GIRARD SCHOOL DISTRICT

AP Government & Politics Curriculum & Pacing Guide

Unit 1: *Foundations of American Democracy*

Unit Overview

Students trace the philosophical roots of American democracy, the failure of the Articles, the compromises and ratification debate behind the Constitution, and the changing balance of federal and state power.

- Philosophical foundations: the Declaration, social contract theory, republicanism, types of democracy, and liberty vs. order
- Why the Articles of Confederation failed and how the framers addressed liberty and order in the Constitution
- Convention compromises and the Federalist–Anti-Federalist ratification debate
- The evolving federal–state relationship: grants, policy issues (ADA, Medicaid, marijuana), and devolution

Essential Questions

- 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 Constitution affect you and the choices you make?
- Why are there debates about the balance of power between the federal and state governments?
- Is the Bill of Rights necessary? Why or why not?

Unit 1: I Can Statements (Weeks 1-4)

- I can explain how Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu shaped American ideas about natural rights, the social contract, and separation of powers.
- I can explain how democratic ideals appear in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Gettysburg Address.

Source: Content reorganized into this format with the assistance of Claude (Anthropic AI), based on the Girard School District AP Government & Politics Syllabus and AP Central College Board Course and Exam Description, November 2026.

- I can compare participatory, pluralist, and elite theories of who rules in American democracy.
- I can explain how Adam Smith's free-enterprise principles shaped American views of limited government in the economy.
- I can explain the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and the compromises of the Constitutional Convention.
- I can compare the arguments of Federalist No. 10 and Brutus No. 1 on the size of the republic and the danger of factions.
- I can explain how Federalist No. 51 uses separation of powers and checks and balances to prevent tyranny.
- I can explain how Federalist No. 39 describes a government with both national and federal features.
- I can explain how grants, mandates, and policy conflicts such as the ADA, Medicaid, and marijuana laws shift power between levels of government.
- I can explain how McCulloch v. Maryland and United States v. Lopez define the limits of national power.

Unit 1 Reference — Foundations of Government (Weeks 1–4)

Standards Addressed — Unit 1

- 5.1.12. A, B, C, E. M
- 5.3.12.A
- CC.8.5.11-12 A

Vocabulary

Content: natural rights, state of nature, social contract, popular sovereignty, republicanism, limited government, participatory democracy, pluralist democracy, elite democracy, free enterprise, faction, Articles of Confederation, Shays' Rebellion, Great (Connecticut) Compromise, Three-Fifths Compromise, Electoral College, ratification, Federalists, Anti-Federalists, separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, enumerated powers, implied powers, Necessary and Proper Clause, Supremacy Clause, Commerce Clause, Tenth Amendment, reserved powers, concurrent powers, categorical grants, block grants, unfunded mandates

Required documents: Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, U.S. Constitution, Federalist No. 10, Brutus No. 1, Federalist No. 51, Federalist No. 39, Gettysburg Address, *The Wealth of Nations*

Required cases: McCulloch v. Maryland, United States v. Lopez

Source: Content reorganized into this format with the assistance of Claude (Anthropic AI), based on the Girard School District AP Government & Politics Syllabus and AP Central College Board Course and Exam Description, November 2026.

Additional resources: AP Classroom; National Constitution Center Interactive Constitution; The Avalon Project (Yale) for document texts; Oyez for McCulloch and Lopez summaries and oral argument audio; Bill of Rights Institute document-based lessons

Textbook: O'Connor, Karen and Sabato, Larry J. *American Government: Roots and Reform: 13th Edition*. Pearson Education. Hoboken, N.J.

Supplemental texts:

Edwards, George C., Wattenberg, Martin P. and Howell, William G. *Government in America; 17th ed*. Pearson Longman. New York. 2006.

Serow, Ann G. and Ladd, Everett C. The Lanahan Readings in American Polity. Lanahan. Baltimore, MD. 2003

4-Week Pacing at a Glance

Weekly pacing reflects a suggested sequence based on the unit's standards and content; adjust to align with specific lessons in AP Classroom.

Wk(s)	Chapter	Readings	Focus
1	***Chapter 1:*** American Government: Roots, Context, and Culture	Hobbes, *Of the First and Second Natural Laws*; Locke, *Of the Ends of Political Society and Government*; Rousseau, *The Social Compact*; Montesquieu, *Of the Principle of Democracy*; Gettysburg Address; Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*; LRAP: *Enduring Culture War*; LRAP: *Diversity in the Power Elite*	*Theories of governing: who rules?*
Chapter 1 Test at conclusion.			
2-3	***Chapter 2:*** The Constitution	Federalist Nos. 10, 31, and 51; Brutus No. 1; U.S. Constitution; LRAP: *A Machine That Would Go of Itself*; LRAP: *The Constitution and America's Destiny*	*Federalist and Anti-Federalist positions*
Chapter 2 Test at conclusion.			
3-4	***Chapter 3:*** The Federal System	Federalist No. 39; LRAP: Democratic Laboratories; LRAP: Renegade	*Federalism and the separation of powers*

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Wk(s)	Chapter	Readings	Focus
		Cities, Public Policy, and the Dilemmas of Federalism.	
Chapter 3 Test at conclusion. **Layer and Marble Cake examples as well.**			

Multilingual Learner / Language Support

- Visual timeline from the Declaration to ratification; vocabulary cards with images

IEP Learner or 504 Plan Learner

- Follow all accommodations; guided notes for AP Daily videos; chunked primary sources; extended time on practice FRQs; apply for College Board exam accommodations early

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GIRARD SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Unit 2: *Interactions Among the Branches of Government*

Unit Overview

Students analyze Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the courts, and how each competes and cooperates with the others to govern.

- Structure of Congress, including differences between the chambers in organization, leadership, incumbency, and powers
- Congressional representation and gerrymandering
- The president's formal and informal powers
- Judicial independence, Federalist No. 78, Marbury v. Madison, and judicial decision-making
- How the bureaucracy operates and its place in checks and balances
- The future of entitlement spending in the United States

Essential Questions

- 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?
- Which branch of government is the most powerful? Why?
- Are there really checks and balances when one political party controls all three branches of government? Why or why not?
- In what ways has the evolution of government powers affected Americans and their daily lives?

Unit 2: I Can Statements (Weeks 1-6)

- I can compare the structure, leadership, and powers of the House and Senate.
- I can explain how a bill becomes a law and how committees, rules, filibusters, and leadership shape the process.
- I can explain how redistricting, gerrymandering, Baker v. Carr, and Shaw v. Reno affect representation.
- I can explain the incumbency advantage and the trustee, delegate, and politico models of representation.

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- I can explain the difference between mandatory and discretionary spending and why entitlement growth challenges the federal budget.
- I can explain the formal and informal powers of the president, using Federalist No. 70 to explain the case for a single executive.
- I can use the Emancipation Proclamation to explain how presidents have used executive power in a crisis.
- I can explain how the bureaucracy implements policy and how Congress, the president, and courts hold it accountable.
- I can explain how judicial review, established in Marbury v. Madison, and judicial independence, defended in Federalist No. 78, shape the courts' power.
- I can compare judicial activism and judicial restraint and explain how precedent and stare decisis operate.

Unit 2 Reference — Institutions of Government (Weeks 5-10)

Standards Addressed — Unit 2

- 5.1.12. L
- 5.2.12.D
- 5.3.12.A, B, C, D, E, I
- 5.4.12.D

Vocabulary

Content: bicameral, enumerated powers, Speaker of the House, majority leader, whip, committees (standing, joint, conference, select), House Rules Committee, filibuster, cloture, hold, unanimous consent, pork barrel, logrolling, discretionary spending, mandatory spending, entitlements, budget deficit, national debt, redistricting, gerrymandering, apportionment, incumbency advantage, divided government, gridlock, lame duck, trustee, delegate, politico, logrolling, veto, pocket veto, executive order, signing statement, executive agreement, treaty, bully pulpit, impeachment, Twenty-Second Amendment, judicial review, original jurisdiction, appellate jurisdiction, precedent, stare decisis, majority opinion, concurring opinion, dissenting opinion, judicial activism, judicial restraint, bureaucracy, iron triangle, merit system, patronage, discretionary authority, rule-making authority, congressional oversight

Required documents: Federalist No. 70, Federalist No. 78, U.S. Constitution (Articles I–III), Emancipation Proclamation (read in Ch. 7 as an example of presidential power)

Required cases: Baker v. Carr, Shaw v. Reno, Marbury v. Madison

Additional resources: AP Classroom; Congress.gov for tracking real bills; C-SPAN Classroom clips of hearings and floor debate; Oyez and Street Law case summaries, including Street Law's

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comparison-case lists for the SCOTUS FRQ; Federal Register for rule-making examples, *Wag the Dog* movie

Textbook: O'Connor, Karen and Sabato, Larry J. *American Government: Roots and Reform: 13th Edition*. Pearson Education. Hoboken, N.J.

Supplemental texts:

Edwards, George C., Wattenberg, Martin P. and Howell, William G. *Government in America; 17th ed*. Pearson Longman. New York. 2006.

Serow, Ann G. and Ladd, Everett C. The Lanahan Readings in American Polity. Lanahan. Baltimore, MD. 2003

6-Week Pacing at a Glance

Weekly pacing reflects a suggested sequence based on the unit's standards and content; adjust to align with specific lessons in AP Classroom.

Wk(s)	Chapter	Readings	Focus
1-2	***Chapter 6:*** Congress	LRAP: *In Praise of Pork*; *Women in the Club*; *Dog Whistles, Walk Backs, and Washington Handshakes*; *Senate Syndrome* (optional)	*Legislative structure and powers and how they shape policymaking*
Chapter 6 Test at conclusion.			
3	***Chapter 7:*** The Presidency	Emancipation Proclamation; LRAP: *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*; *The Rise of the Plebiscitary Presidency*; *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*; *With the Stroke of a Pen*; recommended addition: Federalist No. 70, *Wag the Dog* movie	*Scope of presidential power and influences on presidential decisions*
Chapter 7 Test at conclusion.			
4	***Chapter 8:*** The Federal Bureaucracy	LRAP: *Rulemaking*; *A Government Ill Executed*; *Bureaucracy*	*How the unelected implement and enforce laws and policies.* • *Independent Study Chapter*

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Wk(s)	Chapter	Readings	Focus
Chapter 8 Quiz at conclusion.			
5	***Chapter 9:*** The Judiciary	Federalist No. 78; LRAP: *Storm Center; Pursuit of Justices; The Roberts Court*	*Interpreting the Constitution and laws; judicial review*
Chapter 9 Test at conclusion.			
Public Policy Connection Embedded in Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9	***Chapter 15:*** Social and Economic Policy ***Chapter 16:*** Foreign and Defense Policy	LRAP: *Red Ink;*	*Budgets and entitlement; War Powers Resolution of 1973*

Multilingual Learner / Language Support

- Paired readings with diagrams; sentence frames for comparing branches ("Unlike Congress, the president can…").

IEP Learner or 504 Plan Learner

- Follow all accommodations; guided notes for AP Daily videos; chunked primary sources; extended time on practice FRQs; apply for College Board exam accommodations early

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GIRARD SCHOOL DISTRICT

AP Government & Politics Curriculum & Pacing Guide

Unit 3: *Civil Liberties and Civil Rights*

Unit Overview

Students analyze how courts, the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses, and social movements have expanded civil liberties and civil rights.

- The role of the courts and the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses in expanding liberties and rights, including selective incorporation
- The expansion of liberties protected by the First and Second Amendments
- The development of the right to privacy and its implications for reproductive rights and Fourth Amendment protections
- How historically disadvantaged groups have achieved greater equality and equitable treatment

Essential Questions

- 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?
- How can individuals and groups help protect civil liberties and civil rights?
- Why have Supreme Court decisions about civil liberties and civil rights changed over time?

Unit 3: I Can Statements (Weeks 11-12)

- I can distinguish between civil liberties and civil rights.
- I can explain selective incorporation through the Due Process Clause, using McDonald v. Chicago and Gideon v. Wainwright.
- I can explain how the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses apply in Engel v. Vitale and Wisconsin v. Yoder.
- I can explain the limits on free speech and press using Schenck, Tinker, and New York Times Co. v. United States.
- I can trace the development of the right to privacy, including the shift from Roe v. Wade to Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, and its Fourth Amendment implications.

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- I can explain how the Emancipation Proclamation, the Thirteenth Amendment, and Brown v. Board of Education marked shifts toward civil rights.
- I can explain how "Letter from Birmingham Jail" justifies civil disobedience to achieve equality.
- I can explain how Congress, courts, and social movements expanded rights through the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Title IX.

Unit 3 Reference — Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (Weeks 11-12)

Standards Addressed — Unit 3

- 5.1.12. F, J, L, M
- 5.2.12.A
- 5.3.12.G

Vocabulary

Content: civil liberties, civil rights, Bill of Rights, selective incorporation, Due Process Clause, Equal Protection Clause, Establishment Clause, Free Exercise Clause, clear and present danger, symbolic speech, prior restraint, libel, slander, Second Amendment, exclusionary rule, Miranda rights, probable cause, unreasonable search and seizure, double jeopardy, right to counsel, cruel and unusual punishment, right to privacy, substantive due process, procedural due process, separate but equal, de jure segregation, de facto segregation, civil disobedience, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, Title IX, affirmative action, majority-minority district

Required documents: Bill of Rights and Fourteenth Amendment, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Emancipation Proclamation (revisited from Unit 2)

Required cases: Engel v. Vitale, Wisconsin v. Yoder, Tinker v. Des Moines, New York Times Co. v. United States, Schenck v. United States, McDonald v. Chicago, Gideon v. Wainwright, Brown v. Board of Education

Additional resources: AP Classroom; Oyez, Street Law, and Annenberg Classroom case summaries and videos; National Archives for the Emancipation Proclamation and the Reconstruction Amendments; the King Institute at Stanford for "Letter from Birmingham Jail"; Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L. (2021), a Pennsylvania student-speech case, as a comparison to Tinker, *Mississippi Burning* movie.

Textbook: O'Connor, Karen and Sabato, Larry J. *American Government: Roots and Reform: 13th Edition*. Pearson Education. Hoboken, N.J.

Supplemental texts:

Edwards, George C., Wattenberg, Martin P. and Howell, William G. *Government in America; 17th ed*. Pearson Longman. New York. 2006.

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Serow, Ann G. and Ladd, Everett C. The Lanahan Readings in American Polity. Lanahan. Baltimore, MD. 2003

3-Week Pacing at a Glance

Weekly pacing reflects a suggested sequence based on the unit's standards and content; adjust to align with specific lessons in AP Classroom.

Wk(s)		Readings	Focus
11-12	***Chapter 4:*** Civil Liberties	LRAP: *You Can't Say That!*; LRAP: *Rights Talk*	*How the Bill of Rights protects personal freedoms from government power*
Chapter 4 Test at conclusion.			
12-13	***Chapter 5:*** Civil Rights	LRAP: *Simple Justice*; LRAP: *Obergefell v. Hodges and Chief Justice Roberts' Dissent*; recommended addition: "Letter from Birmingham Jail"	*How government protects groups from discrimination and secures equal protection*
Chapter 5 Test at conclusion.			

Multilingual Learner / Language Support

- Visual case cards; short-answer practice before the full SCOTUS Comparison FRQ.

IEP Learner or 504 Plan Learner

- Follow all accommodations; guided notes for AP Daily videos; chunked primary sources; extended time on practice FRQs; apply for College Board exam accommodations early

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Unit 4: American *American Political Ideologies and Beliefs*

Unit Overview

Students examine how Americans form political beliefs, how polls measure them, and how ideology and party platforms shape policy.

- Elements of a scientific poll, the types of polls, and how they are used
- The basic tenets of American political culture, conservative and liberal ideologies, and how they are acquired through political socialization
- Differences between Democratic and Republican policies and platforms

Essential Questions

- How are American political beliefs formed and how do they evolve over time?
- How do political ideology and core values influence government policy making?
- How do our core beliefs about the role of government affect our behavior?
- How does our view of what freedom is shape our opinions?
- Why are some opinion polls better than others?
- How can policymakers use information from political science to

Unit 4: I Can Statements (Weeks 13-14)

- I can explain how core values such as individualism, equality of opportunity, free enterprise, and rule of law affect attitudes about government.
- I can explain how political socialization and generational and life-cycle effects shape beliefs.
- I can identify the elements of a scientific poll and evaluate a poll's reliability using sampling, question wording, and margin of error.
- I can analyze the results of a recent Gallup poll and draw a conclusion, as in FRQ 2.
- I can compare liberal, conservative, and libertarian views on the role of government.
- I can compare the Democratic and Republican party platforms on major policy issues.
- I can explain how ideology shapes fiscal and monetary policy positions.

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Unit 4 Reference — Political Ideologies and Beliefs (Weeks 13-14)

Standards Addressed — Unit 4

- 5.1.12. C
- 5.3.12.I
- CC.8.5.11-12.G

Vocabulary

Content: political culture, core values, individualism, equality of opportunity, free enterprise, rule of law, limited government, political socialization, generational effects, life-cycle effects, public opinion, opinion poll, tracking poll, exit poll, benchmark poll, push poll, random sample, sampling error, margin of error, political ideology, liberal, conservative, libertarian, party platform, party coalition, polarization, supply-side economics, fiscal policy, monetary policy, Federal Reserve

Required documents: *The Wealth of Nations* (revisited from Unit 1 for core values and free enterprise)

Required cases: none assigned; apply earlier cases to policy debates

Additional resources: AP Classroom; Gallup and Pew Research Center trend data; Pew Political Typology quiz; Current Democratic and Republican national party platforms

Textbook: O'Connor, Karen and Sabato, Larry J. *American Government: Roots and Reform: 13th Edition*. Pearson Education. Hoboken, N.J.

Supplemental texts:

Edwards, George C., Wattenberg, Martin P. and Howell, William G. *Government in America; 17th ed*. Pearson Longman. New York. 2006.

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2-Week Pacing at a Glance

Weekly pacing reflects a suggested sequence based on the unit's standards and content; adjust to align with specific lessons in AP Classroom.

Wk(s)		Readings	Focus
13	***Chapter 10:*** Public Opinion and Political Socialization	LRAP: *Politicians Don't Pander; The Opinion Makers; Diversity Explosion*	*How polls are built and conducted; analyzing a recent Gallup poll*
Chapter 10 Test at conclusion.			
14	***Chapter 11:*** Political Parties	LRAP: *The Big Sort; Are We in an Electoral Realignment?; The Second Civil War; American Grace*	*Differences between Democrats and Republicans: policies and platforms*
Chapter 11 Group Project			
Public Policy Connection embedded	***Chapter 15:*** Social and Economic Policy	*Free to Choose and the Price of Inequality*	*Contrasting views on markets and government*

Multilingual Learner / Language Support

- Pre-teach polling terms with a simple class survey; graphs before text.

IEP Learner or 504 Plan Learner

- Follow all accommodations; guided notes for AP Daily videos; chunked primary sources; extended time on practice FRQs; apply for College Board exam accommodations early

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Unit 5: *Political Participation*

Unit Overview

Students analyze voting, campaigns and elections, media, and interest groups as the links between citizens and government.

- The evolution of voting rights and the current state of voter turnout
- Factors that influence voter choice
- The functions of political parties and third parties (building on Ch. 11)
- Candidate-centered campaigns and the theory of critical elections
- Interest groups; nominations, campaigns, and elections
- The media as a linkage institution, including social media and partisan media

Essential Questions

- 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?
- Why do some people choose to participate in government while others do not?
- How does your social network affect your political beliefs?
- Why might you join a political party? Why might you choose not to?
- How does who you are affect whether you participate or not?

Unit 5: I Can Statements (Weeks 15-18)

- I can explain how constitutional amendments and laws have expanded voting rights.
- I can explain factors that affect turnout and the rational-choice, retrospective, prospective, and party-line models of voting.
- I can explain why third parties struggle in a winner-take-all system and how critical elections produce realignment.
- I can explain how primaries, caucuses, the Electoral College, and candidate-centered campaigns shape elections.
- I can explain how federal elections are financed and how Citizens United v. FEC led to the rise of super PACs.
- I can explain how interest groups form and influence policy, using Federalist No. 10,

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and the free-rider problem.
- I can evaluate the media as gatekeeper, scorekeeper, and watchdog and analyze bias in social and partisan media.

Unit 5 Reference — Political Participation (Weeks 15-18)

Standards Addressed — Unit 5

- 5.1.12. A, E, G
- 5.3.12.F, H, J
- CC.8.5.11-12.G

Vocabulary

Content: suffrage, Fifteenth Amendment, Nineteenth Amendment, Twenty-Fourth Amendment, Twenty-Sixth Amendment, voter turnout, rational-choice voting, retrospective voting, prospective voting, party-line voting, political efficacy, linkage institutions, candidate-centered campaign, critical election, realignment, dealignment, third party, winner-take-all, proportional representation, interest group, lobbying, free-rider problem, political action committee (PAC), super PAC, 527 group, hard money, soft money, Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, primary (open, closed), caucus, national convention, Electoral College, swing state, incumbency advantage, media bias, gatekeeper, scorekeeper, watchdog

Required documents: *Federalist No. 10 (revisited in Ch. 14 for factions and interest groups); voting amendments (15th, 17th, 19th, 24th, 26th)*

Required cases: Citizens United v. FEC

Additional resources: AP Classroom; U.S. Census Bureau voting data; FEC and OpenSecrets campaign finance data; Pennsylvania Department of State election results; Pew Research Center media studies; AllSides for comparing coverage

Textbook: O'Connor, Karen and Sabato, Larry J. *American Government: Roots and Reform: 13th Edition*. Pearson Education. Hoboken, N.J.

Supplemental texts:

Edwards, George C., Wattenberg, Martin P. and Howell, William G. *Government in America; 17th ed*. Pearson Longman. New York. 2006.

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4-Week Pacing at a Glance

Weekly pacing reflects a suggested sequence based on the unit's standards and content; adjust to align with specific lessons in AP Classroom.

Wk(s)		Readings	Focus
15	***Chapter 12:*** Campaigns, Elections, and Voting	LRAP: *Getting Primaried*; *Why We Vote*; *Going Dirty*; *Ground Wars*	Financing federal elections; evaluating voting patterns
Chapter 12 Test at conclusion.			
16	***Chapter 13:*** The Mass Media and the Political Agenda	LRAP: *Feeding Frenzy*; *Republic.com 2.0*; *How the Mass Media Divide Us*	Media bias in society
Chapter 13 Test at conclusion.			
17-18	***Chapter 14:*** Interest Groups	LRAP: *Interest Groups in American Politics*; *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*; *This Town*; Federalist No. 10	Interest group formation and influence on voters and politics • Independent Study Chapter
Chapter 14 Test at conclusion.			
Public Policy Connection embedded	***Chapter 16:*** Foreign and Defense Policy **Chapter 19:** Policymaking for Health Care and Environment	Post-American World, Foreign Policy Begins at home, Soft Power	Universal healthcare; environmental problems; how parties, groups, and media shape policy

Multilingual Learner / Language Support

- Election vocabulary with visual examples from current campaigns; partner data analysis.

IEP Learner or 504 Plan Learner

- Follow all accommodations; guided notes for AP Daily videos; chunked primary sources; extended time on practice FRQs; apply for College Board exam accommodations early.

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