

*Advanced Placement (AP) United States Government and Politics*

**Course Syllabus 2014-15**

**Course Description**

This course serves as a university level introduction to the concepts and research methods used by political scientists to analyze the government and political system of the United States. Despite ongoing challenges within the American political system, the United States still very much stands at the apex of global power. Its governmental decisions have important consequences not only domestically but also worldwide. Therefore, understanding how the American political system operates is not only essential for comprehending the character of the United States itself, but also for a sound understanding of how the world works, more broadly. Students in AP U.S. Government and Politics will study general concepts that are used to interpret American government and policies as well as specific examples of how these concepts are in used in practice. Given the controversial nature of American political life, students will develop analytical prowess in critically evaluating multiple perspectives on political issues and conceptual interpretations. Students who complete the course will be prepared to become effective participants in American political society.

**Course Expectations**

Advanced Placement courses are developed, audited, and assessed by a non-profit organization known as the College Board ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)). Since they function as college preparatory courses, and attaining a sufficiently high grade on the final exam may provide students with the opportunity to receive a college credit, the demands are understandably high. It is expected that only students with the English language proficiency, background knowledge, and academic motivation necessary to achieve a Level 4 or 5 on the final exam will enroll in AP courses at PAS.

Given the rigorous curriculum of which this course is comprised, thorough preparation for class is absolutely necessary and will be strongly predictive of one’s results on the final examination. You are expected to complete all assigned readings and assignments prior to class and to stay up to date with current global and regional events through supplemental readings. Of particular importance is frequent, thoughtful participation in classroom activities and discussions.

***AP courses are designed for the purpose of obtaining university credit while still attending high school.  PAS has a high expectation of student performance, in line with the obvious rigor of such courses.  Therefore, all students enter AP courses on a probationary basis.  Accordingly, a number of measures will be put in place to ensure that only those students who are ready, willing, and able to apply themselves and put in the necessary effort will remain in AP courses. Student performance will be evaluated by both the AP subject teachers and the school administration along the following lines to determine a student's fitness for continuing the course.***

* ***Stage 1 – AP Courses begin during the summer. Completion and effort of the assigned summer work prior to beginning of the school year will be evaluated to determine initial concerns. Students who have not performed to my and PAS' expectations will be issued a warning and their parents will be informed.***
* ***Stage  2 – Just before the add/drop date, which is about three weeks into school, AP teachers will make a recommendation as to whether each student should remain in the course based on each student’s participation in class and on any assessed work completed up to that point.***
* ***Stage 3 – At the end of Quarter 1, any student achieving a grade below “B-“ will be automatically removed from the course.  Any student achieving a "B-" will be given a warning, and face additional scrutiny in the subsequent quarters.***
* ***Stage 4 – At the end of Quarter 2, any student warned at the end of Quarter 1 who has not raised his/her grade above “B-“ will be removed from the course.***

***After Quarter 2, if a student's grade drops to a "B-" or below he/she will be removed from the course.  If the student is a senior and has already been accepted by a university, the administration will notify said university of the student's changed status and may recommend reconsideration of the student's acceptance on that basis.  For students removed from an AP course according to the conditions above, there is an option to appeal to the relevant AP teacher and the administration, in exceptional cases.***

**Course Assessment and Grading**

Students will be required to submit all work online in one of two formats, depending on the assignment. Many written assignments, such as chapter outlines, essays and drafts, and so on, will be submitted using **Google Documents via Google Drive**. Assignments will not be accepted using other document formats (e.g., .doc, .pdf., etc.). Students will also be expected to create and continually update a **website**, which will be used to publish essays, video projects, a reflective blog, and chapter outline syntheses of both the text and the corresponding study guide chapters. Students will receive detailed instructions in class as to how exactly work will be submitted. The website will be worth 20% of the course grade.

Student **participation** in a course of this nature is crucial and will comprise 15% of the course grade. Two-thirds of this mark will be based on preparation for and participation in **Socratic Seminars**. One-third will be based on general class participation.

**Tests and quizzes** will be regular features of classroom life and will be structured to prepare students for the AP Examination, using questions mainly of the same format as well as timed in-class essays. A **Quarterly/Semester Exam** will be worth an additional 10%. Small **projects**, such as (but not limited to!) maps, posters, presentations, and so on, will also make up 10%.

The largest portion of the quarterly mark, 25%, will be based on a **Culminating Activity** that will require considerable research, analysis, critical thinking, and creativity. This assignment will take several weeks to complete each quarter and will challenge students to demonstrate deep understanding of the course curriculum. It will be scaffolded to be submitted in at least three stages, and students will receive and be expected to incorporate descriptive feedback to improve their final product. In Quarters 1 and 3, the Culminating Activity will be a **major research essay**, and in Quarters 2 and 4 it will be a **video project**.

All student work is expected to be completed in a timely manner, respecting all stated deadlines. **Work that is submitted late will lose 10% per school day, and will receive a zero after three days**. Late work will only be excused if a medical or compassionate explanation has been accepted by the school administration. In such cases, it will be the student’s responsibility to get a note from the school office justifying the late submission. Of course, any and all writing may be required to be submitted to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). **Plagiarism** is a serious academic offense and will automatically result in a zero grade as well as further administrative penalties.

In summary, the mark scheme for the course is as follows:

**Tests/Quizzes: 20%**

**Website: 20%**

**Projects: 10%**

**Participation: 15%**

**Quarterly Exam: 10%**

**Culminating Activities: 25%**

**Course Materials**

Students will be expected to use multiple print and online sources. Each student must purchase the following two books at the beginning of the course.

**Text**: Patterson, Thomas (2009). *We the People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics* (9th Ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

**Study Guide**: Lader, Kurt (2014). *Barron’s AP U.S. Government and Politics, 8th Ed*. Barron’s Educational Services, Inc,: Hauppage, NY.

**Course Outline**

The following is a rough outline of course units and corresponding main readings. Dates should be treated as fluid and a rough guideline only. All dates are subject to change.

**Unit 1—Introduction to United States Politics and Government**

*Weeks 1: August 25 – 29*

* Patterson, Ch. 1, “Political Thinking: Becoming a Responsible Citizen”
* Barron’s, Ch. 1, “The Theory of Modern Government”

**Unit 2—Constitutional Democracy**

*Weeks 2-3: September 1 - 12*

* Patterson, Ch. 2, “Constitutional Democracy: Promoting Liberty and Self-Government”
* Barron’s, Ch. 2, “Constitutional Foundations”
* Barron’s, Ch. 4, “The Constitution”

**Unit 3—American Federalism**

*Weeks 4-5: September 15 - 26*

* Patterson, Ch. 3, “Federalism: Forging a Nation”
* Barron’s, Ch. 4, “Federalism”

**Unit 4—Civil Liberties**

*Weeks 6-7: September 30 - October 9*

* Patterson, Ch. 4, “Civil Liberties: Protecting Individual Rights”
* Barron’s, Ch. 5, “The Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties”

**Unit 5—Civil Rights**

*Weeks 8-9: October 13 - 23*

* Patterson, Ch. 5, “Civil Rights: Struggling Toward Fairness”
* Barron’s, Ch. 6, “Civil Rights: Equal Protection Under the Law”

**Week 10 Quarter 1 Exams**: *October 24 - 30*

**Unit 6—Public Opinion and Political Socialization**

*Weeks 11-12: November 4 - 14*

* Patterson, Ch. 6, “Public Opinion and Political Socialization: Shaping the People’s Voice”
* Patterson, Ch. 10, “The News Media: Communicating Political Images”
* Barron’s, Ch. 13, “Voting Behavior: The Impact of the Media on Public Opinion”

**Unit 7—Political Participation**

Weeks 13: November 17 - 21

* Patterson, Ch. 7, “Political Participation: Activating the Popular Will”

**Unit 8—The Electoral Process**

*Weeks 14-15: November 24 – December 5*

* Patterson, Ch. Ch. 8, “Political Parties, Candidates, and Campaigns: Defining the Voter’s Choice”
* Barron’s, Ch. 11, “Political Parties and Political Action”
* Barron’s, Ch. 12, “Nominations, Campaigns, and Elections”

**Unit 9—Interest Groups**

*Weeks 16-17: December 8 - 18*

* Patterson, Ch. 9, “Interest Groups: Organizing for Influence”
* Barron’s, Ch. 14, “Special Interest Groups—Lobbyists and PACs”

**Winter Holidays**: December 19 – January 4

**Week 18 Semester 1 Exams:** January 5 - 9

**Unit 10—The Congress**

*Weeks 19-20: January 12 – 23*

* Patterson, Ch. 11, “Congress: Balancing National Goals and Local Interests”
* Barron’s, Ch. 7, “The Congress”

**Unit 11—The Presidency**

*Weeks 21-22: January 26 – February 6*

* Patterson, Ch. 12, “The Presidency: Leading the Nation”
* Barron’s, Ch. 8, “The Presidency”

**Unit 12—The Bureaucracy**

*Weeks 23-24: February 9 – 17*

* Patterson, Ch. 13, “The Federal Bureaucracy: Administering the Government”
* Barron’s, Ch. 10, “The Bureaucracy”

**Chinese New Year:** February 18 - 24

**Unit 13—The Judiciary**

Weeks 25-26: February 25 – March 6

* Patterson, Ch. 14, “The Federal Judicial System: Applying the Law”
* Barron’s, Ch. 9, “The Judiciary”

**Unit 14—Domestic and Foreign Policy Issues**

Weeks 27-29: March 9-26

* Patterson, Ch. 15, “Economic and Environmental Policy: Contributing to Prosperity”
* Patterson, Ch. 16, “Welfare and Education Policy: Providing for Personal Security and Need”
* Patterson, Ch. 17, “Foreign Policy: Protecting the American Way”
* Barron’s, Ch. 15, “The Economy, the Federal Budget, Social Welfare, and Entitlements”

**Week 29 Quarter 3 Exams:** March 20 - 26

**Spring Holiday:** March 30 – April 3

**AP Examination Review**

*Weeks 30-33: April 6 – May 1*

**AP Exams**

Weeks 34-35: April 4-15

**Course Culminating Activity**

*Weeks 36-39: May 18 – June 10*