

Syllabus Development Guide: AP Government and Politics: United States

To the AP teacher: Please take full advantage of this guide. It is designed to support you as you develop your syllabus for the AP Course Audit. The guide contains the following sections and information:

Curricular Requirements	The curricular requirements are the core elements of the course. Your syllabus must provide clear evidence that each requirement is fully addressed in your course.	Important Considerations	Aligned with the Evaluation Guidelines, these statements provide advice on the type of evidence your syllabus should include.
Scoring Components	Some curricular requirements consist of complex, multi-part statements. These particular requirements are broken down into their component parts and restated as “scoring components”. Reviewers will look for evidence that each scoring component is included in your course.	Reference	As appropriate, references to specific sections of the official AP Course Description or other pertinent publications are included here.
Key Terms	To ensure the clarity of certain terms or expressions that may have multiple meanings, each of these terms is clearly defined.	Samples of Evidence	For each scoring component, three separate samples of evidence are provided. These statements provide either verbatim samples from actual authorized syllabi or clear descriptions of what acceptable evidence should look like.
Evaluation Guidelines	These are the exact guidelines used by reviewers as they evaluate the evidence in your syllabus. Use these to interpret any requirement you may find ambiguous.		

Curricular Requirements	Scoring Components, Key Terms, Evaluation Guidelines, Important Considerations, References and Samples of Evidence			
<p>Curricular Requirement 1: The course provides instruction in each of the following six topics outlined in the Course Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government • Political Beliefs and Political Behaviors • Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media • Institutions of National Government • Public Policy • Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 	Scoring Component 1*: The course provides instruction in constitutional underpinnings of United States Government.			
	*Note Each Curricular Requirement may be subdivided into two or more distinct Scoring Components.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	All terminology in the Scoring Component is clear. No clarification is needed.	If the syllabus includes a high school-level textbook as the primary text, it must also include supplementary resource materials and all subtopics under "Underpinnings of United States Government" from the AP Course Description or a college level reader.	The syllabus can include the underpinnings mentioned in the course description focusing on the three main structural components of federalism, the separation of powers, and checks and balances to demonstrate sufficient evidence.	For more information, see Unit I on pages 6-7 of the Government and Politics Course Description.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus includes federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances as part of a topic outline.	The syllabus includes a college level textbook and cites the relevant chapters for the Constitution and federalism in the course outline.	In a listing of learning objectives for this unit, the syllabus states objectives relating to examination of the Constitution, checks and balances, and federalism.		

<p>Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course provides instruction in each of the following six topics outlined in the Course Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government • Political Beliefs and Political Behaviors • Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media • Institutions of National Government • Public Policy • Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 	<p>Scoring Component 2: The course provides instruction in Political Beliefs, Political Behaviors, and Elections.</p>			
	<p>Key Term(s)</p>	<p>Evaluation Guideline(s)</p>	<p>Important Consideration(s)</p>	<p>Reference</p>
	<p>All terminology in the Scoring Component is clear. No clarification is needed.</p>	<p>If the syllabus includes a high school-level textbook as the primary text, it must also include supplementary resource materials and all subtopics under “Political Beliefs and Behaviors” from the AP Course Description or a college level reader.</p>	<p>The course should include beliefs and behaviors, including political culture, and the variety of forms of political participation, including—but not limited to—voting.</p>	<p>For more information, see Unit II on pages 7-8 of the Government and Politics Course Description.</p>
	<p>Samples of Evidence</p>			
	<p>Sample 1</p>	<p>Sample 2</p>	<p>Sample 3</p>	
	<p>The syllabus includes a college level textbook and cites the relevant chapters for political beliefs, behaviors, and elections in the course outline.</p>	<p>In a listing of learning objectives for this unit, the syllabus includes issues such as voter registration, voter turnout, demographic differences in turnout, other types of political participation, and the relationship between class, age, race, gender, and participation.</p>	<p>The syllabus includes a discussion of political socialization, political culture, public opinion, or demographic factors that relate to citizens’ tendencies to be active or inactive in politics.</p>	

<p>Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course provides instruction in each of the following six topics outlined in the Course Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government • Political Beliefs and Political Behaviors • Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media • Institutions of National Government • Public Policy • Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 	Scoring Component 3: The course provides instruction in Interest Groups.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	All terminology in the Scoring Component is clear. No clarification is needed.	If the syllabus includes a high school-level textbook as the primary text, it must also include supplementary resource materials and all subtopics under “Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media” from the AP Course Description or a college level reader.	Scoring Component is clear and explicit. No Important Considerations are needed.	For more information, see Unit III on pages 7-8 of the Government and Politics Course Description.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
	The syllabus includes a college level textbook and cites the relevant chapter in assigned text that covers Interest Groups.	The course outline includes a minimum of three sub-topics found in the course description’s section on interest groups.	In a listing of learning objectives for this unit, the syllabus includes objectives that examine the role of interest groups in providing avenues for citizen input into the selection of political leaders and the development of public policy.	

<p>Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course provides instruction in each of the following six topics outlined in the Course Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government • Political Beliefs and Political Behaviors • Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media • Institutions of National Government • Public Policy • Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 	Scoring Component 4: The course provides instruction in Political Parties.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	All terminology in the Scoring Component is clear. No clarification is needed.	If the syllabus includes a high school-level textbook as the primary text, it must also include supplementary resource materials and all subtopics under "Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media" from the AP Course Description or a college level reader.	Scoring Component is clear and explicit. No Important Considerations are needed.	For more information, see Unit III on pages 7-8 of the Government and Politics Course Description.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus includes an assignment where students write a research paper on Political Parties.	The course outline includes sub-topics that include examination of trends in partisan identification, and party decline and resurgence.	In a listing of learning objectives for this unit, the syllabus includes objectives that examine the development of political parties, their functions, and the distinction between parties in the electorate and parties in government.		

<p>Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course provides instruction in each of the following six topics outlined in the Course Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government • Political Beliefs and Political Behaviors • Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media • Institutions of National Government • Public Policy • Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 	Scoring Component 5: The course provides instruction in Mass Media.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	All terminology in the Scoring Component is clear. No clarification is needed.	If the syllabus includes a high school-level textbook as the primary text, it must also include supplementary resource materials and all subtopics under “Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media” from the AP Course Description or a college level reader	Coverage of media includes but is not limited to campaigns and elections.	For more information, see Unit III on pages 7-8 of the Government and Politics Course Description.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus includes a college level text and cites the relevant chapter that covers the mass media.	The syllabus includes at least three subtopics from the AP Course Description section relating to mass media.	In a listing of learning objectives, the syllabus includes a discussion of the relevance of mass media in elections, governing, and politics in general.		

<p>Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course provides instruction in each of the following six topics outlined in the Course Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government • Political Beliefs and Political Behaviors • Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media • Institutions of National Government • Public Policy • Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 	<p>Scoring Component 6: The course provides instruction in Institutions of National Government.</p>			
	<p>Key Term(s)</p>	<p>Evaluation Guideline(s)</p>	<p>Important Consideration(s)</p>	<p>Reference</p>
	<p>Institutions of National Government: evidence of coverage of Legislative, Executive (including the Bureaucracy), and Judicial Branches of Government.</p>	<p>The syllabus must specifically mention the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government. If a textbook on the approved list is used and the syllabus cites the chapters on each of the four institutions, then evidence is sufficient.</p> <p>If the syllabus includes a high school-level textbook as the primary text, it must also include supplementary resource materials and all subtopics under “Institutions of National Government” from the AP Course Description or a college level reader.</p>	<p>All branches of government including the bureaucracy should be covered and named within the syllabus. If the term “Executive Branch” is used, it can be assumed that the bureaucracy is covered. If the term “President” is used, then the term “Bureaucracy” must be named.</p>	<p>For more information, see Unit IV on page 8 of the Government and Politics Course Description.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Samples of Evidence</p>			
	<p style="text-align: center;">Sample 1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sample 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sample 3</p>	
	<p>The syllabus includes a college level text and cites the relevant chapters that cover all four institutions of national government: Congress, President, Bureaucracy, and Judiciary.</p>	<p>The syllabus includes a course outline that mentions the following institutions of national government: Congress, President, Bureaucracy, and Supreme Court.</p>	<p>The syllabus includes learning objectives that address each of the national institutions of national government: Congress, the President, the Federal Bureaucracy, and the Judiciary.</p>	

Scoring Component 7: The course provides instruction in Public Policy and Public Policy Areas.				
Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference	
<p>Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course provides instruction in each of the following six topics outlined in the Course Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government • Political Beliefs and Political Behaviors • Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media • Institutions of National Government • Public Policy • Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 	<p>Public policy areas: evidence of coverage of both domestic and foreign policy.</p>	<p>The syllabus must provide evidence of instruction in the public policy making process and coverage of policy areas.</p> <p>To satisfy the scoring component, both domestic and foreign policy must be covered.</p> <p>If the syllabus includes a high school-level textbook as the primary text, it must also include supplementary resource materials and all subtopics under “Public Policy” from the AP Course Description or a college level reader.</p>	<p>Mention of the legislative process in the course outline is not sufficient evidence of the policymaking process. The use of all the public policy chapters from a college level textbook cited in the course outline is sufficient evidence.</p> <p>Coverage of public policy areas can be evidenced through research assignments or current events activities that can appear in both the course description and the course outline.</p> <p>For evidence of specific instances of domestic policy, the syllabus can use one of following terms: social, domestic, economic, environmental, health care, or budgetary policy.</p> <p>For evidence of specific instances of foreign policy, the syllabus can use one of following terms: foreign policy, defense, or national security.</p>	<p>For more information, see Unit V on page 8 of the Government and Politics Course Description.</p>
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
<p>The course outline includes specific subtopics of domestic policy and foreign or defense policy.</p>	<p>The syllabus includes a college level textbook and includes a course outline with the relevant chapters that cover economic, domestic, and foreign policy.</p>	<p>The course includes an assignment that requires students to keep a notebook that collects news articles, commentary, and other information on several domestic and foreign policies in the current political environment.</p>		

<p>Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course provides instruction in each of the following six topics outlined in the Course Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government • Political Beliefs and Political Behaviors • Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media • Institutions of National Government • Public Policy • Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 	Scoring Component 8: The course provides instruction in Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	All terminology in the Scoring Component is clear. No clarification is needed.	If the syllabus includes a high school-level textbook as the primary text, it must also include supplementary resource materials and all subtopics under “Civil Rights and Civil Liberties” from the AP Course Description or a college-level reader	Reviewers should review for both civil liberties and civil rights.	For more information, see Unit VI on pages 8-9 of the Government and Politics Course Description.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus includes in the course outline the Women’s movement to meet the civil rights component.	The syllabus includes in the course outline Brown vs. the Board of Education as a subtopic to meet the civil rights component.	The syllabus includes study of First Amendment freedoms (speech, religion, assembly, expression), rights of the accused, privacy, racial and gender equality in the course outline.		

<p>Curricular Requirement 2: The course provides students with practice in analyzing and interpreting data and other information relevant to U.S. government and politics.</p>	Scoring Component 9: The course provides students with practice analyzing and interpreting data.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	<p>Analyzing and interpreting data: use of numeric, statistical, and graphic information to study dynamics and trends in American politics.</p>	<p>Evidence of how a student will be expected to analyze or interpret data must be presented either in the course description, the inclusion of data resources in course readings, software used for data analysis, or at least two specific mentions of data analysis in the course outline.</p> <p>Statements about the use of data must explain how this use will be implemented in course assignments. A simple statement without a clear description of how data will be used is not sufficient evidence.</p>	<p>Scoring Component is clear and explicit. No Important Considerations are needed.</p>	<p>For more information, see sample multiple choice questions in the Government and Politics Course Description: 8 (page 14), 18 (page 17) and sample free response question 2 (page 21).</p>
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
<p>The syllabus includes a requirement that students design, conduct, and analyze their own public opinion poll.</p>	<p>As a class activity, the syllabus lists the analysis of voter turnout and voting results for specific elections.</p>	<p>The syllabus includes two or more activities that allow students to analyze and interpret data including the study of charts, graphs, tables, diagrams, public opinion polls and other survey research.</p>		

Curricular Requirement 2 (continued): The course provides students with practice in analyzing and interpreting data and other information relevant to U.S. government and politics.	Scoring Component 10: The course provides students with practice analyzing information relevant to US government and politics.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	Analyzing information relevant: the process of studying complex information by breaking it down into composite pieces of political information, issues, cases, rhetoric, and commentary.	The course description may include mention that analysis occurs in the course, but must also explain how this is achieved.	Scoring Component is clear and explicit. No Important Considerations are needed.	No references to external documents are needed for this Scoring Component.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
In the unit on public policy, the syllabus cites specific current or past pieces of legislation as a topic covered.	The syllabus includes a variety of activities including analysis of court cases, political cartoons, speeches, political commentary, current events discussions, and debates.	The syllabus includes an activity where students analyze a current Supreme Court case, predict the likely outcome of that case, and explain why the predicted outcome is the most likely result.		

<p>Curricular Requirement 3: The course includes supplemental readings, including primary source materials (such as The Federalist Papers) and contemporary news analyses that strengthen student understanding of the curriculum.</p>	Scoring Component 11: The course includes supplemental readings, including primary source materials (such as the Federalist Papers).			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	<p>Primary source materials: both important documents from the political development of the United States government and more recent readings from the various subfields of political science found in edited books of readings.</p>	<p>If a reader has been cited, evidence is sufficient. If a reader is not cited, there must be evidence of primary sources and supplemental readings in at least two units.</p>	<p>Evidence can be demonstrated through the use of an American Government reader.</p> <p>Evidence can be demonstrated through the mention of Woll Reader, Lanahan Reader, etc. throughout the course outline.</p>	<p>No references to external documents are needed for this Scoring Component.</p>
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
<p>The course outline includes specific citations of assigned readings from a supplemental reader.</p>	<p>The course outline specifies that a supplemental reading is provided on at least two separate course topics.</p>	<p>The course includes an assignment that requires students to complete and present supplemental readings in oral reports, written reports, or both.</p>		

<p>Curricular Requirement 3 (continued): The course includes supplemental readings, including primary source materials (such as The Federalist Papers) and contemporary news analyses that strengthen student understanding of the curriculum.</p>	Scoring Component 12: The course includes supplemental readings, including contemporary news analyses that strengthen student understanding of the curriculum.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	All terminology in the Scoring Component is clear. No clarification is needed.	Scoring Component is clear and explicit. No Evaluation Guideline is needed.	<p>Evidence of supplemental readings may appear in the course description and/or course outlines and/or course assignments.</p> <p>Evidence can be demonstrated through the use of the internet (blogs, nontraditional commentary).</p> <p>Evidence can be demonstrated through the use of magazines, journals, and newspapers.</p>	No references to external documents are needed for this Scoring Component.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
	The syllabus includes the requirement that students give oral summaries based on current news articles, books, or commentary pieces.	The syllabus includes a requirement that students compile a current events binder that includes clippings on a specific political topic with written comment by students on that topic.	There is specific mention in the course description that requires students to read, watch, or listen to a newspaper, magazine, website, television program, or other contemporary source of political information.	

Curricular Requirement 4: The course requires students to answer analytical and interpretive free-response questions on a frequent basis.	Scoring Component 13: The course requires students to answer analytical and interpretive free response questions on a frequent basis.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	Frequent Basis: At least three instances of the use of analytical and/or interpretive free response questions are included on the syllabus.	If there is no indication of the frequency or type (i.e., free response questions) of questions on the exam, then this requirement is not met. Students must answer such questions at least three times per course.	Evidence is demonstrated through statements of frequency in the course description as well as in the course outlines. Statements of “tests” meet the scoring component if free response or “AP type essays” are specifically stated as being included anywhere in the syllabus. Free response questions on tests or assigned free response questions at least three times during the course constitute sufficient evidence.	No references to external documents are needed for this Scoring Component.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus states that timed essays, free-response essay, or essay exams are used in each unit test.	The syllabus states that free response questions are done at least three times during the course.	The outline of the syllabus states that free response questions will be administered after each unit or chapter.		