

AP[®]

CollegeBoard

Effective
Fall 2018

AP[®] U.S. Government and Politics Project Guide

FROM THE COURSE AND EXAM
DESCRIPTION



About the College Board

The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success—including the SAT® and the Advanced Placement Program®. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators, and schools. For further information, visit www.collegeboard.org.

AP® Equity and Access Policy

The College Board strongly encourages educators to make equitable access a guiding principle for their AP programs by giving all willing and academically prepared students the opportunity to participate in AP. We encourage the elimination of barriers that restrict access to AP for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underserved. Schools should make every effort to ensure their AP classes reflect the diversity of their student population. The College Board also believes that all students should have access to academically challenging course work before they enroll in AP classes, which can prepare them for AP success. It is only through a commitment to equitable preparation and access that true equity and excellence can be achieved.

Contents

About AP	1
Offering AP Courses and Enrolling Students	1
How AP Courses and Exams Are Developed	2
How AP Exams Are Scored	2
Using and Interpreting AP Scores	3
Additional Resources	3
AP U.S. Government and Politics Project Guide	4
Making the Civic Connection	4
Project Guidelines	4
Project Suggestions	5

About AP

The College Board’s Advanced Placement Program® (AP) enables students to pursue college-level studies while still in high school. Through more than 30 courses, each culminating in a rigorous exam, AP provides willing and academically prepared students with the opportunity to earn college credit and/or advanced placement. Taking AP courses also demonstrates to college admission officers that students have sought out the most rigorous course work available to them.

Each AP course is modeled upon a comparable college course, and college and university faculty play a vital role in ensuring that AP courses align with college-level standards. Talented and dedicated AP teachers help AP students in classrooms around the world develop and apply the content knowledge and skills they will need later in college.

Each AP course concludes with a college-level assessment developed and scored by college and university faculty, as well as experienced AP teachers. AP Exams are an essential part of the AP experience, enabling students to demonstrate their mastery of college-level course work. Most four-year colleges and universities in the United States and universities in more than 60 countries recognize AP in the admission process and grant students credit, placement, or both on the basis of successful AP Exam scores. Visit www.collegeboard.org/apcreditpolicy to view AP credit and placement policies at more than 1,000 colleges and universities.

Performing well on an AP Exam means more than just the successful completion of a course; it is a gateway to success in college. Research consistently shows that students who receive a score of 3 or higher on AP Exams typically experience greater academic success in college and have higher graduation rates than their non-AP peers.¹ Additional AP studies are available at www.collegeboard.org/research.

Offering AP Courses and Enrolling Students

This AP course and exam description details the essential information required to understand the objectives and expectations of an AP course. The AP Program unequivocally supports the principle that each school implements its own curriculum that will enable students to develop the content knowledge and skills described here.

Schools wishing to offer AP courses must participate in the AP Course Audit, a process through which AP teachers’ syllabi are reviewed by college faculty. The AP Course Audit was created to provide teachers and administrators with clear guidelines on curricular and resource requirements for AP courses and to help colleges and universities validate courses marked “AP” on students’ transcripts. This process ensures that AP teachers’ syllabi meet or exceed the curricular and resource expectations that college and secondary school faculty have established for college-level courses. For more information on the AP Course Audit, visit www.collegeboard.org/apcourseaudit.

¹See the following research studies for more details:

Linda Hargrove, Donn Godin, and Barbara Dodd, *College Outcomes Comparisons by AP and Non-AP High School Experiences* (New York: The College Board, 2008).

Chrys Dougherty, Lynn Mellor, and Shuling Jian, *The Relationship Between Advanced Placement and College Graduation* (Austin, Texas: National Center for Educational Accountability, 2006).

The College Board strongly encourages educators to make equitable access a guiding principle for their AP programs by giving all willing and academically prepared students the opportunity to participate in AP. We encourage the elimination of barriers that restrict access to AP for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underserved. The College Board also believes that all students should have access to academically challenging course work before they enroll in AP classes, which can prepare them for AP success. It is only through a commitment to equitable preparation and access that true equity and excellence can be achieved.

How AP Courses and Exams Are Developed

AP courses and exams are designed by committees of college faculty and expert AP teachers who ensure that each AP subject reflects and assesses college-level expectations. A list of each subject's current AP Development Committee members is available on apcentral.collegeboard.org. AP Development Committees define the scope and expectations of the course, articulating through a course framework what students should know and be able to do upon completion of the AP course. Their work is informed by data collected from a range of colleges and universities to ensure that AP coursework reflects current scholarship and advances in the discipline.

The AP Development Committees are also responsible for drawing clear and well-articulated connections between the AP course and AP Exam—work that includes designing and approving exam specifications and exam questions. The AP Exam development process is a multiyear endeavor; all AP Exams undergo extensive review, revision, piloting, and analysis to ensure that questions are high quality and fair and that there is an appropriate spread of difficulty across the questions.

Throughout AP course and exam development, the College Board gathers feedback from various stakeholders in both secondary schools and higher education institutions. This feedback is carefully considered to ensure that AP courses and exams are able to provide students with a college-level learning experience and the opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications for advanced placement upon college entrance.

How AP Exams Are Scored

The exam scoring process, like the course and exam development process, relies on the expertise of both AP teachers and college faculty. While multiple-choice questions are scored by machine, the free-response questions and through-course performance assessments, as applicable, are scored by thousands of college faculty and expert AP teachers. Most are scored at the annual AP Reading, while a small portion are scored online. AP Exam Readers are thoroughly trained, and their work is monitored throughout the Reading for fairness and consistency. In each subject, a highly respected college faculty member serves as Chief Reader, and with the help of AP readers in leadership positions, maintains the accuracy of the scoring standards. Scores on the free-response questions and performance assessments are weighted and combined with the results of the computer-scored multiple-choice questions, and this raw score is converted into a composite AP score of 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1.

The score-setting process is both precise and labor intensive, involving numerous psychometric analyses of specific AP Exam results from a particular group of students who took that exam. Additionally, to ensure alignment with college-level standards, part of the score setting process involves comparing the performance of AP students with the performance of students enrolled in comparable college courses throughout the United States. In general, the AP composite score points are set so that the lowest raw score needed to earn an AP score of 5 is equivalent to the average score among college students earning grades of A in the college course. Similarly, AP Exam scores of 4 are equivalent to college grades of A-, B+, and B. AP Exam scores of 3 are equivalent to college grades of B-, C+, and C.

Using and Interpreting AP Scores

The extensive work done by college faculty and AP teachers in the development of the course and the exam and throughout the scoring process ensures that AP Exam scores accurately represent students' achievement in the equivalent college course. While colleges and universities are responsible for setting their own credit and placement policies, AP scores signify how qualified students are to receive college credit or placement:

AP Score	Recommendation
5	Extremely well qualified
4	Well qualified
3	Qualified
2	Possibly qualified
1	No recommendation

Additional Resources

Visit apcentral.collegeboard.org for more information about the AP Program.

AP U.S. Government and Politics Project Guide

Making the Civic Connection

To be authorized as an AP U.S. Government and Politics course, teachers must submit a course syllabus for review that complies with the following:

Curricular Requirement 14: Students are provided with an opportunity to engage in a political science research or applied civics project tied to the AP U.S. Government and Politics course framework that culminates in a presentation of findings. (See AP U.S. Government & Politics Course Audit Curricular Requirements on AP Central.)

The project can involve student participation in nonpartisan service learning opportunities, government-based internship programs, or a choice from a teacher-approved list of research project ideas.

While the project is not part of the AP Exam grade, it does provide students the opportunity to engage in a sustained, real-world activity that will deepen their understanding of course content and help them develop the disciplinary practices that are assessed on the exam.

Project Guidelines

A relevant project applies course concepts to real-world political issues, processes, institutions, and policymaking. For example, students might investigate a question by collecting and analyzing data; participate in a relevant service learning or civic event; or develop a sustained, applied investigation about local issues. Students would then communicate their findings or experiences in a way that conveys or demonstrates their understanding of course content.

You have flexibility in how to set up, connect, and assess student performance on the project. The following are important considerations.

The project must:

- Require students to connect course concepts to real-world issues
- Require students to demonstrate disciplinary practices
- Require students to share/communicate their findings in an authentic way (e.g., presentation, article, speech, brochure, multimedia, podcast, political science fair)

The project may:

- Be undertaken either by individuals or small groups of students
- Be completed before or after the AP Exam or integrated throughout or at a specific point in the course
- Be partisan based, if chosen by the student(s)

You should:

- Ensure the project complies with local school/district guidelines and policies
- Consider the length of course (half year vs. full year) when determining the complexity of the project
- Ensure projects are appropriate for:
 - ◆ the age and maturity of the student
 - ◆ the availability of resources and necessary transportation
 - ◆ the political climate in your community
- Assist students in choosing project topics and determining scope
- Provide feedback to students about conceptual understanding and skill development

You should not:

- Assign students to partisan-based projects; while allowed, such projects must be of the student's own choosing

Guiding Students in Selecting Reasonable Political Issues or Fields of Inquiry

The key to a successful project is choosing an appropriate issue or inquiry, which may be difficult for students. You may want to prepare a list of ideas for student research. Because students will be sharing their work in some capacity, each student or group should work on a different issue or inquiry.

The AP U.S. Government course framework is packed with content that can generate project or topic ideas. Asking students to turn enduring understandings into questions to be answered is a great way to help them to begin the process of inquiry. Additionally, the required foundational documents or Supreme Court cases might spark interest and provide context for a project.

Project Suggestions

The following pages present potential project ideas that can be conducted as either individual or group projects as appropriate. Relevant enduring understandings are also provided to show how each project idea relates to the course.

The projects in this list illustrate a range of complexity and length. Please note that some of the more complex and extensive projects will offer the greatest opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of course concepts and develop disciplinary practices.

Project Description	Presentation	Resources
<p>Develop a Position Research a local, state, or national issue related to a political principle. Propose potential options or alternatives. Develop an argument that describes the intended outcome of the option, explains how it would be implemented, and refutes opposing arguments.</p> <p>PMI-5: Political parties, interest groups and social movements provide opportunities for participation and influence how people relate to government and policy-makers.</p>	<p>Develop a display board to present the issue, options, and proposals that will be shared in a class, school, or community political science fair.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Write a letter or letters to elected officials explaining your position and proposal.</p>	<p>Sample letter to an elected official from the American Library Association website</p> <p>Sample letter and other resources from nlacrc.org</p> <p>“Writing Effective Letters to Your Legislators” on ncra.org</p> <p>Videos with tips for civic engagement on citizenuniversity.us</p>
<p>Analyze Public Opinion Develop and implement a survey about a political topic or policy. Analyze the data</p> <p>OR</p> <p>draft an analysis of existing public opinion data using a polling information compiled by Pew research or another polling organization.</p> <p>Make a policy recommendation and discuss the possible impact of the policy if implemented.</p> <p>MPA-1: Citizen beliefs about government are shaped by the intersection of demographics, political culture, and dynamic social change.</p>	<p>Develop a visual display of the data and present findings and recommendations to an appropriate group/organization/institution (e.g., school board), as a podcast, video, letter, or other authentic format.</p>	<p>Survey creation tools on Google Forms or typeform.com</p> <p>Polling analysis and data from the Pew Research Center</p> <p>Maps, population statistics, and other data from the U.S. Census Bureau</p>
<p>Media Literacy Project Select a political issue and research how that issue is being framed and reported on in multiple media outlets. Use this investigation to develop a framework for discerning false, misleading, or biased information, including determining criteria for what makes a source creditable.</p> <p>PRD-3: The various forms of media provide citizens with political information and influence the ways in which they participate politically.</p>	<p>Create a “guide to media literacy” for peers, using your findings on how one story is covered over various outlets to make recommendations about savvy media use.</p>	<p>“Web Literacy Resources” on novemberlearning.com</p> <p>Media literacy resources from the Newseum, Media Literacy Now, or the PBS Newshour websites</p> <p>“Tips on Writing a Good Letter to the Editor” from ncte.org</p>

Project Description	Presentation	Resources
<p>Local Civic Engagement Identify and research an issue of current debate. Attend a school board, city council, or local government meeting related to that issue. Observe and document policy making processes and outcomes.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Set up a class or school forum where policy makers or advocates of differing perspectives have opportunity to discuss and debate the issue. Document the differing perspectives and implications.</p> <p>CON-2: Federalism reflects the dynamic distribution of power between national and state governments.</p>	<p>Present your own perspective during a public comment period during a public meeting.</p> <p>Write a letter to the editor for the school or local paper, blog, or on-line forum relating your argument or perspective.</p>	<p>“Tips for Speaking at a Town or Public Meeting” on the American Public Health Association website</p>
<p>Legislator Lobby Day After thoroughly researching a policy issue, meet with local legislators to discuss the issue.</p> <p>PMI-4: Widely held political ideologies shape policy debates and choices in American politics.</p>	<p>Develop a list of evidence-based talking points and leave behind a document for use when meeting with elected officials.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Develop a brochure for community members that explains the issue.</p>	<p>How to organize a lobby day on the Classroom to Capitol website</p>
<p>Campaign Consultants During an election season, research important issues, voter perspectives, and policies impacting a particular elected position. Assume the role of campaign consultant(s) who must advise candidates currently running for office.</p> <p>PRD-2: The impact of federal policies on campaigning and electoral rules continues to be contested by both sides of the political spectrum.</p>	<p>Create a mock campaign proposal and then be interviewed by the teacher or classmates. The campaign proposal should illustrate the candidate’s strategy based on data and might include key messaging, storyboards, scripts, visual imagery, videos, and/or posters for the candidate.</p>	<p>Tips for creating online campaigns on Facebook and crowdpac.com</p> <p>“7 Ways to Effectively Market Your Candidate” on Campaigns and Elections</p>

Project Description	Presentation	Resources
<p>Mock Congress Conduct a mock congress. Student assumes the roles of members of Congress seeking to enact a legislative agenda. They research an issue, write a draft of a bill, and write a floor speech to introduce the proposed legislation. Other students assume the roles of other legislators and engage in a congressional debate.</p> <p>Note: This activity may be part of a larger state-wide or national competition or event.</p> <p>PMI-1: The Constitution created a complex and competitive policymaking process to ensure the people’s will is accurately represented and that freedom is preserved.</p>	<p>Deliver the floor speech proposing the legislation and provide evidence-based answers to questions posed about the bill.</p>	<p>“We the People” mock congress national finals on YouTube</p> <p>My E-Congress User’s Guide from the Youth Leadership Initiative website</p> <p>The YMCA Youth and Government program</p>
<p>Citizen Action Campaign Design a citizen action campaign to increase awareness about a policy issue or to increase civic participation. Investigate the issue and an advocacy group that engages with that issue or action.</p> <p>PMI-4: Widely held political ideologies shape policy debates and choices in American politics.</p>	<p>Develop a policy memo detailing the issue, the position of the campaign, and strategies for enacting the policy. Include which governmental institutions or bodies would be most likely to create policy change.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Create a blog or public service announcement (e.g., Youtube video, radio commercial, video PSA) to inform or persuade others.</p>	<p>“Policy Memo Writing Tips” from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs</p> <p>How to design an infographic from piktochart.com</p> <p>“How to Create the Perfect Public Service Announcement” from the Center for Digital Education</p> <p>Strategies for civic engagement such as “The Future of Civic Engagement” on the National League of Cities website or from rockthevote.org</p>
<p>Service Learning Design and participate in a community service project that relates to and builds deeper understanding of a course concept.</p> <p>MPA-1: Citizen beliefs about government are shaped by the intersection of demographics, political culture, and dynamic social change.</p>	<p>Write and a publish an article (e.g., newspaper, blog, magazine, school website) that describes the service project and its relevance to a course concept.</p>	<p>“Incorporating Service Learning into AP Courses” on Advances in AP</p> <p>“Introducing AP With WE Service” on we.org</p> <p>“Service-learning toolkit” from the Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships at the University of South Florida</p>

Project Description	Presentation	Resources
<p>Government in My Community Collect and annotate articles from local sources (e.g., newspapers, magazines, websites) about government actions in the community.</p> <p>PMI-1: The Constitution created a competitive policy-making process to ensure the people’s will is represented and that freedom is preserved.</p>	<p>Compile a portfolio of the articles with analyses of the implications and impact of the governmental actions and outcomes.</p>	<p>“Electronic Portfolios in the K-12 Classroom” from educationworld.com</p>
