

AP United States Government and Politics: Summer Reading 2017

Welcome to **Advanced Placement U.S. Government and Politics**. This course serves two general purposes. First, it will provide you with a broad understanding of the contours, structure, and internal workings of the United States government and the political processes that inform governing and policymaking in the United States. Second, it will prepare you to pass the AP exam.

In pursuit of these goals, this class will introduce you to the rigors and challenges of a college level course, and especially as it relates to reading and writing. To be successful, you will need to be able to read texts closely, engage with them critically, and articulate your thoughts through writing. The following assignment, in addition to introducing some important concepts and readings, will require you to apply these skills.

You will select 3 out of the possible readings/responses listed below. They are found in the *Lanahan Readings in the America Polity* (6th edition). For each, you will read the assigned article/articles and draft a 500-word response to the provided prompt. In your writing, you should address the prompt directly, engage with the author's argument, and provide your own critical assessment of the question at hand. Your responses should be double-spaced, typed, and in 12 point font (Times New Roman). I will collect these during the first full week of class. **They will count as a test grade.**

Each response will be graded based on the following:

- Your thesis (25%). You should have a clear and direct response to the prompt.
- Your use of evidence. (25%) You should cite specific examples from the reading or other outside sources to support your argument.
- Your organization. (25%) Your argument and ideas should follow a logical pattern and build off of one another.
- Prose. (25%) I expect these to be well-written, error-free, and to have been proofread more than once.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at jake.clawson@deerfieldwindsor.com

Readings/Prompts

1. American Ideology
 - a. Readings: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*; Cornel West, *Race Matters*
 - b. Prompt: Is equality a reality in American democracy or something that we are instead striving to attain?
2. The Constitution
 - a. Reading: James Madison, *Federalist 10*; Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*
 - b. Prompt: What motivated the framers of the Constitution?
3. The Constitution
 - a. Reading: C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*; Robert Dahl, *Who Governs* and *A Preface to Democratic Theory*
 - b. Prompt: Compare or contrast the arguments posited by Mills and Dahl. Who, in your opinion, *really* governs in America?
4. Separation of Powers
 - a. Reading: James Madison, *Federalist 51*; David Brian Robertson, *The Constitution and America's Destiny*
 - b. Prompt: Why and how did the framers of the Constitution provide for separation of powers? What are the consequences of this today?
5. Federalism

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- a. Reading: Andrew Karch, *Democratic Laboratories*; Erin Ryan, *Federalism and the Tug of War Within*
 - b. Prompt: What role do the states play in American federalism?
6. Congress
 - a. Reading: David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*
 - b. Prompt: How do members of Congress pursue their own reelection? How might this focus on reelection influence how they create laws and policies in Congress?
7. The Presidency
 - a. Reading: Arthur Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency*.
 - b. Prompt: Does the power of the modern presidency undermine separation of powers?
8. The Judiciary
 - a. Reading: Eugene Rostow, *The Democratic Character of Judicial Review*; Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist 78*
 - b. Prompt: Is the Supreme Court the least democratic branch of government?
9. Political Parties
 - a. Reading: Sean Trende, *Are We in An Electoral Realignment?*; Ronald Brownstein, *The Second Civil War*
 - b. Prompt: What role do parties play in American politics?
10. Political Economy and Public Welfare
 - a. Reading: Milton Friedman, *Free to Choose*; Michael Harrington, *The Other America*
 - b. Prompt: Does an active government – or “big government” – pose a threat to individual liberty?