

ap government and politics

ap government and politics is a comprehensive course designed to introduce students to the fundamental concepts and structures of the United States government and political system. This subject explores the Constitution, the branches of government, political ideologies, civil rights, and the electoral process, providing a deep understanding of how American democracy functions. The study of ap government and politics also includes examining the roles of political parties, interest groups, and the media in shaping public policy and opinion. Students gain insight into the complexities of federalism, the balance of powers, and the impact of landmark Supreme Court cases. This article offers an in-depth overview of ap government and politics, highlighting key topics and essential knowledge areas. Below is a detailed outline of the main sections covered in this comprehensive guide.

- Foundations of American Democracy
- The Constitution and Federalism
- The Three Branches of Government
- Political Beliefs and Behaviors
- Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media
- Public Policy and Civil Rights

Foundations of American Democracy

The foundations of American democracy provide the essential background for understanding the development and principles of the United States government. This section covers the philosophical and historical roots that influenced the creation of the American political system.

Political Philosophies Influencing the Founders

Key Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau shaped the ideas behind American democracy. Locke's theories on natural rights, including life, liberty, and property, were central to the Declaration of Independence. Montesquieu's concept of the separation of powers inspired the division of government into three branches to prevent tyranny.

The Articles of Confederation

Before the current Constitution, the Articles of Confederation served as America's first

governing document. It established a weak central government with limited powers, leading to challenges such as lack of federal authority to regulate commerce or enforce laws effectively. These weaknesses prompted the Constitutional Convention and the drafting of a new governing framework.

Key Principles of American Democracy

The American political system rests on several fundamental principles, including popular sovereignty, limited government, checks and balances, and federalism. These principles ensure that government power is derived from the people and constrained to protect individual freedoms.

- Popular Sovereignty: Authority belongs to the people
- Limited Government: Government powers are restricted by law
- Separation of Powers: Division among legislative, executive, and judicial branches
- Checks and Balances: Each branch can limit the powers of the others
- Federalism: Power is shared between national and state governments

The Constitution and Federalism

The Constitution is the supreme law of the United States and establishes the framework for government operations. Federalism, a key feature of the Constitution, defines the division of power between national and state governments.

The Constitutional Convention and Ratification

The Constitutional Convention of 1787 addressed the shortcomings of the Articles of Confederation by creating a stronger federal government. Key compromises, such as the Great Compromise and the Three-Fifths Compromise, shaped the structure of Congress and representation. The Constitution was ratified after intense debate between Federalists and Anti-Federalists.

Structure and Powers of Government Under the Constitution

The Constitution delineates the powers of the federal government and enumerates specific authorities granted to Congress, the President, and the Supreme Court. It also reserves certain powers to the states and the people through the Tenth Amendment.

Federalism: State and National Government Relations

Federalism involves the dynamic interaction between state and national governments. Over time, this relationship has evolved through mechanisms such as:

1. Enumerated and implied powers
2. Supremacy Clause
3. Grants-in-aid and federal mandates
4. Dual, cooperative, and new federalism

The Three Branches of Government

The United States government is divided into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. Each branch has distinct powers and responsibilities designed to ensure a balance of power and prevent abuses.

The Legislative Branch

Congress, consisting of the House of Representatives and the Senate, holds the power to make laws, control federal spending, declare war, and oversee the executive branch. The legislative process includes bill introduction, committee review, floor debate, and presidential approval or veto.

The Executive Branch

The President leads the executive branch, responsible for enforcing laws, conducting foreign policy, commanding the military, and appointing federal officials. The executive branch also includes the Vice President, the Cabinet, and various federal agencies.

The Judicial Branch

The federal judiciary interprets laws and ensures their constitutionality. The Supreme Court is the highest court, with the power of judicial review established in *Marbury v. Madison*. Lower federal courts hear cases involving federal law, disputes between states, and constitutional issues.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors

Understanding political beliefs and behaviors is essential to analyzing how citizens interact with the political system and influence governance in the United States. This section examines public opinion, political socialization, and voting behavior.

Political Socialization

Political socialization is the process by which individuals acquire their political beliefs and values. Influences include family, education, peers, media, and significant life events. This process shapes citizens' understanding of government and political participation.

Public Opinion and Polling

Public opinion reflects the collective attitudes of the population toward political issues, leaders, and policies. Polling is a primary tool for measuring public opinion, although factors such as question wording and sampling can affect accuracy.

Voting Behavior and Participation

Voter turnout and participation are influenced by demographic factors, political efficacy, and election laws. Patterns of voting behavior reveal trends in party identification, ideological alignment, and issue salience.

- Age and voting rates
- Education and political participation
- Race, ethnicity, and voting patterns
- Gender and political preferences
- Impact of voter registration laws

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media

Political parties, interest groups, and the mass media play crucial roles in shaping political agendas, mobilizing voters, and influencing policy decisions in the American political system.

Role of Political Parties

Political parties organize to win elections, develop policies, and provide choices to voters. The two-party system, dominated by Democrats and Republicans, structures political competition and governance at all levels.

Interest Groups and Lobbying

Interest groups seek to influence public policy by advocating for specific issues or causes. They use lobbying, campaign contributions, and public campaigns to affect legislative and executive decisions.

Mass Media and Politics

The mass media serves as a conduit for information, shaping public opinion and political discourse. Media outlets report on government actions, political campaigns, and societal issues, while also acting as watchdogs of democracy.

Public Policy and Civil Rights

Public policy encompasses the laws and regulations enacted to address societal problems, while civil rights protect individuals from discrimination and uphold equal treatment under the law. This section explores how government action impacts these areas.

Policy Making Process

The policy-making process involves agenda setting, policy formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation. Various actors, including elected officials, bureaucrats, interest groups, and the public, influence each stage.

Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Civil rights guarantee equal protection and prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, religion, or other characteristics. Civil liberties protect individual freedoms such as speech, religion, and privacy. Landmark Supreme Court cases have defined and expanded these protections.

Major Legislation and Court Decisions

Significant laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 advanced equality and voting rights. Supreme Court rulings like *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Roe v. Wade* have had profound impacts on American society and law.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main functions of the three branches of the U.S. government?

The legislative branch makes laws, the executive branch enforces laws, and the judicial branch interprets laws.

How does the system of checks and balances work in the U.S. government?

Each branch of government has powers that can limit or check the powers of the other branches to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful.

What is federalism and how does it affect the relationship between state and national governments?

Federalism is a system of government where power is divided between a central authority and constituent political units (states), allowing both levels to make certain laws and policies independently.

What role do political parties play in American politics?

Political parties organize elections, help coordinate policy agendas, mobilize voters, and provide a structure for political participation and governance.

How does the Electoral College system work in U.S. presidential elections?

Voters cast ballots for electors pledged to presidential candidates. These electors then cast votes for president, and a majority of 270 electoral votes is needed to win the presidency.

What is the significance of the Supreme Court case *Marbury v. Madison*?

Marbury v. Madison established the principle of judicial review, allowing the Supreme Court to declare laws unconstitutional and thus shaping the balance of power in government.

Additional Resources

1. *American Government: Institutions and Policies*

This comprehensive textbook offers an in-depth exploration of the structure and function of the American political system. It covers foundational principles, the Constitution, federalism, political behavior, and public policy. Ideal for AP Government students, it blends theory with current events to provide a well-rounded understanding of U.S. government and

politics.

2. *The Federalist Papers*

A collection of 85 essays written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, this book provides critical insight into the philosophy behind the U.S. Constitution. It explains the reasoning for the new government structure and the need for checks and balances. Students gain a firsthand perspective on the debates that shaped American political institutions.

3. *Democracy in America*

Written by Alexis de Tocqueville, this classic work analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of American democracy in the early 19th century. The book explores themes like political culture, civil society, and the role of equality in governance. It remains relevant for understanding the historical context of American political values.

4. *Politics in America*

This text offers a detailed examination of American political behavior and institutions, focusing on elections, political parties, and interest groups. It combines empirical data with theoretical frameworks to explain how citizens interact with government. The book is particularly useful for students looking to grasp the dynamics of political participation and influence.

5. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*

Focusing on the legislative branch, this book details how Congress operates and how policies are formulated, debated, and enacted. It covers the complexities of committee systems, leadership roles, and the influence of lobbying. AP Government students will find it valuable for understanding the inner workings of the U.S. Congress.

6. *American Political Thought: A Norton Anthology*

This anthology features key writings from American political thinkers across history, including the Founding Fathers and modern scholars. It provides a diverse range of perspectives on democracy, liberty, equality, and justice. The collection helps students engage directly with original texts that have shaped American political ideology.

7. *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives*

This book introduces students to the process of public policy-making in the United States, including agenda setting, policy formulation, and implementation. It discusses various policy areas such as healthcare, education, and the environment. Readers learn to analyze policy alternatives and understand the political factors influencing decisions.

8. *Understanding American Government*

Designed for introductory courses, this book breaks down complex concepts into accessible language, covering the Constitution, branches of government, civil liberties, and political processes. It includes contemporary examples to illustrate how government affects everyday life. This resource is great for students beginning their study of U.S. government and politics.

9. *The Logic of American Politics*

This text applies rational choice theory to explain political behavior and institutional design in the United States. It emphasizes the strategic interactions among voters, politicians, and interest groups. The book provides a unique analytical framework that helps students

understand why political actors make certain decisions.

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ap government and politics: Barron's AP U.S. Government and Politics Curt Lader, 2016-02-01 In-depth preparation for the AP U.S. Government and Politics exam features: Two full-length model AP exams with answer keys and explanations An extensive subject review covering constitutional development, the branches of federal government, political parties, social welfare, foreign policy, and more Updated content includes recent Supreme Court decisions Newly revised free-response questions with rubrics The manual can be purchased alone or with an optional CD-ROM that presents two additional full-length practice tests with automatic scoring and fully explained answers.

ap government and politics: AP Government and Politics Research and Education Association, Research & Education Association, Jack Hamilton, Robert F Gorman, Robert F. Gorman, Scott J Hammond, Scott J. Hammond, P Babbitt, Elliot Kalner, Wesley Phelan, J Hamilton, Gerald G. Watson, Keith Mitchell, 1992-12-09 A NEWER EDITION OF THIS TITLE IS AVAILABLE. SEE ISBN: 978-0-7386-0267-7 Get the AP college credits you've worked so hard for... Our savvy test experts show you the way to master the test and score higher. This new and fully expanded edition examines all AP US & Comparative Government & Politics areas including in-depth coverage of branches of the US government and US voting behaviors. The comprehensive review covers every possible exam topic: the entire US Federal government; a comparative review of the governments of England, France, the former Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China; US political institutions, public opinion, voting behavior and more. Features 3 full-length practice exams with all answers thoroughly explained. Follow up your study with REA's test-taking strategies, powerhouse drills and study schedule that get you ready for test day. DETAILS - Comprehensive, up-to-date subject review of every US & Comparative Government & Politics area used in the AP exam - 3 Full-Length Practice Exams: All exam answers are fully detailed with easy-to-follow, easy-to-grasp explanations - Study schedule tailored to your needs - Packed with proven exam tips, insights and advice TABLE OF CONTENTS About Research & Education Association Study Schedules Study Schedule for the AP Exam in U.S. Government & Politics Study Schedule for the AP Exam in Comparative Government & Politics Chapter 1 - Succeeding on the AP Government & Politics Exams About the Advanced Placement Program The AP United States Government & Politics Exam The AP Comparative Government & Politics Exam About the Review Sections Scoring the Exam Scoring the Multiple-Choice Section Scoring the Free-Response Section The Composite Score Scores that Earn College Credit and/or Advanced Placement Studying for Your AP Examination Test-Taking Tips Chapter 2 - United States Government & Politics Review Constitutional Framework The Federal Government Public Policy Political Institutions and Special Interests Public Opinion and Voter Behavior Civil Rights and the Supreme Court Answer Key Chapter 3 - Comparative Government & Politics Review Britain France The Former Soviet Union (Commonwealth of Independent States) The People's Republic of China Answer Key Practice Test 1 - AP Examination in U.S. Government & Politics Answer Key Detailed Explanations of Answers Practice Test 2 - AP Examination in U.S. Government & Politics Answer Key Detailed Explanations of Answers Practice Test 3 - AP

Examination in Comparative Government & Politics Answer Key Detailed Explanations of Answers
Glossary ANSWER SHEETS APPENDICES including Annotated Articles of Confederation and United States Constitution Chapter 1 - Succeeding on the AP Government & Politics Exams This book will prepare you for the Advanced Placement Examinations in Government and Politics by giving you, first and foremost, an accurate and complete representation of the actual exams for both United States Government and Politics and Comparative Government and Politics. But REA doesn't stop there: we give you thorough yet concise topical reviews, a series of targeted drills, and an up-to-date glossary that comprises the full range of terminology with which you should be familiar. If you are taking the United States Government and Politics exam, you'll want to concentrate on the first part of this book. The second part of the book is devoted to the Comparative Government and Politics exam. In both cases, you'll find a lively course review keyed to exactly the material you'll need to know to score well on the test, complemented by our handy glossary to help you get the most out of your study time. Two complete practice exams are provided for U.S. Government and Politics, while one full-length practice exam is provided for Comparative Government and Politics. Each REA practice exam features an answer key and detailed explanations for every question. The explanations not only provide the correct response but also tell you why the remaining answers shouldn't be chosen. By going over the appropriate review section(s), taking the corresponding exam(s), and studying our detailed explanations, you will discover your strengths and weaknesses and prepare yourself to score well on the AP Government and Politics exams.

About the Advanced Placement Program The Advanced Placement Program is designed to provide high school students with the opportunity to pursue college-level studies while still attending high school. The program consists of two components: an AP course and an AP exam. In addition, the AP in Government and Politics curriculum is divided into two courses: United States Government & Politics and Comparative Government & Politics. If you wish to pursue an Advanced Placement in Government and Politics course you may enroll in the United States course, the Comparative course, or both. You will be expected to leave the course(s) with college-level writing skills and knowledge of government and politics. Upon completion of the course(s), you may then take the corresponding AP exam(s). Test results are then used to grant course credit and/or determine placement level in the subject when you enter college. AP exams are administered every May. The exam schedule has been designed to allow you the opportunity to take both exams, if you are enrolled in both courses. If the United States exam is given during the morning administration, the Comparative exam will be given during the afternoon administration.

The AP United States Government & Politics Exam The United States exam is 145 minutes in length and is divided into two sections: I. Multiple-Choice (50% of your grade): This 45-minute section is composed of 60 questions designed to measure your understanding of facts, concepts, and theories pertinent to United States government and politics. Your ability to analyze and understand data, and the patterns and consequences involved with political processes and behaviors will also be tested. In addition you must have knowledge of the various institutions, groups, beliefs, and ideas relevant to United States government and politics. II. Free-Response (50% of your grade): This 100-minute section consists of four mandatory questions, each of which accounts for one-fourth of your total free-response score. You should allot roughly 25 minutes - or one-quarter of the total time in the free-response segment - for each essay. Each question normally asks you to interrelate ideas from different content areas from among the topics listed below. In addition, you may also be asked to evaluate and define fundamental concepts in the study of United States politics, and possibly to analyze case studies that bear on political relationships and events in the United States. You will be required to demonstrate mastery of political interpretation, and analytic and organizational skills through writing. In addition, you may be presented with graphs, charts and tables from whose data you would be asked to draw logical conclusions. Here's a breakdown of coverage on the United States exam: Topics / % of Exam

I. Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government / 5-15% II. Political Beliefs and Behaviors / 10-20% III. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media / 10-20% IV. Institutions of National Government: The Congress, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, and the Federal Courts / 35-45% V. Public Policy /

5-15% VI. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties / 5-15% The AP Comparative Government & Politics Exam

The Comparative exam is 145 minutes long and is divided into two sections: I. Multiple-Choice (50% of your grade): This 45-minute section is composed of 60 questions designed to measure your understanding of facts, concepts, and theories pertinent to Comparative government and politics. Your ability to analyze and understand data, and the patterns and consequences involved with political processes and behaviors will also be tested. The countries normally tested in the multiple-choice questions include Great Britain, France, the former Soviet Union (Commonwealth of Independent States), and China; these are referred to as the core countries tested on the exam. For certain questions, basic knowledge of the United States will be assumed. II. Free-Response (50% of your grade): This 100-minute section consists of four mandatory questions, each of which accounts for one-fourth of your total free-response score. You should allot roughly 25 minutes - or one-quarter of the total time in the free-response segment - for each essay. Comparative Free-Response questions may require you to compare one or two of the core countries (Great Britain, France, China, and the former Soviet Union) with the developing nations of either India, Mexico, or Nigeria. To do this, you must be able to demonstrate knowledge of the politics of one of these developing nations. Here's a breakdown of coverage on the Comparative exam: Topics / % of Exam I. The Sources of Public Authority and Political Power / 5-15% II. Society and Politics / 5-15% III. The Relationship Between Citizen and State / 5-15% IV. Political and Institutional Frameworks / 35-45% V. Political Change / 15-25% VI. The Comparative Method / 5-10%

About the Review Sections As mentioned earlier, this book includes two reviews: one for United States Government and Politics, the other for Comparative Government and Politics. The United States Government and Politics Review covers all of the key information you'll need to score well on the United States exam. These topics include: - Constitutional Framework - The Federal Government - Political Institutions and Special Interests - Public Opinion and Voter Behavior - Civil Rights and the Supreme Court We also provide a glossary for the United States Government and Politics exam. Included are the key historical figures, court cases, programs, laws, etc., that often appear on this AP exam. The Comparative Review provides a thorough discussion of the material most often tested on the Comparative exam. Special emphasis is placed on the governments and politics of: - Britain - France - The former Soviet Union - The People's Republic of China A glossary for the Comparative Government and Politics exam enables you to brush up on terms that you are likely to encounter on this test. Scoring the Exam After the AP administrations, more than 1,700 college professors and secondary school teachers are brought together to grade the exams during the first two weeks of June. These readers are chosen from around the United States for their familiarity with the AP program. The Multiple-Choice sections of the Comparative Government & Politics and U.S. Government & Politics exams are scored by granting one point for each correct answer and deducting one-fourth of a point for each incorrect answer. Unanswered questions receive neither credit nor deduction. The Free-Response answers are read and scored using a specific set of objective criteria, but the actual points available for each question may vary from administration to administration. For purposes of this discussion - and REA's practice tests - the Comparative exam questions will yield a score between 0 and 9 (with 0 being the lowest and 9 the highest) on Free-Response Part I, and a score of between 0 and 5 (with 0 being the lowest and 5 the highest) on Free-Response Part II. All four Free-Response items on our U.S. Government practice exam are scored on the 0-to-9 scale. Once the responses are graded, the scores can be converted. The AP Government and Politics exam is based on a 120-point scale. The breakdown of the percentages and points is as follows (note that the available free-response points will vary): Once raw scores have been obtained for each section, they are weighted to produce a composite score. Then the composite scores for each section are added together to form a total composite score for the exam. The range for the composite score is from 0 to 120. Finally, the composite score is translated into a range of from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. Scoring the Multiple-Choice Section Use this formula to calculate your raw score for the multiple-choice section: $(\# \text{ right answers}) - (\# \text{ wrong} \times 1/4) = \text{raw score round off to nearest whole number; if the number is less than zero, enter zero}$

Scoring the Free-Response Section The following guide explains typical free-response scoring criteria: Score Explanation of Score 8-9 The thesis is extremely well developed and is supported with concrete evidence; all aspects of the question have been addressed thoroughly; discussions presented are balanced. 6-7 The thesis is defined and supported; the evidence provided is very organized; the essay may be slightly imbalanced with one strong argument and one weak argument and/or discuss one topic more thoroughly than the next; sporadic factual errors may appear. 5 A basic argument or thesis is provided; evidence given supports the argument or thesis, but does not clearly connect with the argument or thesis; only the formal facets of the question are dealt with, and informal facets are not adequately covered; not all aspects of the question are discussed. 4 The thesis is not organized and is not referred to in the essay; the essay is little more than a recounting of facts and events; the essay may be overloaded with data; only one facet of the questions may be discussed; numerous factual errors may appear. 3 The thesis is weak; evidence provided in support does not apply to the thesis; factual errors are apparent. 2 The thesis is very weak; little or no factual evidence is provided to support the thesis; irrelevant and inaccurate information appears. 1 An attempt is made to answer the question, but the support given is insignificant and the coverage of topics is incomplete. 0 The question is not answered with any significance.

Free-Response Part II (Comparative only) Score Explanation of Score 5 The thesis is extremely well developed and is supported with concrete evidence; all aspects of the question have been addressed thoroughly; discussions are presented in a balanced way. 4 The thesis is defined and supported; the evidence provided is very organized; the essay may be slightly imbalanced, with one strong argument and one weak argument; likewise, one topic may be more thoroughly explored than another; may be marred by sporadic factual errors. 3 A basic argument or thesis is presented; evidence given supports the argument or thesis, but does not clearly connect with the argument or thesis; only the formal facets of the question are dealt with, and informal facets are not adequately covered; not all aspects of the question are discussed. 2 The thesis is weak; evidence provided in support does not apply to the thesis; factual errors are apparent. 1 An attempt is made to answer the question, but the support given is insignificant and the coverage of topics is incomplete. 0 The question is not answered with any significance.

It would be extremely helpful to find someone who is willing to score your essay - your teachers or anyone who is familiar with the test material. If you do, ask the person to assign each of your U.S. and Comparative (Part I) essays a score of 0 to 9. For your Comparative (Part II) essays, use the 0-to-5 scale. If you must grade your own essays, try to be objective! In addition, you may want to give your essays three different grades. For instance, if you feel you did well, try giving the essay a score of 5, 6, or 7 to represent the various scores you may receive. By underestimating what your score may be, you are more likely to receive a better score on the actual exam. Use the following formulae to determine your raw score for the Free-Response section: United States Exam (Free-Response) Response (1) score $\times 1.66$ = raw score Response (2) score $\times 1.66$ = raw score Response (3) score $\times 1.66$ = raw score Response (4) score $\times 1.66$ = raw score Comparative Exam Response (1) score $\times 1.66$ = raw score Response (2) score $\times 1.66$ = raw score Response (3) score $\times 3$ = raw score Response (4) score $\times 3$ = raw score

The Composite Score Once you have obtained your raw scores for both the Multiple-Choice and the Free-Response sections, add the scores together to get your composite score: United States Exam Multiple-Choice raw score + Free-Response raw score = composite score (round to nearest whole number) Score Essay 1 + Score Essay 2 + Score Essay 3 + Score Essay 4 = raw score Comparative Exam Multiple-Choice raw score + Free-Response raw score = composite score (round to nearest whole number)

Now compare your composite score with the scale below: Composite Score / AP Grade 88 - 120 / 5 74 - 87 / 4 54 - 73 / 3 35 - 53 / 2 0 - 34 / 1

AP grades are interpreted as follows: 5-extremely well qualified, 4-well qualified, 3-qualified, 2-possibly qualified, and 1-no recommendation. Scores that Earn College Credit and/or Advanced Placement Most colleges grant students who earn a 3 or above college credit and/or advanced placement. You should check with your school guidance office about specific college requirements.

Studying for Your AP Examination It is never too early to start studying. The earlier you begin, the more time you will have to sharpen your skills. Do not procrastinate! Cramming is not

an effective way to study, since it does not allow you the time needed to learn the test material. It is very important for you to choose the time and place for studying that works best for you. Some students may set aside a certain number of hours every morning to study, while others may choose to study at night before going to sleep. Other students may study during the day, while waiting on a line, or even while eating lunch. Only you can determine when and where your study time will be most effective. But, be consistent and use your time wisely. Work out a study routine and stick to it! When you take the practice exam(s), try to make your testing conditions as much like the actual test as possible. Turn your television and radio off, and sit down at a quiet table free from distraction. Make sure to time yourself. As you complete the practice test(s), score your test(s) and thoroughly review the explanations to the questions you answered incorrectly, but do not review too much during any one sitting. Concentrate on one problem area at a time by reviewing the question and explanation, and by studying our review(s) until you are confident that you completely understand the material. Since you will be allowed to write in your test booklet during the actual exam, you may want to write in the margins and spaces of this book when practicing. However, do not make miscellaneous notes on your answer sheet. Mark your answers clearly and make sure the answer you have chosen corresponds to the question you are answering. Keep track of your scores! By doing so, you will be able to gauge your progress and discover general weaknesses in particular sections. You should carefully study the reviews that cover the topics causing you difficulty, as this will build your skills in those areas. To get the most out of your studying time, we recommend that you follow the Study Schedule which corresponds to the exam you are taking. It details how you can best budget your time. If you are taking both exams, do not try to study for each at the same time. Try alternating days by studying for the United States exam one day and the Comparative exam the next.

Test-Taking Tips Although you may be unfamiliar with tests such as the Advanced Placement exams, there are many ways to acquaint yourself with this type of examination and help alleviate your test-taking anxieties. Listed below are ways to help yourself become accustomed to the AP exam, some of which may also be applied to other standardized tests. Become comfortable with the format of the AP Examination in Government and Politics that you are taking. When you are practicing to take the exam(s), simulate the conditions under which you will be taking the actual test(s). You should practice under the same time constraints as well. Stay calm and pace yourself. After simulating the test only a couple of times, you will boost your chances of doing well, and you will be able to sit down for the actual test much more confidently. Know the directions and format for each section of the exam. Familiarizing yourself with the directions and format of the different test sections will not only save you time, but will also ensure that you are familiar enough with the AP exam to avoid nervousness (and the mistakes caused by being nervous). Work on the easier questions first. If you find yourself working too long on one question, make a mark next to it in your test booklet and continue. After you have answered all of the questions that you can, go back to the ones you have skipped. Use the process of elimination when you are unsure of an answer. If you can eliminate three of the answer choices, you have given yourself a fifty-fifty chance of getting the item correct since there will only be two choices left from which to make a guess. If you cannot eliminate at least three of the answer choices, you may choose not to guess, as you will be penalized one-quarter of a point for every incorrect answer. Questions not answered will not be counted. Be sure that you are marking your answer in the circle that corresponds to the number of the question in the test booklet. Since the multiple-choice section is graded by machine, marking the wrong answer will throw off your score.

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