

INDIAN HILL EXEMPTED VILLAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Social Studies Curriculum - May 2009

AP United States Government & Politics

Course Description:

AP United States Government and Politics is a detailed investigation of the political structures and policies of the United States government. Students study the influence of a variety of agents (such as interest groups and the mass media) and institutions (such as Congress, the courts, and the presidency) on the policymaking process. Students will also examine a wide range of concepts and theories relevant to the process of policy implementation. Ultimately, the course is designed to prepare students for the AP United States Government and Politics exam in May.

The Constitution and Foundations of American Government

Goals:

The students will be able to define power and will be able to discuss a variety of theories (such as majoritarianism, elitism, and pluralism) regarding how power is distributed in a democracy. Students will also be able to discuss several key constitutional principles (such as federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances) and will review the historical background of the U.S. Constitution.

American Political Culture, Beliefs, and Behaviors

Goals:

Students will be able to define America's political culture, identify the sources of that culture (e.g., our lack of class consciousness and absence of an official religion), and compare and contrast that culture with other countries. The students will also examine how that political culture shapes public opinion in the U.S. and will identify the effects that public opinion has on the behavior of our citizens.

Political Participation (Political Parties, Elections and Campaigns, Interest Groups, and the Media)

Goals:

The students will be able to define the term political party, contrast American political parties with their European counterparts, and evaluate the importance of parties in the process of political participation. Students will also examine modern elections and campaigns in the United States and will discuss the effects of partisan politics on the democratic process. Finally, students will both examine and evaluate the roles that interest groups and the mass media (print and electronic) play in the political participation process.

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Institutions of Government (Congress, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, and the Courts)

Goals:

The students will examine the role of Congress in the policymaking process and will evaluate how effectively and efficiently Congress represents the nation as a whole. The students will also study how the formal and informal powers of the presidency have been used (and are being used) to influence public policy. The students will be able to define the term bureaucracy and will identify who (or what) controls it – and to what ends. The students will also examine the proper role of the courts in formulating and implementing public policy. Finally, the students will examine the complex relationships between the various branches of government and will determine what constitutes the proper role of each in formulating and implementing public policy.

Public Policy (Formulation and Implementation)

Goals:

The students will examine in detail how public policy is made and implemented. Students will be able to identify the agents responsible for setting our national policy agenda and will examine a variety of public policies (e.g., economic, social, foreign, and environmental). The students will also complete a “costbenefit” analysis of each of these public policy arenas.

Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Goals:

The students will be able to distinguish between civil rights and civil liberties and will become familiar with landmark Supreme Court cases in both arenas (e.g., *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Schenck v. United States*, *Roe v. Wade*). The students will also be able to distinguish between procedural and substantive due process and will examine the importance of the 14th amendment to both. Finally, the students will identify the proper limits of constitutional rights and liberties and will reexamine the role of the courts in determining those limits.

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Resources:

Wilson, James Q. and John J. Dilulio, Jr. *American Government: Institutions and Policies*, 10th ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Woll, Peter. *American Government: Readings and Cases*, 15th ed. New York: Longman, 2004.

Resources will include supplemental articles from various periodicals (e.g., *USA Today*, *Time*, and the *New York Times*) and by excerpts from a variety of primary source documents (e.g., *The Federalist Papers*).