

Dear Rebels,

Welcome to AP U.S. Government and Politics! This is a very rigorous and fast-paced class, and it is important that you are aware of the year-long commitment you are about to undertake as a student of this course. In addition to gaining an in-depth view of the American government system, you will have the opportunity to earn college credit for this course through the College Board by taking the AP Exam in May 2026.

AP Government requires different thinking and writing skills than you may have used in U.S. History. Writing for the government requires the understanding and analysis of abstract concepts and principles. You will depend less on the study of chronological facts and events, and more so on your interpretation of these facts and events within the context of our greater geopolitical climate. Throughout the year, you will become aware of politics in general and will have an opportunity to explore your political self and where you fit into our political world.

This summer assignment is designed to help you transition from thinking historically to thinking and writing from a political perspective. There are three required parts to this assignment, and each one is described on the subsequent pages. Assignments should be prepared and completed for the first day of class. They will count as separate grades for the first quarter.

*Please make sure to read the summer assignment completely and carefully so that you will be ready to fully and successfully participate when class begins in the upcoming 2026-2026 school year. Failure to complete the assignment will result in removal from the course. Please join the Google Classroom for the Summer Assignment using code **beyxf5wd**.*

If you have any questions about the summer assignment or the course in general, you can reach me via email at grayt@slshs.org. I hope that you have an enjoyable, relaxing, and productive summer!

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Gray

AP Gov 2025 Summer Assignment

Directions: Please complete the following. **This assignment must be turned in on the first day of school. On day 3 we will have a test on the Carol Berkin book A Brilliant Solution.**

Part 1 - The Declaration of Independence

Preamble:

1. What does the preamble say is required by the colonists because they had chosen to break from Britain?

Declaration of Natural Rights:

2. What does “self-evident” mean?

3. Listed below are the 5 truths the founders declared to be “self-evident”. In your own words, describe what is meant by each truth.

“Truths”	What It Means
a. all men are created equal	
b. they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights	
c. among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness	
d. to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed	
e. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government...	

4. John Locke heavily influenced this section of the Declaration of Independence. How did his “natural rights” compared to the Declaration’s “unalienable rights”? Why do you think the founders made this change?

5. What is the purpose of government according to the Declaration? Who grants the government its authority? When should that government be abolished or changed? Why do you *think* the founders believed it was not only the right, but the duty of citizens to abolish this type of government?
 - a. Purpose→

 - b. Authority→

 - c. Abolished when→

 - d. Why is it a citizens’ duty to abolish bad governments→

6. What reason does the Declaration give for the colonies breaking with Great Britain and the King?

List of Grievances:

7. There are 27 specific complaints made by the colonists against Britain listed in the Declaration. What effect does this list have on the argument that the colonists have the right to break away from Britain?

8. Listed below are the major rights guaranteed to British citizens in the Magna Carta, Petition of Right, and the English Bill of Rights. Then, a selection of grievances made against King George by the colonies followed. Beside each grievance, write the letter(s) of the basic right(s) being violated.

English Laws

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. No taxes without consent | (Magna Carta, Petition of Right) |
| b. No imprisonment without a trial | (Magna Carta, Petition of Right) |
| c. Cannot force citizens to house troops | (Petition of Right) |
| d. No martial law in peacetime | (Petition of Right, English Bill of Rights) |
| e. Can elect representatives to parliament | (English Bill of Rights) |

Grievance	British Law Being Violated
a. He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance. <i>(2 violations)</i>	
b. He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.	
c. For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us	
d. For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent <i>(2 violations)</i>	
e. For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury	

Attempts to get relief:

9. How have the colonists responded to these repeated offenses according to the two paragraphs beginning with the words "In every stage of these oppressions..."?
10. How have the king and parliament responded to this and what does this prove about them?

Resolution of Independence by the United States:

11. Who is making this resolution for independence officially? By whose authority? Whom do they appeal to for support that they are doing what is right?

a. Officially→

b. Authority→

c. Support→

12. What personal pledge do the signers give in support of their declaration? Put this pledge in your own words.

a. Pledge→

b. Your Words→

The Signers:

13. Who was president of the Continental Congress that approved the document? Who were the signers from Pennsylvania? Name at least 2 other signers that you recognize by name.

a. President→

b. 3 Signers from Pennsylvania→

c. 2 Others→

Part 2 - U.S. Constitution and Amendments

Your assignment is to read the United States Constitution and create for yourself a basic understanding of the document that contains the guiding principles of American self-rule.

Use this website for the assignment: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs>. Begin by clicking on “read transcript”

THE PREAMBLE

This paragraph, which begins with “We the People...”, outlines the basic tasks we ask our Federal Government to perform. List each one as it's written in the document; then in the blank next to it, think of something the federal government actually does to carry out this task.

TASK ACTION

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. |

ARTICLE I ...outlines which branch of the federal government?

Section 1: Congress shall consist of _____ and

Section 2 ... describes which chamber?

Fill out each of the following rules & requirements as prescribed:

Length of term in office: Minimum age:

Minimum years as U.S. citizen:

Number of representatives per state shall be based upon:

Which "sole power" belongs to this chamber as described in Section 2?

Section 3 ... describes which chamber?

Fill out each of the following rules & requirements as prescribed:

Number of Senators per state: Senators are to be chosen by:

*this was later amended

Every two years, how many Senators will be up for re-election?:

Length of term in office: Minimum age:

Minimum years as U.S. citizen:

The "President of the Senate" is: With what power?:

Which "sole power" belongs to this chamber as described in Section 3?

If a president is on trial who presides _____

A guilty verdict equals: _____

How many members must be present to convict? _____

Sections 4, 5 & 6... describe how the chambers are to operate with respect to meetings & adjournments, compensation, internal structure, rules, etc.... in general, who is tasked with running the House and Senate? _____

Define Quorum: _____

Can each house punish their members? _____

Section 7... describes the legislative process

In Clause 1, only the House of Representatives may:

Refer to Clause 2 to fill in the blanks:

A bill must pass before being sent to .

If the bill is not signed into law, it returns to each chamber where a vote is needed before the bill may become a law.

Section 8... describes all of the powers given to Congress. Write each power in your own words in the space provided (each separated paragraph or sentence is a clause)

Clause 1:

Clause 2:

Clause 3:

Clause 4:

Clause 5:

Clause 6:

Clause 7:

Clause 8:

Clause 9:

Clause 10:

Clause 11:

Clauses 12 – 16 call for Congress to:

Clause 17 allows for Congress to appropriate land for:

Clause 18 gives Congress the ability to:

Section 9... limits the federal government in certain key areas –look up and define the following terms:

Writ of habeas corpus:

Bill of attainder:

Ex post facto law:

Also in this section, Congress cannot place a tax on ,
nor in regulating commerce favor one state over another.

Section 10... places limits on state governments, including the following:
No state may enter into with another state or foreign country.

Article IIoutlines which branch of the federal government?

Fill out each of the following rules & requirements as prescribed in Section 1:

Length of term in office: Minimum age:

Citizenship requirement: Residency requirement:

Paragraphs 2, 3 & 4 of Section 1 (although later amended) describes

The last paragraph of Section 1 describes

Section 2... describes the President's powers

With regards to the military, the President is the

The President has the power to grant

2nd clause: With advice & consent of the Senate, the President may make and
nominate/appoint

When the Senate is in recess, the President may fill vacancies. How long may these
appointments last?

Section 3... outlines three things the President may do with respect to Congress, they are:

Section 4... for which offenses may the President, Vice President and other executive officers be impeached and removed from office?

Article III:... outlines which branch of the federal government?

Section 1... establishes one

Who is given the power to establish the “inferior” courts of the federal system?

Based on the idea that judges shall hold their office during “good behavior,” how long is the term of a federal judge & Supreme Court justice? _____

Section 2... identify six areas in which the federal courts have jurisdiction as described in

Clause 1:

Clause 2 ...describes the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction when the parties involved are

Or In all other federal cases, the Supreme Court has jurisdiction.

Section 3... defines it as the only crime in the Constitution.

The Framers intended this very specific definition to prevent the loose use of the charge, for example, against people who criticize the government. How is this crime defined?

ARTICLE IV: ...outlines relations between the states, and the federal government's obligations to states

Section 1... calls for states to extend _____ to the acts, records and proceedings of other states.

Section 2... describes how citizens of states shall be treated in other states.

Clause 1 entitles citizens of each state all _____ & _____

Clause 2 does not allow _____

*Clause 3 was later repealed by amendment

Section 3... who is given the power to admit new states to the union?

Section 4... the federal government guarantees it will do three things for the states:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Article V: ...outlines how the Constitution will be amended in the future

Which are the two ways an amendment may be proposed?

Which are the two ways an amendment will be ratified?

ARTICLE VI

Section 1... calls for the federal government to be responsible to

Section 2... states the Constitution, federal laws and treaties are

Section 3 ... calls for federal officers to take an oath, and that no shall be required to qualify for office

ARTICLE VII ...describes how The Constitution itself would be ratified

States needed for ratification: On what day was The Constitution signed?:

Number of Convention attendees who signed the final document:

Constitutional Amendments

Go back to main Constitution page, then click on "Constitutional Amendments 1-10" (aka "The Bill of Rights") and Amendments 11-27, click on "read transcript" and write a brief description of

each amendment's overall intent in your own words (not necessary to be very specific about the provisions in each amendment):

1st:

2nd:

3rd:

4th:

5th:

6th:

7th:

8th:

9th:

10th:

11th:

12th:

13th:

14th:

15th:

16th:

17th:

18th:

19th:

20th:

21st:

22nd:

23rd:

24th:

25th:

26th:

27th:

Part 3 - AP Government and Politics Summer Reading 2025

Book: Carol Berkin, *A Brilliant Solution: Inventing the American Constitution* (paperback edition)

A student of the American government must begin his/her study with the Constitution. Throughout the semester, we will examine many parts of the nation's principle document in depth. To begin, however, I would like you to understand the environment in which the Constitution was written. Having a solid foundation in the history of late eighteenth-century America will help you understand why the Constitution was written and why it includes so many checks and limitations on government. To do so, we will be reading *A Brilliant Solution* by Carol Berkin. Carefully read the entire assignment below before you begin reading the book. Be aware, this is not an assignment you can start the day before it is due; It is mandatory that you read from pages 1 to 210. The supplemental material from page 211- 300 are optional. As you read, you should take notes from the book in response to the following questions. None of these questions have simple or short answers. Many require thought, argumentation, and/or several different responses; therefore, your replies should reflect original thinking as well as understanding of the text.

Introduction (pages 1-9)

1. In what context did Berkin write this book? How did that influence her writing?
2. According to Berkin, what is the role of historians? (page 3-5)
3. What are Berkin's research questions? What is Berkin's primary argument (thesis)?

Chapter 1 (pages 11-29)

1. Explain the conditions in the United States under the Articles of Confederation. What were the perceived weaknesses? Why do you think those weaknesses existed? Discuss at least 3.
2. What does Berkin mean when she discusses Hamilton wanting the colonists to "think continentally?" (pg. 23)
3. What was Shay's Rebellion and why did it happen?
4. Why was the convention in Philadelphia called? What role did economic circumstances play in the promotion of the gathering?

Chapter 2 (pages 30 – 47)

1. What were James Madison's goals for steering the convention?
2. Why did delegates come to the convention? You can characterize them into two factions but give specific examples.
3. Explain Alexander Hamilton's ideas on a new government (form, foundations, etc.). How did

it compare to Madison's?

4. Explain how the rules made the delegates feel safe in open discussions.

Chapter 3 (p. 48-67)

1. Jefferson referred to the Convention as a "gathering of Demi-gods" (pg. 46). Do you think Berkin agrees? How does she describe the delegates? Explain their positions in society, means, education, Revolutionary War experience and previous government experience. Support your answer with quotes.

Chapter 4 (p. 68 – 95)

1. Did the representatives have the power to create the Constitution? What were the arguments for and against?

2. Which branch of government did most of the delegates think was the most important? Why?

3. Identify and describe several ways in which the Founders talked about protecting against potential abuses of power? How did they think about checks and balances to limit the power of various entities?

4. What were the issues that the convention had with creating the executive? What were some suggestions they put forth?

5. What view did many founders have of average citizens? How does Elbridge Gerry express it (pg. 90-91)?

6. Why was it so difficult for delegates to focus on one problem at a time?

Chapter 5 (pages 96 – 115)

1. What was the Virginia Plan's proposals regarding the structure of Congress and how its members would be elected? Discuss arguments in favor of it.

2. What were the corresponding proposals of the New Jersey Plan? Discuss arguments in favor of it.

3. What were the components of the Great Compromise including how the population of the slaveholding states would be determined?

4. How did the issue of representation also show the debate about national and state power?

5. What are the two political factions developing? What, according to Berkin, is the "irony of the

situation"? (pg. 108)

Chapter 6 (pages 116-148)

1. What did Madison mean (p. 126) when he compared the direct popular election of the President to "ask(ing) a blind man to make a color choice?" What made it difficult for an ordinary citizen to cast a well-informed vote?
2. Explain the final outline of the Presidency. How is he chosen? What responsibilities does he have? (be sure to explain the Electoral College)
3. What does Berkin imply at the end of the chapter about the Presidency? Do you think she's right?

Chapter 7 (pages 149-168)

1. Berkin describes the change from listing the states to simply saying "We the people of the United States." (pg. 150) What is the significance of this change? Does it accurately reflect the purpose of the document?
2. What is the "hierarchy" in the organization of the Constitution?
3. What opposition did the Constitution face? Provide specific criticisms.
4. Franklin's speech argued that a "general Government (is) necessary for us, and there is no form of Government but what may be a blessing to the people if well administered." (p. 163) What does Franklin mean?

Chapter 8 (pages 169-190)

1. How many states had to ratify the Constitution for it to take effect? Does Berkin make it seem likely?
2. Identify the groups that made up the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists. Summarize the arguments made by both sides.
3. Why was it misleading for the supporters of the Constitution to label themselves as "Federalists?"
4. Who was "Publius?" Why is he important in the Ratification process?

Chapter 9 (pages 191-204)

1. Why was Washington chosen to be the first President? Was he a good choice?

2. What point is Berkin trying to make with her description of Washington's inauguration?

Chapter 10 (pages 205-210)

1. What argument does Berkin make about the aftermath of the Constitutional convention?

Provide two examples that she uses.

2. How is the executive branch different than what the Founders envisioned it?

3. How does Berkin connect her narrative back to the reader at the end? Is she effective?

Reflection:

Summary Questions

1. What are some themes Berkin traces throughout the book? Support your answer with quotes.

2. How does Berkin explain the ways in which the delegates dealt with issues of class, gender and race? At one point she notes none of the attendees was a "man of ordinary means, a yeoman farmer, a shopkeeper, a sailor or a laborer." (pg. 49) How does this figure into her overall argument?

3. Based on Berkin's portrayal of the Constitutional Convention, do you think the framers would recognize the government we have today? Would they approve? Why or why not?