

US Government

Course Overview

US Government is the study of the founding principles of democracy in the United States, the structures and details of how the government functions, and the role of the individual citizen in participating in that democracy. In US Government, you will learn about the principles and events that led to the founding of the United States in the eighteenth century; examine how the operations of the US government are spread among three branches of government and distributed between the national, state, and federal levels of government; explore the role of the individual citizen in the operations of the government; and, finally, apply these concepts to understanding the concrete areas of foreign, domestic, and economic policy. You'll explore timelines to gain an understanding of how events link to each other and to the structures of government that exist today, and you'll analyze historical documents for a firsthand sense of how government structures were designed. You'll also gather evidence from relevant documents and historical texts to develop credible explanations of how and why the government exists as it does. You'll then use that evidence to express viewpoints on the operations of government by writing essays and creating presentations about topics of relevance to modern US citizens.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, you will:

- Build a foundation in how political systems function in current and historical societies.
- Solidify an understanding of the founding of democracy in the United States, including the events leading to the American Revolution and the outcomes of the revolution.
- Examine in detail the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.
- Develop a deep understanding of the structure, powers, and operations of the three branches of the US government.
- Examine how different levels of government interact in the United States between the local, state, and national levels.

- Explore the rights of US citizens and the responsibilities of citizenship in promoting a vibrant democracy.
- Understand the process for electing officials in the United States and the role of political parties in that process.
- Analyze the formation of foreign and domestic policy in the United States and the impact those areas of policy have on US citizens.
- Build an understanding of the operations of the US economy and how the government interacts with the economy.

General Skills

To participate in this course, you should be able to do the following:

- Complete basic operations with word processing software, such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs.
- Complete basic operations with presentation software, such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Docs presentation.
- Perform online research using various search engines and library databases.
- Communicate through email and participate in discussion boards.

For a complete list of general skills that are required for participation in online courses, refer to the Prerequisites section of the Plato Student Orientation document, found at the beginning of this course.

Credit Value

US Government is a 0.5-credit course.

Course Materials

- Notebook
- Pencils or ink pens
- Computer with Internet connection and speakers or headphones
- Microsoft Word or equivalent
- Microsoft PowerPoint or equivalent

Course Pacing Guide

This course description and pacing guide is intended to help you stay on schedule with your work. Note that your course instructor may modify the schedule to meet the specific needs of your class.

Unit 1: Foundations of US Democracy

Summary

This unit focuses on the foundations and development of democracy in the United States. It begins by explaining and comparing political systems and governments of the past and present. The unit focuses primarily on founding documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, delving into the context of the historical events that led to each document.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 1	Syllabus and Plato Student Orientation <i>Review the Plato Student Orientation and Course Syllabus at the beginning of this course.</i>	Course Orientation
4 days: 2–5	Political Systems <i>Examine and compare historical and contemporary political systems and governments.</i>	Lesson
5 days: 6–10	The Development of US Democracy <i>Investigate the development of democracy in the United States.</i>	Lesson
5 days: 11–15	The Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation <i>Examine the Declaration of Independence and the government created by the Articles of Confederation.</i>	Lesson
4 days 16–19	Writing the Constitution <i>Examine the process of creating the Constitution.</i>	Lesson
5 days 20–24	The Constitution and the Bill of Rights <i>Investigate the principles and structure of the Constitution and the protections afforded by the Bill of Rights.</i>	Lesson
3 days: 25–27	Unit Activity and Discussion—Unit 1	Unit Activity Discussion

1 day: 28	Posttest—Unit 1	Assessment
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Unit 2: Branches and Levels of Government

Summary

This unit focuses on the branches and levels of the US government. It examines the structure and powers of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the government. The unit also includes an analysis of the powers given to the local, state, and national governments.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
5 days: 29–33	The Legislative Branch <i>Examine the structure and powers of the legislative branch.</i>	Lesson
5 days: 34–38	The Executive Branch <i>Examine the structure and powers of the executive branch.</i>	Lesson
5 days: 39–43	The Judicial Branch <i>Examine the structure and powers of the judicial branch.</i>	Lesson
5 days: 44–48	Local, State, and National Government <i>Analyze the powers given to the national, state, and local governments.</i>	Lesson
3 days: 49–51	Unit Activity and Discussion—Unit 2	Unit Activity Discussion
1 day: 52	Posttest—Unit 2	Assessment

Unit 3: Civil Rights, Citizenship, and Civic Participation

Summary

This unit focuses on the rights and responsibilities of citizens of the United States. The unit examines the rights bestowed and protected by the Constitution. The unit also analyzes how elections work and the role of the party system in the US political system.

The unit concludes by examining the civic duties of citizens and methods for citizens to participate in the workings of the US government and society.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
4 days: 53–56	Civil Rights <i>Examine rights that are granted and protected by the Constitution.</i>	Lesson
4 days: 57–60	Political Parties, Elections, and Elected Officials <i>Examine how elections and the party system play a role in the US political process.</i>	Lesson
4 days: 61–64	Citizenship and Civic Participation <i>Examine the duties associated with civic life and citizenship in the United States.</i>	Lesson
3 days: 65–67	Unit Activity and Discussion—Unit 3	Unit Activity Discussion
1 day: 68	Posttest—Unit 3	Assessment

Unit 4: Foreign and Domestic Policy

Summary

This unit focuses on the foreign and domestic policy of the United States. It analyzes the formation of both foreign and domestic policies in the United States and the impact those policy areas have had on US life. It also examines the basic principles and systems underlying the US economy, as well as the role of the government in regulating the economy.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
4 days: 69–72	Foreign Policy <i>Analyze how foreign policy impacts the United States.</i>	Lesson
4 days: 73–76	Domestic Policy <i>Analyze how domestic policy impacts the United States.</i>	Lesson

4 days: 77–80	Economic Principles and Policies <i>Examine basic economic principles and systems.</i>	Lesson
4 days: 81–84	Government and the Economy <i>Examine the role of government in regulating the economy.</i>	Lesson
3 days: 85–87	Unit Activity and Discussion —Unit 4	Unit Activity Discussion
1 day: 88	Posttest—Unit 4	Assessment
1 day: 89	Semester Review	
1 day: 90	End-of-Semester Test	Assessment