

American Civics and Government Course outline and unit descriptions

Unit One - Introduction to Government

Topics covered:

Forms of Government.

Why is the United States a Republic?

Introduction to American Government.

Unit Two - Legal Codes and Political Philosophies that Influenced the United States.

Topics covered:

Legal codes from the past that influenced the United States.

Political Philosophers and their ideas that influenced the United States.

Unit Three - Key Ideas behind the creation of the United States.

Topics covered:

Constitutional debates and compromises

Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation

Fundamental principles of the United States Constitution

Ratification debates between the Federalists and the Anti Federalists.

Unit Four - Structure and Powers of the U.S. Federal government.

Topics covered:

Interpreting the U.S. Constitution

Express v Implied Powers

Congressional powers

Presidential powers

Judicial powers

Checks and Balances

Separation of Powers

Unit Five - A Survey of the Federal System of the United States Government.

Topics covered:

Federalism.

Relationships between Federal and state governments.

Enumerated, Implied, Reserved, Denied, and Concurrent Powers.

Balance of powers between state and federal governments.

The Supremacy Clause and the U.S. Constitution.

State and Congressional roles in amending the U.S. Constitution.

Unit Six - The Bill of Rights: The Ultimate Protector of our Civil Rights.

Topics covered:

Amendments 1-10 of the U.S. Constitution

Origin of the U.S. Bill of Rights

Unit Seven - Civil Rights and Civil Liberties: What is the difference and why do these rights matter?

Topics covered:

Civil Rights.

Civil Liberties.

Due Process.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Extension of voting rights.

Unit Eight - The Legislative Branch of the U.S. Government.

Topics covered:

Qualifications to become a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Qualifications to become a member of the U.S. Senate.

How House and Senate members are elected.

The impact of the 17th Amendment on Senate elections.

The terms of office for House and Senate members.

The powers of the House.

The powers of the Senate.

How a bill becomes law.

House and Senate leadership positions and their responsibilities.

Unit Nine - Presidential Impeachment: Conflict between the branches of the U.S. government.

Topics covered:

The impeachment process.

The impeachment of Andrew Johnson.

The impeachment of Bill Clinton.

The impeachment of Donald Trump

Unit Ten - The Executive Branch of the U.S. government.

Topics covered:

Formal and Informal qualifications to be President of the United States.

The President's term of office and the line of Presidential succession as these topics pertain to the 20th, 22nd and 25th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

The Electoral College and the election of the U.S. President (The 12th Amendment).

The roles of the U.S. President.

The federal bureaucracy and the President's cabinet.

The assets available to carry out the will of the U.S. President.

Unit Eleven - The Judicial Branch of the U.S. government.

Topics covered:

The selection and approval process for federal judges.

Jurisdiction for the Supreme Court, federal courts and state courts.

The impact of John Marshall, *Marbury v. Madison*, and the principle of Judicial Review.

How cases are heard and decided before the Supreme Court of the U.S. (SCOTUS).

Legal philosophies: Judicial Restraint v. Judicial Activism.

Unit Twelve - The Criminal Justice Process.

Topics covered:

Due process rights as they relate to the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 14th amendments.

Different types of crimes.

Procedures in the criminal justice process.

The different types of sentences a convicted person can receive.

Legal procedures related to civil suits with criminal proceedings.

Unit Thirteen - U.S. Public Opinion: What is it and why does it matter?

Topics covered:

What is Public Opinion?

Measuring public opinion.

Scientific polls v straw polls.

Elements of a scientific poll.

The “Universe” and scientific polling.

Random sampling.

What makes scientific polling valid?

Manipulating public opinion.

Television, public opinion, and the U.S. Presidency.

Factors that influence public opinion.

Mass media and public opinion.

Unit Fourteen - Duties of American Citizens.

Topics covered:

Voter registration

Registering for Selective Service

Unit Fifteen - Local, State, and National Elections.

Topics covered:

U.S. Political parties: Origins and development

The nomination and election process.

Campaign funding.

The influence of special interest groups on the election process.

Policy changes and Supreme Court rulings that have impacted the campaign finance process.

The influence of media coverage, campaign advertising, and public opinion polls on our election process.

Unit Sixteen - American Ideals versus Totalitarian Ideology.

Topics covered:

The role of government in Totalitarian Systems.

Comparison of the structures, power-base, and decision-making processes of American democracy to those of totalitarian governments.

Comparison of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in American democracy to those in totalitarian governments.

Conflict of ideals between American democracy and those of totalitarianism.

An explanation for the causes for the growth and decline of totalitarian forms of government.

American policies designed to resist the spread of Totalitarianism.