Welcome to AP US Government, Semesters 1 & 2

This course is meticulously designed to align with state standards and targeted learning objectives, ensuring comprehensive coverage of essential knowledge and skills required for student success.

Course Description:
Uncover the inner workings of the American political system in this advanced, self-paced course. Dive into the principles of democracy, the constitutional foundations of the United States, and the organization and functions of government. Analyze key political institutions, policies, and engage in critical discussions on civic engagement and democratic participation.

This course will help students develop a comprehensive understanding of U.S. government structures and their roles as active citizens, preparing them for the AP U.S. Government exam and for meaningful participation in democratic processes.

Units and Learning Outcomes
Semester 1:
Unit 1: Foundations of American Democracy

- Understand the philosophical and historical foundations of the U.S. government.
- Explore the key principles of democracy, including limited government, natural rights, and republicanism.
- Study the structure of the U.S. Constitution, its preamble, and its role in shaping American democracy.
- Analyze the Federalist and Anti-Federalist debates and the impact of the Bill of Rights.

Unit 2: The Constitution and Federalism

- Examine the U.S. Constitution's structure, including its articles, amendments, and system of checks and balances.
- Study the principle of federalism and the division of powers between state and federal governments.
- Analyze landmark Supreme Court cases that have defined the balance of powers, including McCulloch v. Maryland and United States v. Lopez.

Unit 3: Political Ideologies and Beliefs

- Investigate the formation of political ideologies and the role they play in shaping public opinion.
- Study the development of major political parties in the U.S. and the role of political parties in elections and governance.
- Analyze the impact of political socialization, interest groups, and media on public opinion and political behavior.

Unit 4: Political Participation

- Understand the concept of political participation and its importance in a democracy.
- Study voting behavior, election systems, and the role of political campaigns.
- Explore the significance of interest groups, political action committees (PACs), and the influence of money in politics.
- Discuss the challenges to voter participation, including voter suppression, disenfranchisement, and electoral reforms.

Semester 2:
Unit 5: Congress

- Study the structure and function of the U.S. Congress, including its bicameral system, leadership, and committees.
- Examine the legislative process and how laws are created, debated, and passed.
- Analyze the role of congressional elections, gerrymandering, and the influence of political parties in shaping legislation.

Unit 6: The Presidency

- Investigate the powers and responsibilities of the President of the United States as outlined in the Constitution and through practice.
- Study the role of the executive branch, including the President's relationship with Congress and the judiciary.
- Explore presidential elections, the Electoral College, and the influence of the presidency on policy-making.

Unit 7: The Judiciary

- Understand the role of the judicial branch in interpreting the Constitution and its relationship with the other branches of government.
- Study the organization of the federal court system, including the Supreme Court, appellate courts, and district courts.
- Examine landmark Supreme Court cases and their impact on U.S. law and society, such as Brown v. Board of Education, Roe v. Wade, and Obergefell v. Hodges.

Unit 8: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

- Explore the protections of civil liberties and civil rights provided by the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment.
- Analyze Supreme Court cases that have expanded or limited civil liberties, including cases on free speech, religious freedom, and equal protection under the law.

Unit 9: Public Policy and Administration

- Understand the role of government in shaping public policy, including economic policy, foreign policy, and social welfare policy.
- Study the policy-making process, including the role of bureaucratic agencies, interest groups, and elected officials.
- Analyze the influence of public opinion and media on policy decisions and the role of the executive and legislative branches in policy creation.

Unit 10: Civil Engagement and Democracy

- Investigate the importance of civic engagement in a democracy, including voting, protests, lobbying, and public service.
- Study the role of the media and political communication in fostering democratic participation.
- Analyze the challenges and opportunities for political engagement in a modern, diverse society.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the foundational principles and structures of the U.S. government.
- Analyze the roles of the Constitution, political institutions, and political behavior in shaping American democracy.
- Apply critical thinking to key political concepts such as federalism, the separation of powers, and civil rights.
- Critically evaluate public policy and the effects of governmental actions on citizens and society.
- Prepare for the AP U.S. Government exam with a deep understanding of the topics.

Conclusion:

This self-paced AP U.S. Government course provides students with an in-depth exploration of the American political system. Through engaging lessons and critical analysis of key political issues and structures, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of U.S. governance, preparing them for the AP exam and for informed participation in civic life.

From the foundational principles of democracy to the modern complexities of policymaking and civil rights, students will be well-equipped to engage in the ongoing conversation about the role of government in shaping society.