



School District of Marshfield **Course Syllabus**

Course Name: AP United States Government and Politics

Length of Course: 1 Year

Credits: 1 Credit

Course Description:

This course explores the political theory and everyday practice that direct the daily operation of our government and shape our public policies. The express purpose of this course is to prepare students to take the AP exam for U.S. Government and Politics. The course is for all intents and purposes taught on a college level and it requires a substantial amount of reading and preparation for every class. The objectives of this course go beyond a basic analysis of how government "works." Students will develop a critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the American political system, as well as their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Skill Targets:

- Understand the impact of different ideologies in our political system
- Assess their own ideology and analyze the factors that shape it
- Develop the concept that the U.S. Constitution is a living document that adapts to changes in society
- Evaluate the current trend of devolution and its impact upon the present federal system in America
- Evaluate the components of the campaign process in the U.S.
- Understand the impact of different demographics on public policy
- Evaluate propaganda and the role of media in politics
- Understand the role of interest groups in politics
- Understand Checks and Balances between the three branches
- Understand the power of Judicial Review and the relevance of historic Supreme Court cases

First Quarter

- I. Foundations of Government (9 weeks)
 1. The Political Landscape (3 weeks)
 - A. Origins of American Government
 - B. Political Ideology
 2. The Constitution (3 weeks)
 - A. The Articles of Confederation
 - B. Basic Principles of the Constitution

- C. Drive for Ratification
- D. Methods of Amending the Constitution
- 3. Federalism (3 weeks)
 - A. Federalism and the Marshall Court
 - B. Dual/Cooperative/New Federalism
 - C. Devolution

Second Quarter

- 4. Civil Liberties (2 weeks)
 - A. The Bill of Rights
 - B. Selective Incorporation
 - C. The Right to Privacy
- 5. Civil Rights (2 weeks)
 - A. The 13th Amendment
 - B. The Civil Rights Movement
 - C. The Women's Rights Movement
 - D. Affirmative Action

II. Institutions of Government (5 weeks)

- 1. Congress (2 weeks)
 - A. The Constitution and the Legislative Branch
 - B. How Congress is organized
 - C. The Party in Government
- 2. The Presidency (1 week)
 - A. Constitutional Powers of the President
 - B. Expansion of Presidential Power
 - C. The President as Policy Maker
- 3. The Federal Bureaucracy (1 week)
 - A. Development of the Federal Bureaucracy
 - B. How Bureaucracy Works
- 4. The Judiciary (1 week)
 - A. Creation of the Federal Judiciary (Judicial Review)
 - B. The American Legal System
 - C. The Federal Court System
 - D. Judicial Policy Making and Implementation

Third Quarter

III. Political Behavior (9 weeks)

- 1. Public Opinion and Political Socialization (1 week)
 - A. Efforts to Influence and Measure Public Opinion
 - B. How Political Socialization Influences Public Opinion
 - C. How Public Opinion is measured
- 2. Political Parties (1½ weeks)
 - A. The Evolution of American Political Parties
 - B. The Functions of Political Parties

- C. Structure of Parties
- 3. Voting and Elections (2 weeks)
 - A. Kinds of Elections
 - B. Electoral College
 - C. Congressional v. Presidential Elections
- 4. The Campaign Process (1½ weeks)
 - A. Structure of a Campaign
 - B. The Media and Campaigns
 - C. Campaign Finance
- 5. The Media (1 week)
 - A. How the Media cover Politicians and Government
 - B. The Media's Influence on the Public
- 6. Interest Groups (2 weeks)
 - A. Roots and Development of American Interest Groups
 - B. What Do Interest Groups Do
 - C. What Makes an Interest Group Successful?

Fourth Quarter

IV. Public Policy

- 1. Social Welfare Policy (2½ weeks)
 - A. The Policy Making Process
 - B. The Roots of Social Welfare Policy
 - C. Social Welfare Policy Today
- 2. Economic Policy (1½ weeks)
 - A. The Roots of Government Involvement in the Economy
 - B. Monetary Policy
 - C. Fiscal Policy
 - D. The Budget Process
- 3. Foreign and Defense Policy (1 week)
 - A. History of U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy
 - B. Executive Branch and Foreign Policy Making
 - C. Groups that Influence Foreign Policy
- 4. The A.P. National Exam takes place in early May, so there are approximately 5 weeks in the 4th quarter before the exam.

Resources:

American Government: Continuity and Change. Pearson 2006