



2024-2025

Rapid City  
Stevens High School

## **AP US Government & Politics**

### **RCAS Policies/Procedures:**

Students will be required to follow all RCAS policies and procedures. To view the RCAS High School Student Handbook, click [handbook](#).

### **Course Description:**

This course is an in-depth study of the American political system. The course focuses on the foundations of American democracy, interactions between branches of government, civil liberties and civil rights, American political beliefs and ideologies, and political participation. Students will be required to do substantial reading and writing; active participation in classroom discussion is expected.

### **Textbook:**

Bianco, William T., and David T. Canon. American Politics and Government Today. AP ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2022.

### **Required Resources:**

Federalist No. 10  
Brutus No. 1  
The Declaration of Independence  
The Articles of Confederation  
The Constitution of the United States (including the Bill of Rights and subsequent Amendments)  
Federalist No. 51  
Letter from a Birmingham Jail (Martin Luther King, Jr.)  
Federalist No. 70  
Federalist No. 78  
McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)

United States v. Lopez (1995)  
Engel v. Vitale (1962)  
Wisconsin V. Yoder (1972)  
Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969)  
New York Times Co. v. United States (1971)  
Schenck v. United States (1919)  
Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)  
McDonald v. Chicago (2010)  
Brown v. Board of Education (1954)  
Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)  
Baker v. Carr (1961)  
Shaw v. Reno (1993)  
Marbury v. Madison (1803)

**“Limited Choice” Resources:** (students will be asked to choose at least one title from this list)

NA

**Student Choice:**

Will student be asked to choose additional reading material from the classroom or school library?

No

**Essential Questions:**

What is the proper role of government in our democracy?  
How do founding documents describe how our government should work? To what extent should we be faithful to the founders’ intentions?  
How are elections run? To what extent do elections reflect the will of the people?  
How does the government work together to make laws? To what extent is Congress designed to make laws that reflect the will of the people?  
In what way(s), have the leadership and actions of particular Presidents moved us closer to, or further away from, our nation’s democratic ideals?  
How does the Supreme Court work? How does the Supreme Court balance the rights of the individual and the needs of society?  
How does the government work together to implement public policy? To what extent is the way government implements public policy beneficial or detrimental to the people?

**Essential Learning Intentions:**

We are learning to evaluate models of representative democracy.

‡ I can differentiate between the models of representative democracy: participatory, pluralism, hyperpluralism, elite.

We are learning to justify the use of democratic ideals reflected in U.S. founding documents.

‡ I can describe each of the democratic ideals: limited government, popular sovereignty, rule of law, separation of powers/checks & balances, independent judiciary, federalism, individual rights.

‡ I can trace the origins of democratic ideals and the founding documents. We are learning about the development of debates surrounding the creation of a new government.

‡ I can explain the issues that showed the weaknesses of the Articles of the Confederation.

‡ I can describe the compromises reached when creating the Constitution.

‡ I can evaluate the views of the Federalists regarding the ratification of the Constitution.

‡ I can evaluate the views of the Anti-Federalists regarding the ratification of the Constitution.

We are learning how the Founders' allocated power between the national and state governments.

‡ I can explain how the U.S. Constitution allocated power between the national and state governments.

‡ I can differentiate between expressed, concurrent, and reserved powers.

‡ I can classify what powers belong to different levels of government.

We are learning about America's current federal system.

‡ I can apply constitutional powers such as commerce clause, elastic clause, and/or 10th Amendment to explain how the Federal government has gained power relative to the states.

‡ I can describe different forms of federalism and identify when they are used; dual, cooperative, regulated, new federalism.

‡ I can assess the proper role of the federal government with regard to a current issue.

We are learning how various factors influence political socialization and attitudes.

‡ I can describe the cultural factors of political socialization.

‡ I can describe generational and lifecycle effects and how they contribute to political socialization.

‡ I can compare political ideologies (conservative and liberal).

We are learning about the credibility of public opinion polls and how they influence elections or political behavior.

‡ I can describe how types of polls influence elections or political behavior differently.

‡ I can describe the elements of a scientific poll that make it credible.

‡ I can explain how a poll influences elections or political behavior.  
We are learning about the role of the media in the electoral process.

‡ I can identify different types of media.

‡ I can explain how diverse forms of media (broadcasting and narrowcasting) influence political behavior.

‡ I can describe the media's roles as a watchdog and gatekeeper.  
We are learning about the role of interest groups in the electoral process.

‡ I can describe the role of interest groups as a linkage institution.

‡ I can explain how the goals of an interest group influence its functions.  
We are learning about the role of political parties in the electoral process.

‡ I can describe the role and structure of political parties as a linkage institution.

‡ I can explain how the goals of a political party influence its functions.  
We are learning about different electoral processes.

‡ I can describe each of the various means for selecting candidates (caucus, open primary, closed primary, nomination, general election).

‡ I can compare how different electoral processes produce different electoral outcomes (i.e. turnout rates, participants).

We are learning about campaign finance laws.

‡ I can describe the origins of current campaign finance laws (FECA, Buckley v. Valeo, BCRA, Citizens United v. FEC).

‡ I can make and defend a claim about campaign finance laws.

We are learning about the Electoral College.

‡ I can describe the constitutional foundation of the Electoral College.

‡ I can explain how the Electoral College functions.

‡ I can make and defend a claim about whether the Electoral College helps or hurts democracy.

We are learning about public policy.

‡ I will be able to describe economic policy in the United States.

‡ I will be able to explain how political ideologies vary on the government's role in regulating the marketplace.

‡ I will be able to describe social policy in the United States.

‡ I will be able to explain how different ideologies impact policy on social issues.

We are learning how the structure, powers, and functions of both houses of Congress affect the policy-making process.

‡ I can compare the structure of the House and Senate: constituencies, term lengths, and leadership.

‡ I can compare the powers of the House and Senate: revenue bills; advice and consent.

‡ I can compare the functions of the House and Senate: committee process, rules for debate.

We are learning how Congress uses its oversight power to check the President & bureaucracy.

‡ I can describe the constitutional and legislative powers used to check

the President.

‡ I can explain how Congress can use those powers to limit the President's actions.

We are learning how Congress uses its power to check the federal courts.

‡ I can describe the constitutional powers used to check the federal courts.

We are learning about the power of the presidency.

‡ I can describe the formal and informal powers of the presidency.

‡ I can explain how presidents have interpreted and justified their use of formal and informal powers.

We are learning about the relationship between the executive branch and legislative branch within the context of policymaking.

‡ I can describe the powers the President can use to check Congress.

‡ I can describe checks on presidential power by Congress, the Supreme Court, the media, and public opinion.

We are learning how the bureaucracy carries out the responsibilities of the federal government.

‡ I can explain how the federal bureaucracy uses delegated authority for rulemaking and implementation.

‡ I can describe the relationships between components of an iron triangle.

‡ I can explain the extent to which government branches can hold the bureaucracy accountable.

We are learning about the federal budget.

‡ I can describe the budgeting process in the United States.

We are learning about the role of the judicial branch in the constitutional system of checks and balances.

‡ I can describe the powers of the judicial branch as set forth in the Constitution and *Marbury v. Madison*.

‡ I can describe checks placed on the Supreme Court by the legislative branch, executive branch, and the judicial appointment process.

‡ I can evaluate judicial activism and judicial restraint as it relates to the court's legitimacy.

We are learning how the interpretation of the 14th amendment has expanded the role of the federal government in relation to the states.

‡ I can describe the parts of the 14th amendment.

‡ I can describe the development of how the Bill of Rights has been applied to the states.

‡ I can explain the implications of the doctrine of selective incorporation.

We are learning about civil liberties and the Bill of Rights.

‡ I can categorize the liberties protected by the Bill of Rights.

‡ I can trace the changes in the Supreme Court's interpretation of a given liberty over time (religion, speech, press, rights of the accused).

We are learning about civil rights and social movements.

‡ I can describe the social movements that have been inspired by the 14th amendment's equal protection clause.

‡ I can explain how civil rights reforms have come from Congress, the executive branch, the courts, or civic action/social movements.