 - b. The activities of interest groups
 - c. The effects of interest groups on the political process

- d. The unique characteristics and roles of PACs in the political process
 - 3. The mass media
 - a. The functions and structures of the media
 - b. The impacts of media on politics
- D. Institutions of National Government
 - 1. The major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power
 - 2. Relationships among these four institutional arrangements of power
 - 3. Linkages between institutions and the following
 - a. Public opinion and voters
 - b. Interest groups
 - c. Political parties
 - d. The media
 - e. Subnational governments
- E. Public Policy
 - 1. Policy making in a federal system
 - 2. The formation of policy agendas
 - 3. The role of institutions in the enactment of policy
 - 4. The role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation
 - 5. Linkages between policy processes and the following:
 - a. Political institutions and federalism
 - b. Political parties
 - c. Interest groups
 - d. Public opinion
 - e. Elections
 - f. Policy networks
- F. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
 - 1. The development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation
 - 2. Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
 - 3. The impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development

III. Accountability Determinants

- A. Free response questions
- B. Document based questions
- C. Multiple choice tests
- D. Timed essays
- E. In class assignments

- F. Homework
- G. Research projects and presentations

IV. AP Exam Requirement

Students attempting to receive college credit for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses are required to pass a College Board exam which validates coursework. This exam **is not a requirement** for District High School credit, grade increases, or extra credit.

Student fees are allowable for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Diploma examinations **for college credit**, so long as (1) taking the exam is not a course requirement; (2) the exam results have no impact on a pupil's grade or credit in a course; and (3) eligible economically disadvantaged high school pupils who receive school district funding towards the exam fee shall pay \$5.00 of the fee. (EC sections 52240-52244; 52920-52922.)

V. Required Text:

The Challenge of Democracy. Kenneth Janda New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.

VI. Supplementary Materials:

American Government: Readings and Cases. Peter Woll New York: HarperCollins, 1996.