

# UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

United States Government is a required course.

Students should be able to:

- Analyze political theories related to the existence, necessity, and purpose of government, including natural rights, balance of the public and private interests, and physical and economic security
- Analyze components of government and the governing process, including politics, power, authority, sovereignty, legitimacy, public institutions, efficacy, and civic life
- Evaluate the role and relationship of the citizen to government in democratic, republican, authoritarian, and totalitarian systems
- Analyze the institutional and organizational structure of government that allows it to carry out its purpose and function effectively, including the branches of government and legitimate bureaucratic institutions
- Evaluate limited government and unlimited government with regard to governance, including rule of law, the role of constitutions, civil rights, political freedom, economic freedom, and the ability of citizens to impact or influence the governing process
- Evaluate the organization of government in confederal, federal, and unitary systems, including the distribution of power and the advantages and disadvantages of each system
- Summarize core principles of United States government, including limited government, federalism, checks and balances, separation of powers, rule of law, popular sovereignty, republicanism, individual rights, freedom, equality, and self-government
- Analyze developmental influences on the core political principles of American government, including Greek democracy, Roman republicanism, the Judeo-Christian heritage, and the European philosophers John Locke, Charles de Montesquieu, and William Blackstone
- Analyze the British heritage that fostered development of the core political principles of American government, including the Magna Carta, the Petition of Right (1628), the Glorious Revolution, the English Bill of Rights, and the Mayflower Compact
- Evaluate significant American founding documents in relation to core political principles, including the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, state constitutions, the United States Constitution, The Federalist papers, and the Bill of Rights
- Evaluate significant American historical documents in relation to the application of core principles (e.g., the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, the Ordinance of Nullification, the Seneca Falls Declaration, the Emancipation Proclamation, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"), the eleventh through the twenty-seventh amendments to the Constitution, and critical Supreme Court cases
- Evaluate the Constitution as the written framework of the United States government, including expression of the core principles of limited government, federalism, checks and balances, separation of powers, rule of law, popular sovereignty, republicanism, individual rights, freedom, equality, and self-government
- Evaluate the formal and informal structure, role, responsibilities, and authority of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the national government as the embodiments of constitutional principles
- Analyze federalism and its application in the United States, including

- the concepts of enumerated, concurrent, and reserved powers; the meaning of the ninth and tenth amendments; the principle of states' rights; the promotion of limited government; the protection of individual rights; and the potential for conflict among the levels of government
- Analyze the organization and responsibilities of local and state governments in the United States federal system, including the role of state constitutions, the limitations on state governments, the typical organization of state governments, the relationship between state and local governments, and the major responsibilities of state governments
- Evaluate the role of the citizen in the American political process, including civic responsibilities and the interaction between the citizen and government
- Analyze the process of political socialization and its relation to political participation
- Evaluate the role and function of common avenues utilized by citizens in political participation, including political parties, voting, polls, interest groups, and community service
- Analyze the process through which citizens monitor and influence public policy, including political parties, interest groups, the media, lobbying, donations, issue advocacy, and candidate support
- Evaluate the importance of civil rights and civil liberties for citizens in American political culture and the protective role of the national government through the Bill of Rights, the judicial system, and the Fourteenth Amendment
- Explain how fundamental values, principles, and rights often conflict within the American political system; why these conflicts arise; and how these conflicts are and can be addressed

## Activities

Have your child:

- Subscribe to a local newspaper or an online news service and review the daily or weekly news with your child. Relate the news to topics being studied in your child's classes.
- Watch/listen to the nightly news on television with your child. Talk about stories related to the federal government.
- Ask adult friends or relatives about their role as citizens
- Keep a journal or a log of the activities of political parties within your local area
- Volunteer to help a local political party or a local service organization
- Take your child with you when you vote in a local, state, or national election. Talk about the election process and have him/her research the process of registering to vote at age 18.
- Visit our state or national capital. Discuss the branches of government and their responsibilities.
- Encourage your child to be a page for one of your senators in Washington, DC
- Help your child write a letter or an email to a representative or senator at the local, state, or national level about an issue that is important to him/her

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## Books

- Baker, Frank. *Political Campaigns and Political Advertising*
- Baker, Ross K. *House and Senate*
- De Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America, Vols. I and II*
- Holder, Angela Roddey. *The Meaning of the Constitution. 2nd Edition*
- Jefferson, Thomas and Founding Fathers. *Words of Our Fathers: Declarations of Freedom*
- Maisel, L. Sandy. *The Parties Respond: Changes in the American Political System*
- Paine, Thomas. *The Age of Reason*
- Paine, Thomas. *The Rights of Man*
- Wilson, James Q. *What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*

## Web Sites

- Civil Rights Act of 1964 – [www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act/](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act/)
- Democratic Party – [www.democrats.org](http://www.democrats.org)
- Declaration of Independence – [www.usconstitution.net/declar.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/declar.html)
- Federal Government Statistics for Kids – [www.fedstats.gov/kids/index.html](http://www.fedstats.gov/kids/index.html)
- Official Government Kids' Site – [www.kids.gov](http://www.kids.gov)
- Public Broadcast System (PBS) – [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)
- Republican Party – [www.rnc.org](http://www.rnc.org)
- State and Local Government – [www.statelocalgov.net](http://www.statelocalgov.net)
- Time Online – [www.time.com](http://www.time.com)
- U.S. Census Bureau – [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
- U.S. Department of State – [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)
- U.S. Federal Government – [www.fedworld.gov](http://www.fedworld.gov)
- U.S. Government Web Portal – [www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov)
- White House – [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)