

Course Objectives for The American Citizen

Listed below are the key concepts that will be covered in this course. Essentially, this content will be covered in each chapter of the textbook (Richard J. Hardy's *Government in America*) and through our discussions in class.

UNIT 1: FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Unit Overview

Unit One introduces students to the basic elements of government generally, and American government specifically. Chapter 1 opens by discussing the characteristics of states (in the sense of nations) and then focuses on theories of government, the functions of governments, their different forms, the principles that guide American democracy, and the concept of citizenship. Chapter 2 deals with the origins of American government. It describes English political traditions brought to America, forms of colonial government, the upheaval and aftermath of the American Revolution, and the drafting and ratification of the Constitution. Chapter 3 explains the principles that form the foundation of the Constitution, describes the amendment process, and discusses informal methods of changing the Constitution. In Chapter 4, the division of power between the national and state governments is discussed, along with the responsibilities of both levels. The chapter explains how the national government's power has increased over time, and discusses the ways in which federalism links the fifty states.

Chapter 1: Principles of Government

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- identify the four basic characteristics of a state.
- describe two theories of government, including the social contract.
- explain the four common areas of government policy.
- name three forms of government based on geographical divisions of authority.
- distinguish among four classifications of government based on the number of people who have power.
- describe how civil liberties and civil rights are related to the principle of individual worth.
- explain four political principles that guide American democracy.
- explain the significance of the Fourteenth Amendment to U.S. citizenship.
- identify three ways in which a person can become a naturalized citizen.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to the principles of government.

Chapter 2: Origins of American Government

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- identify and explain four political principles brought from England that have influenced American political thought.
- explain why British policy toward its American colonies changed in the 1760s.
- describe how the colonists' reaction to British policies led to the First Continental Congress.
- identify and explain the three parts of the Declaration of Independence.
- list the reasons why the Articles of Confederation were ineffective.
- tell how the Connecticut Compromise and the "three-fifths" compromise enabled the members of the Constitutional Convention to plan a government.
- describe the process of ratifying the Constitution.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to the origins of American government.

Chapter 3: The Constitution: Supreme Law of the Land

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- explain how popular sovereignty is ensured in the Constitution and in specific amendments.
- describe the three branches of government and their functions.
- state the purpose of the system of checks and balances and give examples.
- describe how federalism, combined with the supremacy of national law, has contributed to the government's endurance.
- explain how civilian control of government is built into the Constitution.
- identify ways of proposing amendments to the Constitution.
- explain reasons for the proposal and passage of amendments.
- give examples of informal changes that have affected interpretation of the Constitution.
- identify names and terms related to our constitution.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to our constitution.

Chapter 4: Federalism: The Division of Power

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- explain how the national government possesses delegated, implied and inherent powers.
- name powers denied to both the national and state governments.
- list the ways in which the states' reserved powers may be categorized.
- name powers held concurrently by the national and state governments.
- describe obligations of the states to the federal government.
- describe responsibilities of the federal government to the states.
- explain how views of federalism have changed since the Constitution was written.
- name ways in which the power of the national government has increased.
- describe both formal and informal ways in which states cooperate among themselves.
- identify important names related to federalism.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to federalism.

UNIT 2: CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Unit Overview

Unit Two examines the civil rights and liberties enjoyed by U.S. citizens. In Chapter 5, students learn about the First Amendment freedoms of religion, speech, press, and assembly, as well as the right of citizens to complain to the government about their grievances against it – as well as what these freedoms and rights are and how their meaning has been interpreted by the Supreme Court. Chapter 6 deals with the civil liberties guaranteed through “due process of law”: limited investigation, rights of the accused, right to a fair trial, and right to privacy. Chapter 7 traces the progress in civil rights that has been made in this century. It describes the civil rights movement and discusses how, more and more, protection under the law is applied to all Americans.

Chapter 5: Civil Liberties -- The First Amendment Freedoms

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- describe how the First Amendment prevents the government from supporting specific religions.
- explain how the "free exercise" clause has been interpreted.
- explain the three categories of free speech identified by the Supreme Court.
- explain why freedom of speech is important in a democracy and why it may nevertheless sometimes be limited.
- explain the importance of freedom of the press in a democracy.
- distinguish between the protections given to the printed press and those given to other media, such as radio and television.

- describe the kinds of assembly given First Amendment protection.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to civil rights and civil liberties in our constitutional democracy.
- identify important names and documents as they relate civil rights and civil liberties in our constitutional democracy.

Chapter 6: Civil Liberties -- Due Process of Law

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- explain the importance of "due process of law" and distinguish between substantive and procedural due process.
- trace the process by which the protections in the Bill of Rights have been extended to the states.
- explain how the Fourth Amendment protects people's bodies, homes, and property against unreasonable searches and seizures.
- give reasons why the Fourth Amendment and the exclusionary rule sometimes conflict with the need for evidence in law enforcement.
- describe three ways in which electronic surveillance by law enforcement officials has been limited.
- list Fifth Amendment provisions that protect the rights of people accused of crimes.
- list requirements for a fair trial established in the Sixth Amendment.
- give examples of how the right to legal advice has been expanded since 1789.
- explain the Eighth Amendment guarantee of fair and humane treatment for prisoners and those convicted of crimes.
- explain the constitutional bases for decisions upholding the "right to privacy" in certain areas of people's lives.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to due process of law.

Chapter 7: Civil Rights -- Equal Protection of the Law

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- identify the specific provisions and purposes of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments.
- trace the development of legalized discrimination against people of color in the U.S. and the changes in attitude that began in the 1930s.
- explain the significance and consequences of the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.
- describe the goals and strategies of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.
- list significant civil rights legislation of the 1960s and 1970s.
- name minority groups other than African Americans that have gained fuller civil rights and give examples of their accomplishments.
- compare opposing viewpoints on affirmative action.
- trace women's efforts to gain the right to vote.
- name three areas in which laws and Supreme Court decisions have reduced discrimination against women.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to equal protection of the law.

UNIT THREE: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE

Unit Overview

Unit Three examines the role of citizens in the political system of the United States. In Chapter 8, students learn how public opinion affects government policy. This chapter discusses American ideology and political culture, as well as methods of measuring public opinion. Chapter 9 investigates interest groups: why they are formed and how they influence public officials. Included are descriptions of the various types of groups and the ways such groups exert their influence through lobbying and the use of other persuasive techniques.

Chapter 10 presents political parties as essential American institutions. It describes their historical development and their roles in a democracy, and compares the Democratic and Republican parties. It also describes the role that third parties have played in the democratic system. Chapter 11 describes the political process, from nomination to election day. It examines the legal basis for suffrage and provides a detailed look at the American voter.

Chapter 8: Public Opinion in American Democracy

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- identify the factors that determine how much influence public opinion has on government policy.
- state the relationship between ideology and public opinion.
- identify the elements of American political culture and give examples.
- explain how family, school, peer groups and the media contribute to political socialization.
- describe methods used to measure public opinion.
- explain why scientific polling is a more reliable method of measuring public opinion than traditional methods.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to public opinion in American democracy.

Chapter 9: Interest Groups and Their Influence

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- describe the characteristics of an interest group.
- explain why people join interest groups.
- identify the factors which make interest groups effective.
- assess the role of interest groups in the American political system.
- distinguish among economic interest groups, social action groups, and single-issue groups, and give examples of each.
- identify the tactics used by interest groups to influence elections and public policy makers.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to interest groups in American politics.

Chapter 10: Political Parties

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- identify the roles played by political parties in American government.
- distinguish among one-party, two-party, and multi-party systems.
- assess the role of third parties in the American political system.
- explain how political parties developed in the United States.
- explain how the Civil War and Great Depression affected political party alignments in the United States.
- compare and contrast the present-day Republican and Democratic parties.
- explain how the major parties are organized and describe the functions of national, state and local party organizations.
- identify general policy differences between the two major parties.
- identify trends in political party affiliation in the United States.
- identify important names related to political parties in America's political system.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to parties in American politics.

Chapter 11: Politics in Action

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- distinguish between primary and general elections and among the four types of direct primaries.
- identify methods other than the direct primary used to select political candidates.
- trace the steps in the presidential nomination process.

- identify the roles played by a presidential candidate's campaign staff.
- assess the importance of media coverage to the presidential nomination and selection process.
- explain how political campaigns are financed.
- cite ways in which federal laws have been used to overcome voting discrimination.
- identify voting requirements common to most American states.
- make generalizations about the effects of socio-economic factors on voter behavior and describe trends in voter participation.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to the American political process.

UNIT FOUR: THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Unit Overview

Unit Four presents a discussion about Congress – its powers, members and procedures. Chapter 12 begins by clarifying for students the powers of the legislative body and then examines the roles of members of Congress. Chapter 13 concentrates on lawmaking, describing the step-by-step process from the introduction of a bill to its final passage or veto. Together, these chapters familiarize students not only with the organization of Congress but also with its functions.

Chapter 12: Congress: Its Powers, Structure, and Members

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- list legislative and non-legislative functions of Congress.
- distinguish between implied and expressed powers and explain the importance of the elastic clause of the Constitution.
- compare the House and Senate with regard to length of term, method of filling vacancies, size of constituency represented, and qualifications for membership.
- explain the importance of the "one person, one vote" principle in congressional politics and in representation in state government.
- explain how population shifts have affected reapportionment and redistricting at the state and national levels since World War Two.
- identify privileges and benefits enjoyed by their representatives at the local, state, and national levels.
- explain why both houses of the state and national legislatures have a code of conduct, and indicate the penalties for misconduct.
- distinguish among the delegate, trustee, and politico roles of state and national representatives.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to the legislative branch.

Chapter 13: The Lawmaking Process

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- explain why the 20th Amendment was passed.
- explain the rules for congressional sessions.
- identify the informal rules that play a part in congressional activity.
- identify the key leadership positions in each house of Congress and describe the roles played by congressional leaders in the legislative process.
- give examples of the various agencies that provide support services to Congress.
- distinguish among the types of congressional committees and evaluate the role of committees in the lawmaking process.
- explain how members of Congress are assigned to committees and how committee chairpersons are selected.
- trace the steps by which a bill becomes a law.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to the lawmaking process.

UNIT 5: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Unit Overview

Unit Five discusses the function and organization of the executive branch of the national government. In Chapters 14 and 15, the various roles and responsibilities of the President and Vice President are discussed, and procedures are outlined for the transfer of presidential power. The history and operations of the Electoral College are also examined. Other elements of government administration are covered in Chapter 16, including the Executive Office, Cabinet, independent agencies, and civil service system.

Chapter 14: The Office of President of the United States

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- distinguish between the roles that presidents play as chief executive and chief of state.
- identify the written and unwritten qualifications for holding the office of President of the U.S.
- describe the salary and fringe benefits the President receives.
- explain how tradition, acts of legislative bodies such as Congress, and constitutional amendments have affected the length of the President's terms of office, the order of succession to each office, and the procedures for removing presidents from office.
- explain how the 20th, 22nd, and 25th amendments relate to the presidency.
- cite ways in which the vice presidential role has changed over time.
- explain the origin and history of the Electoral College system.
- evaluate proposals for reform of the Electoral College system.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to the office of the President of the U.S.
- identify important names and documents as they relate to the office of the President of the U.S.

Chapter 15: The Powers of the Executive Branch

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- identify the powers presidents exercise in domestic and foreign affairs.
- classify presidents' powers as executive, legislative, or judicial.
- identify checks or constraints that other branches of the federal government exerts on the powers of presidents.
- distinguish between treaties and executive agreements, and explain how modern presidents have used executive agreements to conduct foreign policy.
- describe the president's military powers.
- trace the developments that led to the passage of the War Powers Act, and explain how this act affects the actions of the president.
- cite personality traits, political skills, and attitudes that affect the performance of presidents.
- explain how a president's popularity is measured, and identify factors that influence their approval ratings.

Chapter 16: Government at Work

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- identify the agencies that make up the Executive Office of the President and state their functions.
- distinguish between the pyramid and circular styles of executive branch management.
- explain how Cabinet departments are organized and give reasons for the differences in the amount of influence each one has with the President.
- trace the changing role of Cabinet members and explain why some member may leave their posts.
- distinguish among independent regulatory commissions, government corporations, and independent executive agencies.

- assess the effects of deregulation on the economy, the federal and state governments, and on our society.
- explain how federal agencies work with outside contractors.
- give reasons for the growth of the merit system in the federal government.
- cite changes resulting from the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978.
- state benefits and drawbacks of working under the civil service system.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to the federal bureaucracy.

UNIT 6: THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

Unit Overview

Article III of the Constitution establishes the judicial branch of the national government. It creates the Supreme Court and authorizes Congress to set up the rest of the federal courts. Congress began this process with the Judiciary Act of 1789 and over the past 200+ years has expanded that system. In fashioning the nation's judicial structure, the framers of the Constitution, and then Congress, carefully balanced the rights of the individual and society's need for laws. The results of this combination are outlined in Chapters 17 and 18, which review how the law has developed and how it is applied to both the civil and criminal setting.

Chapter 17: The Supreme Court and the Federal Courts System

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- state the functions and jurisdictions of the U.S. Supreme Court and other federal courts and tell how they interact.
- describe the U.S. Supreme Court's constitutional relationship with the executive and legislative branches of the federal government.
- cite examples of important federal court cases.
- distinguish between the purposes for which constitutional and legislative courts were created.
- describe the appointment process for federal judges.
- describe how court cases reach the U.S. supreme courts.
- describe how other factors influence decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to the judicial branch at the federal state levels.
- identify important names and documents as they relate the judicial branch at the federal state levels.

Chapter 18: Law and the Legal Process

When students have completed this chapter, they will be able to:

- describe the sources of American law, including the Constitution, statutory law, common law, and courts of equity, and identify the importance of each in the U.S. legal system.
- distinguish between private law and public law, and identify the branches of each.
- describe the functions of the U.S. Justice Department and how it is organized.
- list and explain pre-trial procedures.
- list and explain the steps in a typical trial.
- explain what forms imprisonment may take and on what bases a prisoner may be released.
- understand the meaning of specialized terminology related to the law and the legal process.
- identify important names and documents as they relate the law and the legal process.