

# AP U.S. Government & Politics

## GENERAL RESOURCES

Description of the AP U.S. Government & Politics Test

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/usgov/exam.html?usgovpol>

Sample questions from the CollegeBoard

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/usgov/samp.html?usgovpol>

Resources recommended by CollegeBoard

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/usgov/add.html?usgovpol>

AP Credit Policy Information -

<http://www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy/institution/0,4098,2306,00.html>

Online Textbook: Study Guide & Tests (all chapters):

[http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,1000212-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,1000212-,00.html)

EThemes of the Times: L.A. Times articles on noteworthy issues

[http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,1000208-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,1000208-,00.html)

Avalon Project: Historical Documents

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm>

Core Documents of U.S. Democracy

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/coredocs.html>

Documents in the News

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/docnews.html>

Douglass: Archives of American Public Address

<http://dougllassarchives.org/>

The Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy –

<http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/>

Government of the United States – Outline of U.S. Government

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/gov.htm>

### U.S. Government Sites

- [FirstGov](#), official U.S. government portal
- [FindLaw](#)
- [FindLaw: Supreme Court Opinions](#)

- [Thomas: Legislative Information on the Internet](#)
- [U.S. House of Representatives](#)
- [U.S. Senate](#)
- [U.S. Supreme Court](#)
- [The White House](#)

**The Presidency**

- [The White House](#)
- [The American Presidency](#) (Grolier Encyclopedia)
- [The American Presidents](#) (Internet Public Library)
- [American Presidents' Life Portraits](#) (C-SPAN)
- [The American Presidents](#)
- [The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden](#), Smithsonian Museum
- [Smithsonian Bibliography of Recently Published Books on the Presidency](#)
- [PBS \*The American Experience: The Presidents\*](#)
- [Character Above All](#), a *New Hour* discussion of Presidential character
- [U.S. Election Atlas](#)
- [National Portrait Gallery Hall of Presidents](#)
- [America Votes: Presidential Campaign Memorabilia](#), Duke University Library
- [Leadership Information Archives](#)

Raleigh Charter High School – AP Class Website

<http://www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy/institution/0,4098,2306,00.html>

AP U.S. History Course Description (CollegeBoard)

[http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/ap/students/govpol/ap03\\_govpol.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/ap/students/govpol/ap03_govpol.pdf)

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HOW THIS AP STUDY GUIDE WORKS:

Below is a topic outline from [apcentral.collegeboard.com](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com). I have copied the outline and provided links for each outline topic. I have checked all of the links for accuracy, authority, and relevancy to the topic.

To search this site, you may scroll down through the complete outline and click on the accompanying links. To view a particular section of the test, look at the condensed outline and click on the section you wish to review.

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The following topic outline is based on the tables of contents of a representative sample of textbooks used in AP U.S. Government & Politics courses. The outline is intended as a guide for teachers structuring their courses and for students preparing to take the AP United States Government & Politics Examination. The outline is not intended in any way to be prescriptive of what AP teachers must teach or AP students must study. It is illustrative only of topics that might appear in any one edition of the examination.

# CONDENSED OUTLINE

## Topic Outline

The topic outline below summarizes the major content areas covered by the U.S. Government & Politics Exam. The multiple-choice portion of the exam is devoted to each content area in the approximate percentages indicated. The free-response portion of the exam will test students in some combination of the six major categories outlined below. The outline is a guide and is by no means an exhaustive list of topics or the preferred order of topics.

- 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 \(5-15%\)](#)

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## COMPLETE TOPIC OUTLINE

### **I. Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government (5-15%)**

The study of modern politics in the United States requires students to examine the kind of government established by the Constitution, paying particular attention to federalism and the separation of powers. Understanding these developments involves both knowledge of the historical situation at the time of the Constitutional Convention and an awareness of the ideological and philosophical traditions on which the framers drew. Such understanding addresses specific concerns of the framers: e.g., Why did Madison fear factions? What were the reasons for the swift adoption of the Bill of Rights? Familiarity with the Supreme Court's interpretation of key provisions of the Constitution will aid student understanding of theoretical and practical features of federalism and the separation of powers. Students should be familiar with a variety of theoretical perspectives relating to the Constitution, such as democratic theory, theories of republican government, pluralism, and elitism.

- A. Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution

- B. Separation of powers
- C. Federalism
- D. Theories of democratic government

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Constitutional Democracy: <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch1.htm>

Government By The People, Brief Fifth Edition - Online Textbook: Chapter 1 (Constitutional Democracy) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,769951-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,769951-,00.html)

Online Textbook Review Test, Ch. 1  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch1.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch1.txt)

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American Federalism: <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch2.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 2 (American federalism)  
[http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770075-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770075-,00.html)

Online Textbook Review Test, Ch. 2  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch2.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch2.txt)

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A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/>

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Browsable version of the U.S. Constitution:  
<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/constitution/browse.html>

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An Outline of U.S. Government – Online Textbook, Chapter 1 – The Constitution: An Enduring Document <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/ch1.htm>

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An Outline of U.S. Government – Online Textbook, Chapter 2 – Explaining the Constitution: The Federalist Papers  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/ch2.htm>

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The Formation of a National Government:  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/history/ch4.htm>

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## **II. Political Beliefs and Behaviors (10-20%)**

Individual citizens hold a variety of beliefs about their government, its leaders, and the U.S. political system in general; taken together, these beliefs form the foundation of U.S. political culture. It is important for students to understand how these beliefs are formed, how they evolve, and the processes by which they are transmitted. Students should know why U.S. citizens hold certain beliefs about politics, and how families, schools, and the media act to perpetuate or change these beliefs. Understanding the ways in which political culture affects and informs political participation is also critical. For example, students should know that individuals often engage in multiple forms of political participation, including voting, protest, and mass movements. Students should understand both why individuals engage in various forms of political participation and how that participation affects the political system.

Finally, it is essential that students understand what leads citizens to differ from one another in their political beliefs and behaviors, and the political consequences of these differences. To understand these differences, students should focus on the different views that people hold of the political process, the demographic features of the American population, and the belief and behavior systems held by specific ethnic, minority, and other groups.

- A. Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders
- B. Processes by which citizens learn about politics
- C. The nature, sources, and consequences of public opinion
- D. The ways in which citizens vote and otherwise participate in political life
- E. Factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors

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Political Culture and Ideology: <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch5.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 3 (Political Culture & Ideology) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770150-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770150-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 3  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch3.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch3.txt)

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The American Political Landscape: <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch6.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 4 (The American Political Landscape) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770216-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770216-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 4  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch4.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch4.txt)

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### **III. Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media (10-20%)**

Students should understand the mechanisms that allow citizens to organize and communicate their interests and concerns. Among these are political parties, elections,

political action committees (PACs), interest groups, and the mass media. Students should examine the historical evolution of the U.S. party system, the functions and structures of political parties, and the effects they have on the political process. Examination of issues of party reform and of campaign strategies and financing in the electronic age provides students with important perspectives. A study of elections, election laws, and election systems on the national and state levels will help students understand the nature of both party and individual voting behavior. Treatment of the development and the role of PACs in elections and the ideological and demographic differences between the two major parties, as well as third parties, form an important segment of this material.

Students must also consider the political roles played by a variety of lobbying and interest groups. Important features of this section of the course include an explanation for why some interests are represented by organized groups while others are not, and the consequences of these differences. Students study what interest groups do, how they do it, and how this affects both the political process and public policy. Why are certain segments of the population, such as farmers and the elderly, able to exert pressure on political institutions and actors in order to obtain favorable policies?

The media has become a major force in U.S. politics. Students are expected to understand the role of the media in the political system. In addition, the impact of the media on public opinion, voter perceptions, campaign strategies, electoral outcomes, agenda development, and the images of officials and candidates should be explored and understood by students. Understanding the often symbiotic, and frequently conflictual, relationship between candidates, elected officials, and the media is also important.

A. Political parties and elections

- A. Functions
- B. Organization
- C. Development
- D. Effects on the political process
- E. Electoral laws and systems

B. Interest groups, including political action committees (PACs)

- A. The range of interests represented
- B. The activities of interest groups
- C. The effects of interest groups on the political process
- D. The unique characteristics and roles of PACs in the political process

C. The mass media

- A. The functions and structures of the media
  - B. The impact of media on politics
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Political Parties and Interest Groups: <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch7.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 5 (Political Parties & Interest Groups) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770274-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770274-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 5  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch5.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch5.txt)

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An Outline of U.S. Government – Online Textbook, Chapter 8 (Government of the People: The Role of the Citizen)  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/ch8.htm>

An Outline of U.S. Government – Online Textbook (Political Parties)  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/parties.htm>

An Outline of U.S. Government – Online Textbook: The Media  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/media.htm>

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#### **IV. Institutions of National Government: The Congress, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, and the Federal Courts (35-45%)**

Students must become familiar with the organization and powers, both formal and informal, of the major political institutions in the United States- the Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the federal courts. The functions these institutions perform and do not perform, as well as the powers that they do and do not possess, are important. It is necessary for students to understand that power balances and relationships between these institutions may evolve gradually or change dramatically as a result of crises. Students are also expected to understand ties between the various branches of national government and political parties, interest groups, the media, and state and local governments. For example, a study of the conflicting interests and powers of the President and Congress may help explain recent and repeated struggles to adopt a national budget.

- A. The major formal and informal institutional arrangements of power
- B. Relationships among these four institutions, and varying balances of power
- C. Linkages between institutions and the following:
  - A. Public opinion and voters
  - B. Interest groups
  - C. Political parties
  - D. The media
  - E. Subnational governments

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The Media and American Politics <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch9.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 7 (The Media & American Politics) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770542-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770542-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 7  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch7.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch7.txt)

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Congress: The People's Branch <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch10.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 8 (Congress: The People's Branch) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770611-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770611-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 8  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch8.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch8.txt)

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The Presidency <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch11.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 9 (The Presidency: The Leadership Branch) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770698-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770698-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 9  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch9.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch9.txt)

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 10 (Congress and the President) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770772-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770772-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 10  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch10.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch10.txt)

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The Judiciary <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch12.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 12 (The Judiciary: The Balancing Branch) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770910-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770910-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 12  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch12.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch12.txt)

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The Bureaucracy <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch13.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chap. 11 (The Federal Bureaucracy: The Real Power) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770839-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770839-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 11  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch11.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch11.txt)

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The American Presidency: Grolier Encyclopedia Article - <http://ap.grolier.com/>

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An Outline of U.S. Government – Online Textbook, Chapter 3 (The Executive Branch: Powers of the Presidency) <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/ch3.htm>

The Presidency: <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/presid.htm>

The Cabinet: <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/cabinet.htm>

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An Outline of U.S. Government – Online Textbook, Chapter 4 (The Legislative Branch: The Reach of Congress) <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/ch4.htm>

The Committee System - <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/commsys.htm>

The Oversight Powers of Congress - <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/over.htm>

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An Outline of U.S. Government – Online Textbook, Chapter 5 (The Judicial Branch: Interpreting the Constitution) <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/ch5.htm>

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An Outline of U.S. Government – Online Textbook, Chapter 6 (Landmark Decisions of the Supreme Court) <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/ch6.htm>

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An Outline of U.S. Government – Online Textbook, Chapter 7 (A Country of Many Governments) <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/outusgov/ch7.htm>

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## **V. Public Policy (5-15%)**

Public policy is the result of interactions and dynamics among actors, interests, institutions, and processes. The formation of policy agendas, the enactment of public policies by Congress and the President, and the implementation and interpretation of policies by the bureaucracy and the courts are all stages in the policy process with which students should be familiar. Students should also investigate policy networks, iron triangles, and other forms of policy subgovernments in the domestic and foreign policy areas. The study of these will give students a clear understanding of the impact of federalism, interest groups, parties, and elections on policy processes and policy making in the federal context.

- A. Policy making in a federal system
- B. The formation of policy agendas
- C. The role of institutions in the enactment of policy

- D. The role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation
- E. Linkages between policy processes and the following:
  - A. Political institutions and federalism
  - B. Political parties
  - C. Interest groups
  - D. Public opinion
  - E. Elections
  - F. Policy networks

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Public Opinion, Voting, and Elections <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch8.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 6 (Public Opinion, Voting, & Elections) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770410-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770410-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 6  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch6.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch6.txt)

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Domestic Policy: <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch14.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 15 (Making Economic and Social Policy) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,771209-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,771209-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 15  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch15.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch15.txt)

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Foreign and Defense Policy <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch15.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Ch. 16 (Making Foreign & Defense Policy) [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,771353-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,771353-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 16  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch16.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch16.txt)

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## **VI. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (5-15%)**

An understanding of United States politics includes the study of the development of individual rights and liberties and their impact on citizens. Basic to this study is an analysis of the workings of the Supreme Court and an understanding of its most significant decisions. Students should examine judicial interpretations of various civil rights and liberties such as freedom of speech, assembly, and expression; the rights of

the accused; and the rights of minority groups and women. For example, students should understand the legal, social, and political evolution following the Supreme Court's decisions regarding racial segregation. Finally, it is important that students be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Supreme Court decisions as tools of social change.

- A. The development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation
- B. Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
- C. The impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties

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First Amendment Rights: <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch3.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 13 (First Amendment Freedoms)  
[http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,770982-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,770982-,00.html)

Online Textbook Review Test, Ch. 13  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch13.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch13.txt)

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Equal Justice Under the Law: <http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/ch4.htm>

Government By The People - Online Textbook: Chapter 14 (Equal Justice Under the Law)  
[http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_burns\\_govbrief\\_5/0,7874,771075-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_burns_govbrief_5/0,7874,771075-,00.html)

Online Textbook: Review Test, Ch. 14  
[http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review\\_ch14.txt](http://hcl.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/ps201/review_ch14.txt)

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