

AP US Government Summer Assignments

Dear Incoming AP Government students,

First and foremost, I should say that I am so excited that you've chosen to take this course! I feel passionately that understanding our government and the role that you play within this country is an important responsibility. This class will ask you to do the hard work of examining the impact of complex systems of governance, the history of our governmental institutions, and your own principles and beliefs. I believe this course to be a very rewarding one – and honestly a lot of fun – but you should expect the workload to be commensurate with a college-level course. We will have several chapters of reading each week in addition to preparation for our classroom activities. Most of the content mastery will be your responsibility to do by yourself or in small groups, as most of our class time will be dedicated to applying that knowledge in the form of simulations, moot courts, projects, and the like.

In deciding on what assignments would best prepare you for this course, I've decided to make it both summer reading and summer *listening*.¹ The goal is to review what you (hopefully!) covered in US History your junior year. Focus on understanding how the US Constitution was written, what compromises were negotiated, and its overall purpose.

Though it is not assigned, please start listening to the news on a regular basis. We have the 2024 primary and general elections coming up, a Senate race here in California, SCOTUS will issue all its major rulings by the end of June², and a former US President has been indicted on federal charges.

If you would like to reach out to me with questions about summer assignments or any part of the course, you can do so via Schoology or email me at enahum@kehillah.org.

I am so excited to see you all in class this fall!

Ms. Nahum

¹ Okay, you can also read the transcripts if you prefer reading to listening, but you'll lose the dramatic music and pauses in the podcast. Compromise and listen whilst reviewing the transcripts. ☺

² Cases include free speech, same-sex marriage, & anti-discrimination laws; you can read summaries [HERE](#).

Assignment #1

- Purchase your textbook “Benjamin Ginsberg et al., *We the People (Eleventh Essentials Edition)*” for the course as soon as possible³. You must have your book by the first day of class. No exceptions. **Worth 10 points in Class Prep.**
- Read chapters 1 and 2 in the textbook, using the [Unit 1 Objectives & Terms](#) as your guideline to take notes. For this first unit, I will be asking you to submit your notes so I can assess any tips or advice you may need to be efficient.
 - “Do the notes have to be Cornell format?” – “NO!”
 - “What’s the expectation?”
 - There are objectives to answer, you should explain the concepts in about 3-4 sentences. Please explain the concept in a succinct paragraph. Try your best not to just copy from the book but put answers into your own words.
 - I’m giving you a choice in which objectives to answer. You can decide to answer the ones you already know, making the workload light... but if you skip the more challenging objectives, and it’s exactly a question I end up asking on the first assessment, it may not be worth it to start the class that way.
 - “Do I have to write definitions for all the terms?” – “NO!”
 - “...Unless you have never heard of the term, then you should write the definition.” ☺
 - It’s also good practice to incorporate the terms into answering the objectives.
Example: *One way the Constitution separates powers is by writing specific **expressed powers** for each branch of government. It’s written in the Constitution that Congress declares war, but the President is Commander in Chief.*

Ch. 1: Intro to Government – be familiar with the terms, choice to answer objective 2 or 3.

Ch. 2: The US Constitution – be familiar with the terms, you can pick any 4 objectives to answer.

- Please complete and submit your notes on Schoology by our second class together. You will need to submit all work as a pdf to earn credit for timeliness.
- There will be a reading quiz on the second day of class, no notes, so please be prepared.
- **Your notes are worth 25 points (5 points per objective).**

You will notice that Ch. 3 on Federalism is also outlined here. That will be the main focus of our first two weeks of class together. You are more than welcome to get ahead on the reading, but it is not required.

³ There are many versions of this book new and used, and if you get a different version number, your chapters and/or page numbers will differ from mine. But the content is the same (terms you will need to know, objectives to be able to answer). Purchasing or renting an e-book is fine too, so long as you realize (again) the page numbers will be different – or online there might be no page numbers!

Assignment #2

Understanding the Constitution and how it has changed over time will be integral to the AP US Government and Politics course. We will spend time during the year reading the Constitution and its Amendments. I'm asking you to listen to the [Washington Post's podcast series *Constitutional*](#) by journalist Lillian Cunningham (who also made *Presidential*)⁴. I find Cunningham to be a masterful storyteller, and I genuinely hope that you will enjoy parts of this series.

This podcast series explores one of the central questions that this course asks you to consider: What principles do you believe should rightfully govern the responsibilities and limitations of the government and how can our governmental system be shaped to represent those principles?

From the website:

About Constitutional

With the writing of the Constitution in 1787, the framers set out a young nation's highest ideals. And ever since, we've been fighting over it — what is in it and what was left out. At the heart of these arguments is the story of America.

Reporter Lillian Cunningham returns with this series exploring the Constitution and the people who framed and reframed it — revolutionaries, abolitionists, suffragists, teetotalers, protesters, justices, presidents — in the ongoing struggle to form a more perfect union across a vast and diverse land.”

There are 17 episodes, but you are not required to listen to them all – unless you'd like to! **You will listen to the first episode “Framed”** and then **you can pick two other episodes** from the list below. Episodes with an asterisk (*) are highly recommended.

Episode Recommendations

Framed – REQUIRED BY ALL STUDENTS

Race

Gender

Senate and States*

Congress and Citizens

Fair Trials*

Fair Punishment

Love

War

Privacy*

The First Amendment*

- You will need to write up a summary of the main ideas for each episode, focusing on how it specifically connects to the Constitution (which Article or amendment if applicable)⁵. Do your best to address what its significance is to the development of the US's governmental system.⁶
- **Your Constitutional summaries are worth 15 points (5 points per episode).**

Please keep this in perspective: while being prepared for this class is important and does have an impact on your grade, your summer assignments will not make or break how you do in this class. You are expected to

⁴ Yes, APUSH students, same journalist, same voice.

⁵ The last page of this document has an outline of the US Constitution.

⁶ You do not need to do any outside research; this is just based on what's in the series.

complete the work and complete it well. That shows me that you are taking the class seriously, but do not forget to enjoy your summer break.

More details on the Constitutional Podcast

Website: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/podcasts/constitutional/>

The website will have transcripts available to help you follow along.

Framed⁷

In the premier episode of “Constitutional,” we go back in time to that hot Philadelphia summer in 1787 when a group of revolutionary Americans debated, drank and together drafted the U.S. Constitution.

Race

As powerful as it was to change the Constitution after the Civil War, and enshrine racial equality into our governing document, that wasn’t enough to change the reality of life in America.

Gender

From the American Revolution through today, women have been leading a long-burning rebellion to gain rights not originally guaranteed under the Constitution.

Senate and states*

When the United States changed its process for electing senators, did that lead to a decline in state power? Or did it instead bring us closer to a “more perfect union”?

Congress and citizens

Is it a feature or a bug of the amendment process that an idea of James Madison’s, more than 200 years ago, could be recently resurrected and etched into the U.S. Constitution?

Fair trials*

In 1963, the Supreme Court ruled in *Gideon v. Wainwright* that states must offer a defense attorney to all poor people accused of crimes. The decision transformed the concept of fair trials in America, but left major challenges to the justice system today.

Fair punishment

“There is so much feeling of racial injustice around the issue of punishment. And you have to understand that those feelings have a history – and that history is Parchman Farm.”

Love

The words “marriage” and “love” appear nowhere in the U.S. Constitution. Yet 50 years ago, the Supreme Court issued a decision that would embed those concepts in the heart of the document itself.

⁷ Remember this one is required (plus it complements your chapter 2 reading)

War

What was the original point of the Second Amendment? We examine its colonial and revolutionary roots—plus its quiet companion, the Third Amendment—with renowned American history scholar Gordon Wood.

Privacy*

How should the Constitution's privacy protections be translated for a new era? This is a question before the Supreme Court today, but it was also a question that captivated a justice appointed to the Supreme Court 100 years ago — Louis Brandeis⁸.

The First Amendment*

Why do First Amendment rights trump nearly every other right in America? Thank Jehovah's Witnesses.

⁸ Personal bias, Louis Brandeis is so cool and a key SCOTUS jurist to know about.

If you want to lay things out by parts of the Constitution, you can also use this as a guide:

Parts of the Constitution to Start Learning:

- Article I, Section 8
 - Specific clauses: Naturalization Clause, Necessary and Proper Clause
- Article I, Section 9
 - Specific clauses: Writ of Habeas Corpus
- Article V
- Bill of Rights
 - First Amendment
 - Second Amendment
 - Third Amendment
 - Fourth Amendment
 - Fifth Amendment
 - Sixth Amendment
 - Eighth Amendment
- 13th Amendment
- 14th Amendment
 - Specific clauses: Equal Protection Clause, Due Process Clause
- 15th Amendment
- 16th Amendment
- 17th Amendment
- 18th and 21st Amendments
- 19th Amendment
- 24th Amendment
- 27th Amendment