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# **Teacher's Guide to Advanced Placement Courses in American Government and Politics**



**Advanced Placement Program®  
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**AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**

This course surveys the broad, complex subject of American government and politics. Needless to say, this is difficult to do in one quarter, especially when students going into the course vary greatly in their understanding of national politics. I will try to make the subject clear to those with weak preparation while challenging those who already know a good deal. The course will be taught through four analytical perspectives toward politics in the United States: Marxist, laissez-faire, majoritarian, and pluralist models. In light of these, we will consider such topics as political parties, elections, the Congress, the courts, the presidency, and policy-making in general.

The readings for the course will be referred to in lectures but not systematically reviewed. It is essential, therefore, that students read the assigned material in advance of the lectures. Those who do not will be wasting their time and tuition money. Both the readings and lectures will figure prominently in the midterm and final examinations. The midterm will consist of a short-answer essay, while the final will be objective with an optional essay.

The readings will be substantial but not overwhelming. I urge you to read a daily newspaper regularly, at least three times a week (the New York Times is probably the best). However, accounts in the daily press will not determine our discussion agenda since this is not a course in civics or current events. Nevertheless, that is where the

"stuff" of American politics is reported, and you will be expected to enhance your study of the subject by knowing what is happening and by interpreting those activities.

In fact, your ability to analyze American politics will be demonstrated in a short term paper, which must be submitted to your teaching assistant at your last quiz section. The paper will be a critique of any newspaper article or editorial on American government and politics published since the beginning of the spring semester in any major daily newspaper--for example, the New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Sun-Times, or Washington Post. A copy of the newspaper article--not the original--must be submitted to your teaching assistant by the next-to-last meeting of your quiz section. Your critique should make use of the models, concepts, and knowledge gained through the course in analyzing the conclusions, biases, or assumptions of the article. It will be judged for relevance and importance of topic as well as quality of analysis. The critique should be typewritten and no longer than ten pages, double-spaced:

Your grade in the course will be determined according to your performance on the midterm examination (25%), the final (45%), the paper (20%), and whatever criteria your teaching assistant establishes for you and communicates to you in the course of your section meetings (10%).

#### **Required Texts**

Robert L. Lineberry. Government in America. 2nd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1983).

Edward S. Greenberg. The American Political System. 4th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1983).

Milton and Rose Friedman. Free to Choose. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980; Avon, paperback, 1980).

Each of these texts has strengths and weaknesses, and it will be helpful to note them in evaluating their role in the course.

Lineberry's Government in America is a good "conventional" American government text, but provides livelier reading than most. (Lineberry was a former Northwestern University faculty member and very popular teacher of this course before becoming Dean at the University of Kansas.) He discusses four theoretical approaches to the study of American government: democratic, elitist, pluralist, and hyperpluralist. Recognizing that each has merits and shortcomings, he treats them equally to encourage your own evaluation of American government in terms of democracy and effectiveness. His own judgment is that our government measures up better to the standard of democracy than to that of effectiveness. Your job is to draw your own conclusions, aided by the other two books, which are not nearly so even-handed as Lineberry's in their analyses of America's political system.

Greenberg's The American Political System is an excellent, unconventional American government text. Nearly half the book is devoted to defining capitalism, the American liberal tradition, and the role of government in modern capitalist society. Greenberg, writing from a Marxist or socialist perspective, concludes that America is neither just nor democratic. In place of pluralism in American politics, he proposes a "socialist alternative." His ideological orientation leads to some harsh judgments of American politics, but his

work is scholarly and analytical as well as critical and evaluative.

Milton and Rose Friedman's Free to Choose is not an American government text at all but a defense of laissez-faire in political economy. Like Greenberg's text, it makes some harsh judgments of American politics but from the other side of the ideological fence. Milton Friedman, the Nobel prize-winning economist, is probably known to many as a "conservative," but he styles himself instead as a "liberal" in the classical nineteenth-century sense. He emphasizes freedom of the individual and opposes state intervention in economics and society on general principle. Needless to say, the Friedmans' views on politics differ fundamentally from Greenberg's. In defending competitive capitalism, the Friedmans oppose precisely the socialist alternative to pluralism that Greenberg advocates.

The course lectures are intended to keep to the schedule below, but adjustments almost certainly will have to be made along the way. For example, every year that I have taught the course, some major political developments have demanded analysis, throwing off the schedule. Also, questions in class (which I encourage) occasionally lead me astray. Nevertheless, the outline below is a guide to the course. My lectures will treat almost invariably the subject of that week's readings, but usually in a very different manner. It will always help to read the material before the class in order to gain more from the lectures. Missed lectures can be obtained from tape recordings available in the Poetry and Listening Room at the library, but they usually will not be available until two days after the lecture.

## Topics and Reading Assignments

### Week 1: Democratic Theory

Topics: The Nature of Democratic Theory  
Two Conceptions of Democratic Theory  
Varieties of Democratic Theory

Readings: The term "democracy" is subject to many interpretations. The discussions by Lineberry and Greenberg are similar to the one I will present in my lectures, but there are differences. You will get a more rounded understanding of the issues by attempting to analyze the different concepts yourself. Don't fall behind on the reading this week (100 pages). My approach is to strike early in the quarter; later on the reading eases considerably. Of course, your paper will require time then.

Lineberry, Chs. 1-2: "People, Politics, and Policy" and "Understanding American Government"

Greenberg, Chs. 1-2: "Capitalism and American Politics" and "Evaluating the American System: Justice and Democracy"

Friedman: "Preface" and "Introduction"

### Week 2: Alternative Political Perspectives

Topics: Government, Politics, and Economics  
The Socialist Perspective  
The Capitalist Perspective

Readings: This week's readings total about 140 pages, so get an early start. The readings in Greenberg and Friedman stake out their opposing stances concerning the proper relationship between economics and government. Be sure you understand the socialist/Marxist and capitalist/laissez-faire positions, as they will figure heavily in the course.

Greenberg, Chs. 3-5: "The Cultural Milieu: Liberalism," "Law and the Constitution," and "Capitalism: Theory and Implications"

Friedman, Chs. 1-2 and 5: "The Power of the Market," "The Tyranny of Controls," and "Created Equal"

### Week 3: Evaluating American Politics and Economics

Topics: Social Change and the Positive State  
Socialist and Laissez-Faire Evaluations of the Positive State  
Government and the American Economy

Readings: Be warned, the readings for this week total approximately 170 pages. Obviously, we will focus our attention on the positions of Greenberg and Friedman. The challenge in these readings is to analyze the state's role in pursuing social and economic justice.

Greenberg, Chs. 6-7: "Economy and Society: Social Class and Inequality" and "Economy and Society: The Giant Corporations"

Friedman, Chs. 4 and 6-8: "Cradle to Grave," "What's Wrong With Our Schools?," "Who Protects the Consumer?," and "Who Protects the Worker?"

### Week 4: Institutionalizing Democracy in America

Topics: Institutional Models of Democracy  
Elitism and Democratic Government  
The Constitution and Limited Government

Readings: This week's readings of about 100 pages begin our study of the institutions of American government. The Lineberry readings on the formation of the Constitution will cover familiar ground for some; others with weaker backgrounds will have to study the material more carefully.

Lineberry, Chs. 3-5: "Creative Government in America: The Constitution," "The American Governments: Federalism," and "Civil Liberties and Public Policy"

### Week 5: Elite-Mass Institutional Linkages

Topics: Elections  
The Place of Political Parties in Democratic Government  
Characteristics of American Political Parties

Readings: A major problem in institutionalizing democracy is to devise mechanisms for linking mass opinions and elite actions. Historically, this was the function of popular elections, and political parties originated to facilitate electoral politics. More recently, the mass media have been interposed into the relationship between

parties and the public. The task of these readings (180 pages) is to evaluate the efficacy of elections and parties as mechanisms for democratic government. Greenberg contends that "outsiders" in the system must use unconventional tactics of disruption and violence to counter the undemocratic aspects of these "democratic" procedures.

Lineberry, Chs. 6-8: "The American People: Public Opinion and Political Action," "The Political Parties," and "Elections: Nominations, Campaigns, and Voting"

Greenberg, Chs. 9-10: "Conventional Linkage Politics: Elections and Political Parties" and "Unconventional Politics: The Politics of Outsiders"

Midterm examination

Week 6: Interest Groups and American Government

Topics: Characteristics of Interest Groups  
The Impact of Interest Groups

Readings: The reading this week is light (about 50 pages) following the midterm exam. Interest groups serve a valuable governmental function according to the pluralist conception of democracy, which equates democratic government with the free interplay of interest groups. According to the elitist, Marxist, and even laissez-faire interpretations of government, interest-group politics have undemocratic biases. Greenberg contends that the biases are due to unequal resources of different interest groups.

Lineberry, Ch. 9: "Interest Groups"

Greenberg, Ch. 9: "The Group Process and the Politics of Unequal Power"

Week 7: Institutional Framework of American Government: The Presidency

Topics: The Office and the Person  
The President and Rule-Making  
The President and the Bureaucracy

Readings: "Responsibility without authority" describes the office of the U.S. president. The power of the president is constrained not only by the Congress and the courts according to the separation of powers but also by the bureaucracy, which the president ostensibly heads. As

you read the 140 pages in this assignment, think of poor Jimmy and Ronnie being blamed for government's ineptitude in dealing with the nation's ills. How much blame is due to them personally and how much is due to the structural features of our political system?

Lineberry, Chs. 10 and 12-13: "Politics in Washington: Actors and Their Agendas," "The Presidency," and "The Federal Bureaucracies"

Greenberg, Chs. 11-12: "The Presidency" and "The Federal Bureaucracy"

#### Week 8: Institutional Framework of American Government: Congress and the Court

Topics: The Congress as Rule-Maker  
The Operation of Congress  
The Representatives of Congress and the Court

Readings: I feel that the Congress deserves far more attention than Lineberry and Greenberg give it in their texts. My lectures will try to treat the Congress from several perspectives, including a comparison with legislative bodies in other countries. I will argue that Congress does a better job of representing interests than of legislating. I have assigned 130 pages this week.

Lineberry, Chs. 11 and 14-15: "Congress," "The Courts," and "The Budget-Makers: Taxing, Spending, and Public Policy"

Greenberg, Ch. 13: "Congress"

#### Week 9: Policy-Making

Topics: The Budgetary Process  
Domestic Policies  
Foreign Policies

Readings: The reading this week (155 pages) is much heavier than I wanted to make it for so late in the quarter, but I could think of no better way to package the material. The fundamental issue here is, as Greenberg asks, "What does government do?" We will approach the question from the standpoint of budgeting and expenditures in various policy areas. Study Greenberg's explanations of why our government does what it does.

Lineberry, Chs. 16-19: "The Economy and Public Policy," "Public Policy and Equality," "Energy, Environment, and Public Policy," and "The Global Connection"

Greenberg, Chs. 14-16: "American Public Policy: What Does Government Do and Why?," "American Public Policy: Protecting Economic Expansion," and "American Public Policy: The Welfare State and the Management of Discontent"

Week 10: Politics in the Future

Topics: Politics in the Future  
What Should It Be? Socialism, Capitalism, or . . . ?

Readings: My end-of-term gift is a reading assignment of only 60 pages--the concluding chapters of each of our texts. Try to pull it all together in preparation for the examination. Your authors all try to help, each in their own way. While Lineberry sees "hard choices" confronting the practice of politics in America, Greenberg and Friedman see more obvious solutions to our social and political problems. Unfortunately, their prescriptions are diametrically opposed. Of course, you must read and understand the positions of all these authors, but I will give you the correct analysis of the future of American politics in my lecture.

Lineberry: "Epilogue"

Greenberg, Ch. 17: "The Future of Capitalism and Prospects for Justice and Democracy"

Friedman, Ch. 10: "The Tide Is Turning"

Final examination