

AP United States Government and Politics Topic Outline

Below is a summary outline of the major content areas covered by the AP Examination in United States Government and Politics. The objective (multiple choice) portion of the examination is devoted to each content area in the approximate percentages indicated. The free response portion of the examination will test students in some combination of the six major categories outlined below. The outline is a guide and is by no means an exhaustive list of topics or the preferred order of topics.

I. Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Governments 5-15%

- A. Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution
- B. Separation of Powers
- C. Federalism
- D. Theories of democratic government

II. Political Beliefs and Behaviors 10-20%

- A. Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and leaders
- B. Processes by which citizens learn about politics
- C. The nature, sources and consequences of public opinion
- D. The ways in which citizens vote and otherwise participate in political life
- E. Factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors.

III. Political Parties, Interest Groups and Mass Media 10-20%

- A. Political Parties and elections
 - 1. Functions
 - 2. Organization
 - 3. Development
 - 4. Effects on the political process
 - 5. Electoral laws and systems
- B. Interest groups, including PAC's (Political Action Committees)
 - 1. The range of interest represented
 - 2. The activities of interest groups
 - 3. The effects of interest groups on the political process
 - 4. The unique characteristics and roles of PAC's in the political process
- C. The mass media
 - 1. The functions and structures of media
 - 2. The impacts of media on politics

IV. Institutions of National Government: The Congress, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy and the Federal Courts 35-45%

- A. The major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power
- B. Relationships among these four institutions and varying balances of power
- C. Linkages between institutions and the following:
 - 1. Public opinion and voters
 - 2. Interest groups
 - 3. Political parties
 - 4. The media
 - 5. State and local governments

V. Public Policy 5-15 %

- A. Policy making in the federal system
- B. The formation of policy agendas
- C. The role of institutions in the enactment of policy
- D. The role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation
- E. Linkages between policy processes and the following:
 - 1. Political institutions and federalism
 - 2. Political parties
 - 3. Interest groups
 - 4. Public opinion
 - 5. Elections
 - 6. Policy networks

VI. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 5-15%

- A. The development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation
- B. Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
- C. The impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties

The Examination: Skills and Abilities

- 1. Knowledge of facts, concepts and theories pertaining to U.S. government and politics.
- 2. Understanding typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences (including the components of political behavior, the principles used to explain or justify various government structures and procedures and the political effects of these structures.
- 3. Analysis and interpretation of data relationships in U.S. government and politics
- 4. Written analysis and interpretation of the subject matter of U.S. government and politics.
- 5. Careful attention to the specific free response question posed and ability to stay on task.