Course Overview
A.P. U.S. Government and Politics is a year-long college level course, designed to give students a comprehensive understanding of government and politics in the United States. The course will include the study of broad concepts needed to understand U.S. politics and government as well as analysis of specific examples of these systems. It will require familiarity with ideas, individuals, groups and institutions that make up U.S. politics. This is a preparatory course for the AP exam on U.S. government and politics, which gives students the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school. Students enrolled in the course are required to take the AP exam. Therefore, the aim of the course is to give students a learning experience equivalent to a one-semester introductory college course on U.S. government and politics. As a result, this course requires significant reading before every class, both in a textbook and supplementary readings. A high score on this exam is accepted as college credit by most four-year colleges and universities.

Texts/Materials
Texts should be critically read and challenged. Come to class prepared to share your thoughts, ideas and questions.
- Supplementary readings provided by instructor. These readings include the following foundational documents which you will need to be familiar with: The Articles of Confederation, The Declaration of Independence, The U.S. Constitution, Federalist Papers 10, 51, 70 & 78, Brutus I (anti-Federalist), and MLK’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”.
- You will need to be familiar with the following U.S. Supreme Court cases:
  • Marbury v. Madison (1803)
  • McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)
  • Schenck v. United States (1919)
  • Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
  • Baker v. Carr (1961)
  • Engel v. Vitale (1962)
  • Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)
  • Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969)
  • New York Times Company v. United States (1971)
  • Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972)
  • Roe v. Wade (1973)
  • Shaw v. Reno (1993)
  • United States v. Lopez (1995)
  • McDonald v. Chicago (2010)
A daily newspaper like *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* and/or other national newspapers/news sites that provide in-depth coverage of the federal government.

**Unit One: Foundations of American Democracy** (Chapters 1-3)
*How did the founders of the U.S. Constitution attempt to protect individual liberty, while also promoting public order and safety?*
*How have theory, debate, and compromise influenced the U.S. Constitutional system?*
*How does the development and interpretation of the Constitution influence policies that impact citizens and residents of the U.S.?*

Unit One includes instruction in the following:
*Balance of governmental power and individual rights*
*Debate and ratification of the U.S. Constitution*
*Checks and balances and competitive policy-making process*
*Federalism*

**Application of enduring understandings:** Students will examine and debate how effectively provisions in the Constitution balance governmental power and individual rights and the degree to which the Constitution advances political efficacy. They will read and analyze the arguments in Federalist 10 and 51 and in Brutus I regarding the new Constitution and the balance between federal and state power and how the pieces relate to the idea of federalism and to political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.

**Unit Two: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs** (Chapters 6, 8, 16-18)
*How are American political beliefs formed and how do they evolve over time?*
*How do political ideology and core values influence government policy making?*

Unit Two includes instruction in the following:
Development of political beliefs
Measurement and political influence of public opinion
How ideology shapes policy outcomes

**Application of enduring understandings:** Students will continually analyze and interpret quantitative data from public polling (provided by the website pollingreport.com) as well as other data sets to explain what the data implies or illustrates about political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors. With regard to polling they will also evaluate how wording, sample size and survey methodology impact the reliability of opinion surveys. They will also evaluate how polling influences public policies and institutions.

**Unit Three: Political Participation** (Chapters 7, 9-10)
*How have changes in technology influenced political communication and behavior?*
*Why do levels of participation and influence in politics vary?*
*How effective are the various methods of political participation in shaping public policies?*

Unit Three includes instruction in the following:
Protections, barriers, demographics, and other political participation factors
Political parties, interest groups, and social movements
Federal policies on campaigning and electoral rules
Media’s influence on political participation

Application of enduring understandings: Students will evaluate the various forms of media and how they influence the ways in which citizens participate in politics. The will also assess the role of political parties, interest groups, and social movements in allowing opportunities for political participation. Students will analyze and interpret visual information in political cartoons to explain how the elements of the visual illustrate or relate to political principles, institutions, processes, and behaviors.

Unit Four: Interactions Among Branches of Government (Chapters 11-15)
*How do the branches of the national government compete and cooperate in order to govern?
*To what extent have changes in the powers of each branch affected how responsive and accountable the national government is in the 21st century?

Unit Four includes instruction in the powers and the interaction among the following:
*Congress
*The presidency
*Judicial branch and judicial review
*Federal bureaucracy

Application of enduring understandings: Students will participate in a simulation of Congress to gain a hands on understanding of how it strives to manifest the republican ideal. The simulation also requires students to evaluate the interaction of Congress with the other branches or government, with the states, and with the federal bureaucracy and to reflect on the roles that the press, political parties and the public play in the development of -- and debate over -- legislation. The simulation concludes with a presentation of the students’ findings on the role of Congress. They will also participate in a Supreme Court simulation that highlights the role of judicial review and will also evaluate the degree of independence granted to the branch by the Constitution. The simulation concludes with a presentation of the students’ findings on the role of the Supreme Court. They will also evaluate the influence of political parties and political concepts in Supreme Court decisions both historically and today. As part of the unit exam, students will develop an argument in the form of an essay, supported by relevant evidence, regarding interactions among the branches of the federal government. Students will also analyze and interpret quantitative data regarding the budget using a New York Times link titled the Budget Puzzle and will explain what the data implies or illustrates about the choices policy makers and the public face in addressing budget deficits and the federal debt.

Unit Five: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (Chapters 4-5)
*To what extent do the U.S. Constitution and its amendments protect against undue government infringement on essential liberties and from invidious discrimination?
*How have U.S. Supreme Court rulings defined civil liberties and civil rights?

Unit Five includes instruction in:
*Interpretation of the Bill of Rights
*14th Amendment due process and selective incorporation
*14th Amendment equal protection and advancement of equality
*Influence of citizen-state interactions and constitutional interpretation on public policy
*Supreme Court’s protection and restriction of minority rights over time

**Application of enduring understandings:** Students will examine the ways in which the Supreme Court has at times restricted minority rights and at other times expanded them. They will also assess how the court’s interpretation of the Bill of Rights has shifted over time, including how it has been selectively incorporated to apply to the states under the 14th Amendment’s due process clause. They will read and analyze Dr. King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” to understand his philosophy of non-violent civil disobedience and to analyze the impact of political and social movements on government institutions. As part of the unit exam, students will answer a Scotus free response question that requires them to analyze and explain how one of the required Supreme Court decisions (listed on page one) relates to political principles, institutions, processes, or behaviors and connect the case to another non-required landmark cases.

**Assessments**
After every textbook reading assignment, you will be quizzed on that material in order to assess your understanding of the concepts in that section. These chapter quizzes will include multiple choice questions on the concepts covered in the course and your understanding of quantitative sources presented in the chapter (maps, charts, graphs, etc.). Additionally, you will be expected to connect concepts learned in the text to current events. Therefore, it is essential that students read a daily newspaper and/or listen to the news on a radio network like NPR. At the conclusion of every unit you will take a test with 55 multiple choice questions, mirroring the College Board exam in May. These questions will contain concepts covered in the course and your understanding of quantitative sources (maps, charts, graphs, etc.). Additionally, the unit exam will include one free response essay question, also following the College Board format. Every test is cumulative.
Beginning in the first semester, all students will participate in a simulation project called LegSim. LegSim is a legislative simulation created by a professor at the University of Washington that is intended to provide students with a better understanding of the complicated legislative process. Students will represent a different U.S. legislative district and create, debate and pass bills that benefit their constituents. In addition, students will act as members of legislative committees. Students must spend time both in and out of class participating in this simulation.
Grading
The following lists a breakdown of different kinds of assessments. Your letter grade will be determined by the Bainbridge High School grading scale:

- Exams
- Quizzes/Homework
- Projects/Participation
- BHS Grading Scale
  - A = 93%+ C = 73 - 76%
  - A- = 90 - 92% C- = 70 - 72%
  - B+ = 87 - 89% D+ = 67 - 69%
  - B = 83 - 86% D = 60 - 66
  - B- = 80 - 82% F = 0 - 59
  - C+ = 76 - 79%

Class Expectations
- **Attendance** is essential in this class in order to thoroughly prepare for the College Board exam in May. There is a direct correlation between good attendance and strong performance in this class and on the College Board exam.
- Students are expected to take an active role in class on a daily basis. You are expected to come to class every day, ready to participate in active and lively discussions.
- Expect reading assignments for every class session from the textbook as well as supplementary readings. Take these seriously – they are the foundation of daily discussions and lectures. Students should expect a quiz every class period on the textbook reading.
- Students must take excellent notes in order to prepare for quizzes and unit tests as well as to use when reviewing for the AP exam in the spring.
- Students should closely follow the news, paying special attention to current events related to American government.
- Late work is not accepted unless it is an excused absence.
- It is the student’s responsibility to reschedule quizzes and unit exams missed due to an excused absence. These assessments can be rescheduled before or after school within one week of the student’s return to school after an excused absence.
- Students should not use electronic devices in class. Expect to lose cellphones that are visible or audible in class.

Academic Honesty
Honesty is a compelling principle by which we operate all aspects of student and school life. Academic honesty is highly valued. Students should not cheat, nor should they tolerate such among fellow students. Therefore, students do not receive credit for work that is not their own. Disciplinary sanctions will be administered for cheating on any school assignment or plagiarism, or the use of material produced by someone else without acknowledging its source. Cheating is defined as an attempt to earn credit or receive a grade for coursework in a manner other than defined as acceptable by the teacher. Because of the serious nature of academic honesty, violations of this code will result in loss of credit for the assignment with a recorded failing grade. It may also entail loss of credit for the course with a recorded failing grade, removal from the course with a failing grade, and/ or additional appropriate disciplinary action.
Sensitive Materials
There are times in the course of Social Studies classes where sensitive materials will be shown to students. If this is the case, parents/guardians will be notified ahead of time via letter about the content of such materials. These materials may include nudity (indigenous people, famous works of art, war), violence (war, social strife, protests, etc), extreme poverty, and some written/video material with language considerations. At times in this course, rated R films may be shown. These films are always shown with a purpose to add to the learning goals of the course. It is your right to not view these materials if you are sensitive to them. You will be given different materials to incorporate the same information.