



AP U.S. GOVERNMENT & POLITICS An Overview

UNITS

TRI A

Introduction to AP American Government and Politics Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy (15-22%)

Unit 2: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (13-18%)

Unit 3: American Political Culture, Ideologies and Beliefs (10-15%)

TRI B

Unit 4: Political Participation, Parties, and Electoral Process (20-27%)

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN BRANCHES (25-36%)

Unit 5: The Executive Branch and Mass Media

Unit 6: Bureaucracy and Public Policy

TRI C

Unit 7: The Legislative Branch and Special Interest Groups

Unit 8: The Judicial Branch

THE EXAM

The AP Government and Politics Exam

Section I: 55 multiple-choice questions (1 hour and 20 min)

Section II: Four free-response questions (1 hour and 40 minutes)

FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

The AP requires that we master several primary source documents related to the founding of the country.

You will be required to know:

- The context of the document
- How the document addresses the relationship between the structure and power of the federal government and individual rights

REQUIRED FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS



Required Foundational Documents

A balance between governmental power and individual rights has been a hallmark of American political development. **LOR-1**

- **FEDERALIST NO. 10**
The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection
teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/federalist-no-10/
- **BRUTUS NO. 1**
To the Citizens of the State of New-York
teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/brutus-i/
- **THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**
www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html

The Constitution emerged from the debate about the weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation as a blueprint for limited government. **CON-1**

- **THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION**
www.ushistory.org/documents/confederation.htm
- **THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES (INCLUDING THE BILL OF RIGHTS AND SUBSEQUENT AMENDMENTS)**
constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution

The Constitution created a competitive policy-making process to ensure the people's will is represented and that freedom is preserved. **PMI-1**

- **THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES (INCLUDING THE BILL OF RIGHTS AND SUBSEQUENT AMENDMENTS)**
constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution
 - **FEDERALIST NO. 51**
The Structure of the Government Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the Different Departments
teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/federalist-no-51/
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Federalism reflects the dynamic distribution of power between national and state governments. **CON-2**

- **THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES (INCLUDING THE BILL OF RIGHTS AND SUBSEQUENT AMENDMENTS)**
constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution
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The Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause as well as other constitutional provisions have often been used to support the advancement of equality. **PRD-1**

- **"LETTER FROM A BIRMINGHAM JAIL" (BY MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.)**
web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter_Birmingham_Jail.pdf
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The presidency has been enhanced beyond its expressed constitutional powers. **CON-4**

- **FEDERALIST NO. 70**
The Executive Department Further Considered
teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/federalist-no-70/
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The design of the judicial branch protects the Supreme Court's independence as a branch of government, and the emergence and use of judicial review remains a powerful judicial practice. **CON-5**

- **FEDERALIST NO. 78**
The Judiciary Department
teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/federalist-no-78/

SCOTUS CASES

You will be required to learn fifteen key Supreme Court cases for this class. For each class, you will need to know:

- Key facts of the case
- The majority opinion of The Court
- Reasoning of The Court including constitutional support

REQUIRED SCOTUS CASES



Required Supreme Court Cases

Federalism reflects the dynamic distribution of power between national and state governments. **CON-2**

- **MCCULLOCH V. MARYLAND (1819)**

This case established supremacy of the U.S. Constitution and federal laws over state laws.

- **UNITED STATES V. LOPEZ (1995)**

Congress may not use the commerce clause to make possession of a gun in a school zone a federal crime.

Provisions of the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights are continually being interpreted to balance the power of government and the civil liberties of individuals. **LOR-2**

- **ENGEL V. VITALE (1962)**

School sponsorship of religious activities violates the establishment clause.

- **WISCONSIN V. YODER (1972)**

Compelling Amish students to attend school past the eighth grade violates the free exercise clause.

- **TINKER V. DES MOINES INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT (1969)**

Public school students have the right to wear black armbands in school to protest the Vietnam War.

- **NEW YORK TIMES CO. V. UNITED STATES (1971)**

This case bolstered the freedom of the press, establishing a "heavy presumption against prior restraint" even in cases involving national security.

- **SCHENCK V. UNITED STATES (1919)**

Speech creating a "clear and present danger" is not protected by the First Amendment.

*Protections of the Bill of Rights have been selectively incorporated by way of the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause to prevent state infringement of basic liberties. **LOR-3***

- **GIDEON V. WAINWRIGHT (1963)**

This case guaranteed the right to an attorney for the poor or indigent in a state felony case.

- **ROE V. WADE (1973)**

This case extended the right of privacy to a woman's decision to have an abortion.

- **MCDONALD V. CHICAGO (2010)**

The Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms for self-defense is applicable to the states.

*The Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause as well as other constitutional provisions have often been used to support the advancement of equality. **PRD-1***

- **BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION (1954)**

Race-based school segregation violates the equal protection clause.

*The impact of federal policies on campaigning and electoral rules continues to be contested by both sides of the political spectrum. **PRD-2***

- **CITIZENS UNITED V. FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION (2010)**

Political spending by corporations, associations, and labor unions is a form of protected speech under the First Amendment.

*The republican ideal in the U.S. is manifested in the structure and operation of the legislative branch. **CON-3***

- **BAKER V. CARR (1962)**

This case opened the door to equal protection challenges to redistricting and the development of the "one person, one vote" doctrine by ruling that challenges to redistricting did not raise "political questions" that would keep federal courts from reviewing such challenges.

- **SHAW V. RENO (1993)**

Majority-minority districts, created under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, may be constitutionally challenged by voters if race is the only factor used in creating the district.

*The design of the judicial branch protects the Supreme Court's independence as a branch of government, and the emergence and use of judicial review remains a powerful judicial practice. **CON-5***

- **MARBURY V. MADISON (1803)**

This case established the principle of judicial review, empowering the Supreme Court to nullify an act of the legislative or executive branch that violates the Constitution.

FREE RESPONSE QUESTION

What is it?

The **FRQ** is a short essay. You may write as many or as few paragraphs as you need to fully answer the prompt.

There are four types on the AP exam that we will be practicing throughout the year:

I. Scenario: Apply political concepts and ideas to the context of a given scenario.

II. SCOTUS Decisions: Apply one of fifteen Supreme Court decisions to a situation and/or compare it to another case.

Quantitative Analysis: Analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics.

III. Argumentative: Develop an argument citing one or more required primary source documents.