



ACE American Government (3 Semester Credits) - Course Syllabus

Description:

American Government includes innovative features designed to enhance student learning, including Insider Perspective features and a Get Connected module that shows students how they can get engaged in the political process. The course textbook provides an important opportunity for students to learn the core concepts of American Government and understand how those concepts apply to their lives and the world around them.

Textbook: *American Government* – Open Stax – Krutz, et al., ISBN-10: 1-947172-66-2
(This text is provided to students as part of their enrollment.)

Prerequisites: No prerequisites

Course objectives:

Throughout the course, you will meet the following goals:

- Explain what government is and what it does.
- Identify the type of government in the United States and compare it to other types.
- Identify the origins of the core values in American political thought, including ideas regarding representational government.
- Explain the concept of federalism, and the constitutional logic behind it.
- Define, and explain the importance of, civil liberties and civil rights.
- Discuss voter registration, voter turnout, campaigns, and elections.
- Explain the roles that The Media, Political Parties, Interest Groups and Lobbyists play.
- Explain the three branches of government and their relationships to each other.

Course Evaluation Criteria

A passing percentage is **70%** or higher.

Grading Scale

A = 95-100%

B = 88-94.9%

C = 80-87.9%

D = 70-79.9%

F = below 70%

ACE Course Retake Policy

2 (two) attempts are allowed on every quiz, and 2 (two) attempts are allowed on every final exam.

***Proctorio* – Video Proctoring**

All Final Exams are video proctored with Proctorio. (www.proctorio.com)

ADA Policy

Excel Education Systems is committed to maintaining an inclusive and accessible environment to all students, across all of its schools, in accordance with the 1990 Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

There is a **total of 305 points** in this course:

Grade Weighting

Chapter Quizzes	70%
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>30%</u>
	100%

Assessment	Points Available	Percentage of Final Grade
Chapter 1 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 2 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 3 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 4 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 5 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 6 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 7 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 8 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 9 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 10 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 11 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 12 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 13 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 14 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 15 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 16 Quiz	15	4.11
Chapter 17 Quiz	15	4.11
Final Exam	50	30
Total	305	100

Course Contents and Objectives

Chapter 1 – American Government and Civic Engagement	
Lessons	1.1 What is Government? 1.2 Who Governs? Elitism, Pluralism, and Tradeoffs 1.3 Engagement in a Democracy
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain what government is and what it does• Identify the type of government in the United States and compare it to other forms of government• Describe the pluralism-elitism debate• Explain the tradeoffs perspective on government• Explain the importance of citizen engagement in a

	<p>democracy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the main ways Americans can influence and become engaged in government • Discuss factors that may affect people’s willingness to become engaged in government
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Chapter 2 – The Constitution and Its Origins	
Lessons	<p>2.1 The Pre-Revolutionary Period and the Roots of the American Political Tradition</p> <p>2.2 The Articles of Confederation</p> <p>2.3 The Development of the Constitution</p> <p>2.4 The Ratification of the Constitution</p> <p>2.5 Constitutional Change</p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the origins of the core values in American political thought, including ideas regarding representational government • Summarize Great Britain’s actions leading to the American Revolution • Describe the steps taken during and after the American Revolution to create a government • Identify the main features of the Articles of Confederation • Describe the crises resulting from key features of the Articles of Confederation • Identify the conflicts present and the compromises reached in drafting the Constitution • Summarize the core features of the structure of U.S. government under the Constitution • Identify the steps required to ratify the Constitution • Describe arguments the framers raised in support of a strong national government and counterpoints raised by the Anti-Federalists • Describe how the Constitution can be formally amended • Explain the contents and significance of the Bill of Rights • Discuss the importance of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Nineteenth Amendments

Chapter 3 – American Federalism	
Lessons	<p>3.1 The Division of Powers</p> <p>3.2 The Evolution of American Federalism</p> <p>3.3 Intergovernmental Relationships</p> <p>3.4 Competitive Federalism Today</p> <p>3.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Federalism</p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the concept of federalism • Discuss the constitutional logic of federalism • Identify the powers and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how federalism has evolved in the United States • Compare different conceptions of federalism • Explain how federal intergovernmental grants have evolved over time • Identify the types of federal intergovernmental grants • Describe the characteristics of federal unfunded mandates • Explain the dynamic of competitive federalism • Analyze some issues over which the states and federal government have contended • Discuss the advantages of federalism • Explain the disadvantages of federalism
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Chapter 4 – Civil Liberties	
Lessons	4.1 What Are Civil Liberties? 4.2 Securing Basic Freedoms 4.3 The Rights of Suspects 4.4 Interpreting the Bill of Rights
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define civil liberties and civil rights • Describe the origin of civil liberties in the U.S. context • Identify the key positions on civil liberties taken at the Constitutional Convention • Explain the Civil War origin of concern that the states should respect civil liberties • Identify the liberties and rights guaranteed by the first four amendments to the Constitution • Explain why in practice these rights and liberties are limited • Explain why interpreting some amendments has been controversial • Identify the rights of those suspected or accused of criminal activity • Explain how Supreme Court decisions transformed the rights of the accused • Explain why the Eighth Amendment is controversial regarding capital punishment • Describe how the Ninth and Tenth Amendments reflect on our other rights • Identify the two senses of “right to privacy” embodied in the Constitution • Explain the controversy over privacy when applied to abortion and same-sex relationships

Chapter 5 – Civil Rights	
Lessons	5.1 What Are Civil Rights and How Do We Identify Them? 5.2 The African American Struggle for Equality 5.3 The Fight for Women’s Rights 5.4 Civil Rights for Indigenous Groups: Native Americans,

	Alaskans, and Hawaiians 5.5 Equal Protection for Other Groups
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the concept of civil rights • Describe the standards that courts use when deciding whether a discriminatory law or regulation is unconstitutional • Identify three core questions for recognizing a civil rights problem • Identify key events in the history of African American civil rights • Explain how the courts, Congress, and the executive branch supported the civil rights movement • Describe the role of grassroots efforts in the civil rights movement • Describe early efforts to achieve rights for women • Explain why the Equal Rights Amendment failed to be ratified • Describe the ways in which women acquired greater rights in the twentieth century • Analyze why women continue to experience unequal treatment • Outline the history of discrimination against Native Americans • Describe the expansion of Native American civil rights from 1960 to 1990 • Discuss the persistence of problems Native Americans face today • Discuss the discrimination faced by Hispanic/Latino Americans and Asian Americans • Describe the influence of the African American civil rights movement on Hispanic/Latino, Asian American, and LGBT civil rights movements • Describe federal actions to improve opportunities for people with disabilities • Describe discrimination faced by religious minorities

Chapter 6 – The Politics of Public Opinion	
Lessons	6.1 The Nature of Public Opinion 6.2 How Is Public Opinion Measured? 6.3 What Does the Public Think? 6.4 The Effects of Public Opinion
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define public opinion and political socialization • Explain the process and role of political socialization in the U.S. political system • Compare the ways in which citizens learn political information • Explain how beliefs and ideology affect the formation of

	<p>public opinion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how information about public opinion is gathered • Identify common ways to measure and quantify public opinion • Analyze polls to determine whether they accurately measure a population's opinions • Explain why Americans hold a variety of views about politics, policy issues, and political institutions • Identify factors that change public opinion • Compare levels of public support for the branches of government • Explain the circumstances that lead to public opinion affecting policy • Compare the effects of public opinion on government branches and figures • Identify situations that cause conflicts in public opinion
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Chapter 7 – Voting and Elections	
Lessons	<p>7.1 Voter Registration 7.2 Voter Turnout 7.3 Elections 7.4 Campaigns and Voting 7.5 Direct Democracy</p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ways the U.S. government has promoted voter rights and registration • Summarize similarities and differences in states' voter registration methods • Analyze ways states increase voter registration and decrease fraud • Identify factors that motivate registered voters to vote • Discuss circumstances that prevent citizens from voting • Analyze reasons for low voter turnout in the United States • Describe the stages in the election process • Compare the primary and caucus systems • Summarize how primary election returns lead to the nomination of the party candidates • Compare campaign methods for elections • Identify strategies campaign managers use to reach voters • Analyze the factors that typically affect a voter's decision • Identify the different forms of and reasons for direct democracy • Summarize the steps needed to place initiatives on a ballot • Explain why some policies are made by elected representatives and others by voters

Chapter 8 – The Media

Lessons	8.1 What Is the Media? 8.2 The Evolution of the Media 8.3 Regulating the Media 8.4 The Impact of the Media
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what the media are and how they are organized • Describe the main functions of the media in a free society • Compare different media formats and their respective audiences • Discuss the history of major media formats • Compare important changes in media types over time • Explain how citizens learn political information from the media • Identify circumstances in which the freedom of the press is not absolute • Compare the ways in which the government oversees and influences media programming • Identify forms of bias that exist in news coverage and ways the media can present biased coverage • Explain how the media cover politics and issues • Evaluate the impact of the media on politics and policymaking

Chapter 9 – Political Parties	
Lessons	9.1 What Are Parties and How Did They Form? 9.2 The Two-Party System 9.3 The Shape of Modern Political Parties 9.4 Divided Government and Partisan Polarization
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe political parties and what they do • Differentiate political parties from interest groups • Explain how U.S. political parties formed • Describe the effects of winner-take-all elections • Compare plurality and proportional representation • Describe the institutional, legal, and social forces that limit the number of parties • Discuss the concepts of party alignment and realignment • Differentiate between the party in the electorate and the party organization • Discuss the importance of voting in a political party organization • Describe party organization at the county, state, and national levels • Compare the perspectives of the party in government and the party in the electorate • Discuss the problems and benefits of divided government • Define party polarization • List the main explanations for partisan polarization

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the implications of partisan polarization
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Chapter 10 – Interest Groups and Lobbying	
Lessons	10.1 Interest Groups Defined 10.2 Collective Action and Interest Group Formation 10.3 Interest Groups as Political Participation 10.4 Pathways of Interest Group Influence 10.5 Free Speech and the Regulation of Interest Groups
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how interest groups differ from political parties • Evaluate the different types of interests and what they do • Compare public and private interest groups • Explain the concept of collective action and its effect on interest group formation • Describe free riding and the reasons it occurs • Discuss ways to overcome collective action problems • Analyze how interest groups provide a means for political participation • Discuss recent changes to interest groups and the way they operate in the United States • Explain why lower socioeconomic status citizens are not well represented by interest groups • Identify the barriers to interest group participation in the United States • Describe how interest groups influence the government through elections • Explain how interest groups influence the government through the governance processes • Identify the various court cases, policies, and laws that outline what interest groups can and cannot do • Evaluate the arguments for and against whether contributions are a form of freedom of speech

Chapter 11 - Congress	
Lessons	11.1 The Institutional Design of Congress 11.2 Congressional Elections 11.3 Congressional Representation 11.4 House and Senate Organizations 11.5 The Legislative Process
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the role of Congress in the U.S. constitutional system • Define bicameralism • Explain gerrymandering and the apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives • Discuss the three kinds of powers granted to Congress • Explain how fundamental characteristics of the House and Senate shape their elections

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss campaign funding and the effects of incumbency in the House and Senate • Analyze the way congressional elections can sometimes become nationalized • Explain the basics of representation • Describe the extent to which Congress as a body represents the U.S. population • Explain the concept of collective representation • Describe the forces that influence congressional approval ratings • Explain the division of labor in the House and in the Senate • Describe the way congressional committees develop and advance legislation • Explain the steps in the classic bill-becomes-law diagram • Describe the modern legislative processes that alter the classic process in some way
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Chapter 12 – The Presidency	
Lessons	12.1 The Design and Evolution of the Presidency 12.2 The Presidential Election Process 12.3 Organizing to Govern 12.4 The Public Presidency 12.5 Presidential Governance: Direct Presidential Action
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the reason for the design of the executive branch and its plausible alternatives • Analyze the way presidents have expanded presidential power and why • Identify the limitations on a president's power • Describe changes over time in the way the president and vice president are selected • Identify the stages in the modern presidential selection process • Assess the advantages and disadvantages of the Electoral College • Explain how incoming and outgoing presidents peacefully transfer power • Describe how new presidents fill positions in the executive branch • Discuss how incoming presidents use their early popularity to advance larger policy solutions • Explain how technological innovations have empowered presidents • Identify ways in which presidents appeal to the public for approval • Explain how the role of first ladies changed over the course of the twentieth century

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the power presidents have to effect change without congressional cooperation • Analyze how different circumstances influence the way presidents use unilateral authority • Explain how presidents persuade others in the political system to support their initiatives • Describe how historians and political scientists evaluate the effectiveness of a presidency
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Chapter 13 – The Courts	
Lessons	13.1 Guardians of the Constitution and Individual Rights 13.2 The Dual Court System 13.3 The Federal Court System 13.4 The Supreme Court 13.5 Judicial Decision-Making and Implementation by the Supreme Court
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the evolving role of the courts since the ratification of the Constitution • Explain why courts are uniquely situated to protect individual rights • Recognize how the courts make public policy • Describe the dual court system and its three tiers • Explain how you are protected and governed by different U.S. court systems • Compare the positive and negative aspects of a dual court system • Describe the differences between the U.S. district courts, circuit courts, and the Supreme Court • Explain the significance of precedent in the courts' operations • Describe how judges are selected for their positions • Analyze the structure and important features of the Supreme Court • Explain how the Supreme Court selects cases to hear • Discuss the Supreme Court's processes and procedures • Describe how the Supreme Court decides cases and issues opinions • Identify the various influences on the Supreme Court • Explain how the judiciary is checked by the other branches of government

Chapter 14 – State and Local Government	
Lessons	14.1 State Power and Delegation 14.2 State Political Culture 14.3 Governors and State Legislatures 14.4 State Legislative Term Limits

	14.5 County and City Government
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how the balance of power between national and state governments shifted with the drafting and ratification of the Constitution • Identify parts of the Constitution that grant power to the national government and parts that support states' rights • Identify two fiscal policies by which the federal government exerts control over state policy decisions • Compare Daniel Elazar's three forms of political culture • Describe how cultural differences between the states can shape attitudes about the role of government and citizen participation • Discuss the main criticisms of Daniel Elazar's theory • Identify the formal powers and responsibilities of modern-day governors • List the basic functions performed by state legislatures • Describe how state legislatures vary in size, diversity, party composition, and professionalism • Describe the history of state legislative term limits • Compare the costs and benefits of term limits • Identify the differences between county and municipal governments in terms of their responsibilities and funding sources • Describe the two primary types of municipal government and the three basic types of county government

Chapter 15 – The Bureaucracy	
Lessons	15.1 Bureaucracy and the Evolution of Public Administration 15.2 Toward a Merit-Based Civil Service 15.3 Understanding Bureaucracies and their Types 15.4 Controlling the Bureaucracy
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define bureaucracy and bureaucrat • Describe the evolution and growth of public administration in the United States • Identify the reasons people undertake civil service • Explain how the creation of the Civil Service Commission transformed the spoils system of the nineteenth century into a merit-based system of civil service • Understand how carefully regulated hiring and pay practices helps to maintain a merit-based civil service • Explain the three different models sociologists and others use to understand bureaucracies • Identify the different types of federal bureaucracies and their functional differences • Explain the way Congress, the president, bureaucrats, and citizens provide meaningful oversight over the bureaucracies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the ways in which privatization has made bureaucracies both more and less efficient
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Chapter 16 – Domestic Policy	
Lessons	16.1 What Is Public Policy? 16.2 Categorizing Public Policy 16.3 Policy Arenas 16.4 Policymakers 16.5 Budgeting and Tax Policy
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the concept of public policy Discuss examples of public policy in action Describe the different types of goods in a society Identify key public policy domains in the United States Compare the different forms of policy and the way they transfer goods within a society Identify the key domestic arenas of public policy Describe the major social safety net programs List the key agencies responsible for promoting and regulating U.S. business and industry Identify types of policymakers in different issue areas Describe the public policy process Discuss economic theories that shape U.S. economic policy Explain how the government uses fiscal policy tools to maintain a healthy economy Analyze the taxing and spending decisions made by Congress and the president Discuss the role of the Federal Reserve Board in monetary policy

Chapter 17 – Foreign Policy	
Lessons	17.1 Defining Foreign Policy 17.2 Foreign Policy Instruments 17.3 Institutional Relations in Foreign Policy 17.4 Approaches to Foreign Policy
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain what foreign policy is and how it differs from domestic policy Identify the objectives of U.S. foreign policy Describe the different types of foreign policy Identify the U.S. government’s main challenges in the foreign policy realm Describe the outputs of broadly focused U.S. foreign policy Describe the outputs of sharply focused U.S. foreign policy Analyze the role of Congress in foreign policy Describe the use of shared power in U.S. foreign policymaking Explain why presidents lead more in foreign policy than in

	<p>domestic policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss why individual House and Senate members rarely venture into foreign policy• List the actors who engage in foreign policy• Explain classic schools of thought on U.S. foreign policy• Describe contemporary schools of thought on U.S. foreign policy• Delineate the U.S. foreign policy approach with Russia and China
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