

Required Supreme Court Cases

AP Government

The following listing represents required Supreme Court cases and their holdings as related to the enduring understandings in the content outline.

AP U.S. Government and Politics students should be familiar with the structure and functions on the U. S. Supreme Court, as well as how the court renders its decisions. This includes how holdings are decided and that justices who are in the minority often write dissents that express their opinions on the case and the Constitutional questions. While students will not need to know any dissenting (or concurring) opinions from the required cases, it is important for students to understand the role of dissenting opinions, especially as they relate to future cases on similar issues.

CON-2: Federalism reflects the dynamic distribution of power between national and state governments.

McCulloch v. Maryland (1819) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1789-1850/17us316>
Established supremacy of the U.S. Constitution and federal laws over state laws

United States v. Lopez (1995) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1994/93-1260>
Congress may not use the commerce clause to make possession of a gun in a school zone a federal crime

LOR-2: Provisions of the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights are continually being interpreted to balance the power of government and the civil liberties of individuals.

Engel v. Vitale (1962) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1961/468>
School sponsorship of religious activities violates the establishment clause

Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1971/70-110>
Compelling Amish students to attend school past the eighth grade violates the free exercise clause

Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969)
<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1968/21>
Public school students have the right to wear black armbands in school to protest the Vietnam War

New York Times Co. v. United States (1971) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1970/1873>
Bolstered the freedom of the press, establishing a "heavy presumption against prior restraint" even in cases involving national security

Schenck v. United States (1919) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1900-1940/249us47>
Speech creating a "clear and present danger" is not protected by the First Amendment

LOR-3: Protections of the Bill of Rights have been selectively incorporated by way of the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause to prevent state infringement of basic liberties.

Gideon v. Wainwright (1963) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1962/155>
Guaranteed the right to an attorney for the poor or indigent in a state felony case

Roe v. Wade (1973) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1971/70-18>
Extended the right of privacy to a woman's decision to have an abortion

McDonald v. Chicago (2010) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2009/08-1521>

The Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms for self-defense is applicable to the states

PRD-1: The 14th Amendment’s equal protection clause as well as other constitutional provisions have often been used to support the advancement of equality.

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1955/347us483>
Race-based school segregation violates the equal protection clause

PRD-2: The impact of federal policies on campaigning and electoral rules continues to be contested by both sides of the political spectrum.

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2008/08-205>
Political spending by corporations, associations, and labor unions is a form of protected speech under the First Amendment

CON-3: The republican ideal in the U.S. is manifested in the structure and operation of the legislative branch.

Baker v. Carr (1961) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1960/6>
Opened the door to equal protection challenges to redistricting and the development of the “one person, one vote” doctrine by ruling that challenges to redistricting did not raise “political questions” that would keep federal courts from reviewing such challenges

Shaw v. Reno (1993) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1992/92-357>
Majority minority districts, created under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, may be constitutionally challenged by voters if race is the only factor used in creating the district

CON-5: The design of the judicial branch protects the Supreme Court’s independence as a branch of government, and the emergence and use of judicial review remains a powerful judicial practice.

Marbury v. Madison (1803) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1789-1850/5us137>
Established the principle of judicial review empowering the Supreme Court to nullify an act of the legislative or executive branch that violates the Constitution