

Poli sci



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Part I: The three Woll reading presentations that I did this year were Democracy in America by de Toqueville, The Power to Persuade by Neustadt, and Bowling Together by Robert D.

Putnam. Since some of the readings, specifically Democracy in America, were hard to understand because of the style of writing, it helped to read it earlier then read it two more times prior to making the power point. It helped to read it multiple times because if I didn't understand a part, it would take a while for it to sink in, and the next time I would read it, I would find information that I missed the previous time I read it. Every time I read it, I would write down important information that I could use in the power point. Then when I read it for the final time, I compiled the information I found and started to create the power point.

My group and I used the main ideas of the reading for the objectives. The rest of the explanation consisted of elaborating on the objectives to make it easier for the class to understand. I felt that the presentation and our plan on working the presentation were very effective. But because it was a group project, we had a hard time getting together early and putting everything together. Ultimately, the only time that we had together, was the night before the presentation. If I had the chance to do things differently, I would try to meet with my group earlier to try and get the presentation done early so we wouldn't be in a rush to get things done. It might've been more efficient if we just collaborated ideas and emailed the power point to each other to add what we found ourselves and then pull it all together to finish it up. Even though the working part was procrastinated, I still was able to learn from the readings.

From Democracy in America I learned that the federal Constitution of the United States better represents individuals. I also learned that the U. S. took the good parts of small nations' and big nations' policies to have a policy that had the best of both. The reading also discussed how there are flaws and evils in a federal government, like the complicated nature of the sovereignties and weakness of the union government, but the United States took advantage of these terms and adapted the federal government so ultimately it would work out for them. The United States also had many advantages that other nations didn't have that allowed for a federal system to thrive. The country is virtually isolated and therefore doesn't have the threat of war. In The Power to Persuade, I learned the way that the three branches function with each other is by using persuasion and that persuasion is like collective bargaining that is based on status, authority, logic, and charm.

From this reading I also learned that persuasion is easier if it indulges people's self interest. After reading Bowling Together by Robert Putnam, I understood how traumatic events unite the nation, the different ways people come together after a traumatic experience, and why and how 9/11 affected people. The moot courts were a very interesting part of the semester. The experience was very beneficial and intriguing. From the process of finding the information and putting all of it together, I was able to experience the feeling of being a lawyer. From searching for the necessary information, I was able to understand how lawyers set up their briefs and argued their points.

I also learned how the Constitution can be interpreted in many different ways and even though it allows for flexibility, it can still result in problems. In my first counsel case, *Board of Education v. Earls*, the main arguments were that urinal analysis violated the fourth and fourteenth amendments. The respondents claimed that urine was considered a person's property and a random urine test would violate the fourth amendment. We also said that it violated the fourteenth amendment because if the school is going to randomly test those in sports, they should test everyone in the school instead of singling out those in sports.

According to the justices, it didn't violate the fourth and fourteenth amendment rights because the students who were in sports signed a statement that stated that they would be randomly tested. If the students didn't want to be tested, they had the option of not joining the sport. As a justice, I learned new information about the judicial branch. In *McDonald v. Chicago*, the second amendment was the issue in question.

In this case, it was really a debate on how the amendment was worded. The loose wording allowed for multiple interpretations but ultimately, since it states that the right to bear arms will not be taken away, it was decided that the handgun ban did violate the second amendment. Some note card highlights was the story of the boy who got his confiscated and he was suspended for a picture of him and his friend holding a bb gun. The issue in question was whether or not the school had the right to search the phone. I learned that they didn't have the right to search the phone unless there was a probable cause to search his property. The health care issue was also a major topic throughout the semester. A topic subordinate to that was the

billions of dollars that could possibly be going to other places, like defense and security, were going to healthcare instead.

Also more over the semester, I felt better equipped to read and understand more articles. I started using better sources to find articles. Instead of using whichever articles I found on web sites like Google and Yahoo, I started using more scholarly sources like The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Economist. My ability to understand the more difficult articles increased over time.

Instead of looking up articles that discussed random topics that didn'tTM t pertain to the government, I began to look for articles that did pertain to the government. As the semester progressed I was able to understand what the articles were talking about and was able to draw connections to what we learned and talked about in class. Part II: In unit one, the main ideas and elements that political science students should take away are that there are different beliefs as to how political power is distributed in America. There is the bureaucratic view which suggests that the government is dominated by appointed officials and the pluralist view which is the belief that competition among all affected interests shapes public policy. There is also the Marxist view, the belief that the government is dominated by capitalists and the power elite view which suggests that the government is dominated by a few top leaders, most of whom are outside of the government. Another main idea in unit one was that the framers of the Constitution had their vision of American democracy and favored certain values, but in order for the Constitution to remain timeless and flexible, these values were not stated in

the Constitution. This unit also explains how and why the Constitution was made.

It mentioned the events that lead to its creation and how and why the ideas within it were created. For example the supremacy clause was created to avoid a similar incident like with the Articles of Confederation. From this unit I was able to better understand why the Constitution was created and how it has still been applicable up to now even though it was created a more than a century ago. In unit 2 the main ideas were how the judiciary branch, the executive branch, and the bureaucracy functioned within themselves and each other.

For example the presidency is constantly swelling; the president needs more help because there is always more to do. By having more staff, he can delegate the power and things can get done faster. Just as other parts of the government, the president can use the executive privilege to withhold certain information that can be harmful. Another main idea is that the bureaucracy is characteristic of almost all aspects of modern life, not just the government. But government bureaucracies can pose special problems because they are subject to competing sources of political authority. They must function in a constitutional system of divided powers and federalism.

Since the bureaucracy is constantly expanding, often referred to as bureaucratic imperialism, its power should be measured by its discretionary authority, not by the number of its employees or the size of its budget.

Another main idea in this unit was that the judicial branch is a potent political force in American life. It is an independent judiciary with the power

of judicial review, the right to decide the constitutionality of acts of Congress, the president and state governments.

Though the Supreme Court is the pinnacle of the federal judiciary, most decisions, including many important ones are made by the several courts of appeals and the ninety-four district courts. The Supreme Court can control its own workload by deciding when to grant certiorari. Sometimes courts can overstep the bounds of their authority and they receive a counterattack from the public and Congress, which is a result of checks and balances. Another main idea was that Supreme Court justices must serve for life in order to prevent their decisions from being swayed and to remain impartial. If their job was threatened, they would be easily swayed. This unit enhanced by understanding of political science because it explained how the executive, judicial, and the bureaucracy functioned within themselves and with each other.

In unit three a main idea that political science students should take away is that Congress is the most powerful branch among the three branches, but its power is split into two, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Even though it is the most powerful branch, it is also the most complicated. A single legislator can make a big difference in what ideas get considered and which bills become laws.

In the senate, they can use the filibuster which holds up legislation of other business in the U. S. Senate by organizing continuous speeches in opposition so that no vote can be taken.

And because of the complicated process of making a bill into a law, it takes a lot of work and a lot of time to get anything accomplished. But the framers of the Constitution knew that Congress would proceed slowly in favor of deliberative, not decisive action. In this unit, it also discussed how Congress functioned with the other branches. For example the pocket veto is the process by which the president may veto a bill by not signing it. A bill normally becomes a law after ten days if Congress is still in session. If Congress adjourns within that ten day period without the president having signed the bill, the bill is dead. A pocket veto cannot be overridden as is the case with other presidential vetoes. Another main idea in this unit was that Congress is usually in step with the public, but on some issues the delegates'™ opinions are out of sync with their constituents.

But the framers believed that representatives should refine, not reflect, public wishes, and mediate, not mirror public views. In this unit I learned how Congress functions with the other branches and why and how it functions as it currently does. Another element in this unit was that policy making involves two stages, placing an issue on the governmental agenda and deciding what to do about the issue once it is on the agenda. Because of historical crises, interest group activity, the competition for votes, and the operation of key institutions like the courts, the bureaucracy and the mass media, the agenda is constantly expanding. Another main idea is that majority coalition that forms during decision making depends on the nature of the issue, especially the perceived distribution of costs and benefits. The four kinds of coalitions are majoritarian, client, interest group, and entrepreneurial.

Unit three also said that there are three economic factors that make a difference to voters; the economic health of the nation, the amount and kinds of government spending, and the level and distribution of taxes. In this unit I understood more about policy making and how and why it is affected. In unit four a main idea was that not everyone participates in elections but we engage in various nonelectoral forms of participation.

Another main idea was that a political party exists in three places, among the voters who psychologically identify with it, as a grassroots organization staffed and led by activists, and as a group of elected officials who follow its lead in law making. Another element of this unit was that interest groups in the United States are numerous. The goals of the interest groups reflect the interest of their members. The main source of interest group influence is information; public support, money and the ability to create trouble. Because the right to lobby is protected by the first amendment, it is hard to regulate what goes on.

Another main idea in this unit was that the media has a lot of power but it is limited because people tend to believe only those arguments that are consistent with their own beliefs. The role of the media is necessary but can pose a dilemma. If they are to do their job as a watchdog on political actions, it was be free of governmental controls. In this unit I learned that there are many factors that can influence legislation. And that it is hard to regulate what is happening because it is protected by the first amendment. Part III: I think all political science students should know how the three main branches of government function with each other, within themselves, and with the public.

They should also know how the branches function within themselves. For example, knowing how the judicial branch works also goes along with understanding the Constitution. The Constitution gives the branches the power it has because it is considered the supreme law of the land. Knowing how Congress functions can help explain why it takes so long to get things done. Also knowing how interest groups and media play a role in how the government functions is important. Even though an individual may think he or she doesn't majorly affect the government, their participation can change a lot. They can choose to become journalists or lobbyists or they can contact their representatives because their representatives have to represent their constituents' opinions in congress. Future political science AP students can have success in this class by paying attention in class, taking good notes, and not procrastinating the work.

Trying to cram all the work prevents the information from being absorbed well. It applies to their lives because it's constantly happening and always will be happening. Something that interest group does to sway legislation can directly and indirectly affect them. By knowing how the government functions they can participate in it and understand how and why it functions as it does.