

AP U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
2023 SUMMER ASSIGNMENT
Mrs. Battisto

Hello, future APGOV students! The three assignments detailed below are what I would like you to work on this summer in preparation for our AP U.S. Government and Politics class. My best advice is to remain calm and confident; you were chosen to be in this class for a reason and you are capable of success in it. I have no doubt about that and neither should you. I know that AP courses can be intimidating, especially if you have never taken one before. When you lay out the course it looks like a lot of work (and it is!), but I guarantee you that by early May you will be thankful that you got some of the work out of the way over the summer. I am not a fan of homework for the sake of homework. I want this summer work to be meaningful and leave you in a place where you come into class in September feeling confident. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns along the way, please do not hesitate to reach out.

I. News coverage:

Please follow breaking political news over the summer. For example, the Supreme Court is expected to announce its decisions in some significant cases by the end of June when they end their current session. We also have many local elections coming up this fall before we head into a presidential election year in 2024. Read newspapers, read news magazines, watch television news channels, and listen to news programs on the radio. Be sure to read or listen to the whole article or segment, and not just the headlines. Take note of any evidence of bias you witness when you read and/or listen to the news. Media bias will be one topic we cover this year. Sometimes it is blatant, and other times it is more subtle and more difficult to detect. There is no formal written assignment. Just listen and think about the relevance of government and politics in our everyday lives and come to school ready to discuss important issues respectfully with your classmates.

II. Declaration of Independence and Articles of Confederation Annotations and Questions in binder (10 points each)

The course includes nine foundational documents (*The Declaration of Independence, The Articles of Confederation, The Constitution, Federalist 10, Federalist 51, Federalist 70, Federalist 78, Brutus 1, and Letter from Birmingham Jail*) that will be used throughout the year in various ways, most importantly to provide evidence to back up argumentative essays (one of the four APGOV FRQ types). Eight of the nine documents come up in Unit 1, which means a lot of annotating homework early in the year if we do not get it started early. I will hand out binders before students leave for summer and will ask that you complete the annotations and questions for the first two documents (DOI and AoC). Any transfer student or student who misses the last weeks of school and does not have the physical binder can email me at ebattisto@gmahs.org and I will provide electronic versions of the two documents. Thanks!

III. Judicial Assignment:

The course also includes 14 required Supreme Court cases that will come up throughout the year. They were chosen carefully by the College Board out of thousands of cases to illustrate different principles that we will study throughout the year. Questions regarding these cases will appear on the exam in multiple choice format as well as in a SCOTUS (Supreme Court of the United States) Comparison FRQ (Free Response Question). These FRQs, which we will practice throughout the year, require you to read the background, constitutional questions, and ultimate decisions in a case that is not required and likely you have never seen before. Then you will be asked to compare the nonrequired case to one of the 14 required cases. I am asking you to research one of these cases and to complete a case brief summarizing your assigned case. You should also fill out the appropriate binder page for your assigned case to help guide your brief-writing.

The brief should follow this format:

- Paragraph One
 - Identify the name of the case and the year in which it was decided
 - Summarize the background information in the case
 - Identify the key constitutional question in the case (discuss which article or amendment of the Constitution is in question)
- Paragraph Two
 - Summarize the Opinion of the Court (mention who wrote the opinion and what the vote breakdown was—was it a close decision, unanimous, etc.?)
 - Discuss the concurring and dissenting opinions if they exist (mention who wrote them)
- Paragraph Three
 - Discuss the impact/historical significance of the decision (Consider: Why are we talking about this case? Why is it a required case choice out of the thousands of cases that have been decided by the court?)

Rubric:

Paragraph One	
Name of case	5 points
Background info.	5 points
Key question	5 points
Paragraph Two	
Opinion summary	5 points
Who wrote?	5 points
Vote breakdown	5 points
Concurring/dissenting opinions?	5 points
Paragraph Three	
Impact	5 points
TOTAL-	40 points

Sample:

The case of Marbury v. Madison (1803) involved the “midnight appointments” made by President John Adams in his final hours in office, including that of William Marbury as a federal justice of the peace. When Thomas Jefferson became president before the appointment was declared official, he ordered his Secretary of State, James Madison, not to follow through with the appointment. Marbury brought a suit against Madison to have his appointment fulfilled. He asked the Court to issue a writ of mandamus, which was permissible under the Judiciary Act of 1789. The key constitutional question in this case is whether the Supreme Court has the power, under Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution, to interpret the constitutionality of a law or statute passed by the Congress. In other words, does the Supreme Court have the right to exercise judicial review?

The Court decided unanimously that Marbury’s request was based on a law passed by Congress that the Court held to be unconstitutional. The justices decided that the Judiciary Act of 1789 violated the Constitution and therefore was invalid since the Constitution holds higher legal weight than a law passed by Congress. Chief Justice John Marshall wrote the opinion of the Court.

This case is significant in that it established the power of judicial review. This power allows a judicial “check” on the legislative branch of the government. When the Court exercises judicial review, Congress can attempt to convince 2/3 of its representatives to agree that the law is important enough to amend the Constitution and ¾ of the state legislatures would have to ratify the amendment in order to add it to the Constitution. This is extremely difficult to do, which is why we have so few Constitutional amendments to this day.

Case choices—

McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)—

U.S. v. Lopez (1995)—

McDonald v. Chicago (2010)—

Baker v. Carr (1961)—

Shaw v. Reno (1993)—

Marbury v. Madison (1803)—do not choose this one; see sample above as a guide

Engle v. Vitale (1962)—

Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972)—

Schenck v. U.S. (1919)—

Tinker v. DesMoines (1969)—

New York Times v. U.S. (1971)—

Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)—

Brown v. Board of Education (1954)—

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)—

You should use at least two sources for this assignment. These summaries need not be long. This assignment should be typed and handed in on the first day of classes. One excellent source that we will be utilizing all year is www.oyez.org. I will create a Turn It In page for our class and you can submit it there after joining the class in the first week.

Please email me over the summer at ebattisto@gmahs.org if you have any questions! Enjoy your summer! I promise that this is a fun class! You will see principles from the textbook come alive as you watch them play out in real life. We are going to have a great year!