

Foundations of American Democracy



Developing Understanding

BIG IDEA 1

Constitutionalism **CON**

- Why are there debates about the balance of power between the federal and state governments?

BIG IDEA 2

Liberty and Order **LOR**

- Is the Bill of Rights necessary? Why or why not?

BIG IDEA 4

Competing Policy-Making Interests **PMI**

- How does the Constitution affect you and the choices you make?

More than 200 years after the U.S. Constitution was ratified, the compromises that were necessary for ratification—which in some instances led to ambiguity—continue to fuel debate and discussion over how best to protect liberty, equality, order, and private property. This first unit sets the foundation for the course by examining how the framers of the Constitution set up a structure of government intended to stand the test of time. Compromises were made during the Constitutional Convention and ratification debates, and these compromises focused on the proper balance between individual freedom, social order, and equality of opportunity. In subsequent units, students will apply their understanding of the Constitution to the institutions of government and people’s daily lives.

Building the Disciplinary Practices



In the study of government and political science, text-based qualitative sources help political scientists understand how governmental and political institutions and actors function and the reasons for their behaviors. These sources are often actually arguments about what the government does (or should do) and how these actions impact citizens and other people in the country.

In this course, students also learn to write their own arguments. Arguments should be organized around a specific reasoning process that aligns to the purpose for writing (e.g., to explain similarities and differences among political principles, or to explain political processes). Choosing the right reasoning process allows students to establish the line of reasoning for the argument and helps them organize the essay.

In their arguments, students should write claims that take a position, going beyond simply stating facts. Claims should also include additional information that sets




















up the evidence. This is usually developed through a “because” statement, as in “My claim is the strongest because . . .”, which is then followed by specific relevant evidence. Evidence is relevant when it relates to and supports the claim.

Preparing for the AP Exam

The AP U.S. Government and Politics course requires students to apply their knowledge in a variety of contexts and to real-world scenarios. It’s not enough for students to know the definition of governmental terms and concepts. On the AP Exam, they will be asked to show a deeper understanding of how these concepts actually work, often by describing and explaining an interaction or application within a given scenario on both multiple-choice and free-response questions.

Students often struggle with explanations. They may define or describe a concept but not fully explain the how or why in the context of the question. Have students practice by asking them to explain the steps, stages, and interactions of processes; explain and link causes and effects; or explain the significance of similarities and differences.

UNIT AT A GLANCE

Enduring Understanding	Topic	Suggested Skill	Class Periods
			-16/-8 CLASS PERIODS
LOR-1	1.1 Ideals of Democracy 	 Describe political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors illustrated in different scenarios in context.	
	1.2 Types of Democracy 	 Describe the author's claim(s), perspective, evidence, and reasoning.	
CON-1	1.3 Government Power and Individual Rights 	 Describe political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors.	
	1.4 Challenges of the Articles of Confederation 	 Explain how the author's argument or perspective relates to political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors.	
	1.5 Ratification of the U.S. Constitution 	 Explain how political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors apply to different scenarios in context.	
PMI-1	1.6 Principles of American Government 	 Explain how the author's argument or perspective relates to political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors.	
CON-2	1.7 Relationship Between the States and Federal Government 	 Articulate a defensible claim/thesis.	
	1.8 Constitutional Interpretations of Federalism  	 Describe the facts, reasoning, decision, and majority opinion of required Supreme Court cases.	
	1.9 Federalism in Action	 Support the argument using relevant evidence.	
 Go to AP Classroom to assign the Personal Progress Check for Unit 1. Review the results in class to identify and address any student misunderstandings.			

 Required Foundational Document  Required Supreme Court Case

SAMPLE INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The sample activities on this page are optional and are offered to provide possible ways to incorporate various instructional approaches into the classroom. Teachers do not need to use these activities or instructional approaches and are free to alter or edit them. The examples below were developed in partnership with teachers from the AP community to share ways that they approach teaching the content and skills in this unit. Please refer to the Instructional Approaches section beginning on p. 139 for more examples of activities and strategies.

Activity	Topic	Sample Activity
1	1.2 and 1.3	Close Reading When students are reading the required foundational documents, such as <i>Federalist No. 10</i> and <i>Brutus No. 1</i> , have them highlight relevant words and passages that support the authors' claims. Ask students to connect ideas outlined in the documents to the Federalist and Antifederalist views of how our government was founded.
2	1.3 and 1.6	Think-Pair-Share Give students a question that requires them to connect Madison's argument in <i>Federalist No. 51</i> to a) the structure of the three branches of government established in the Constitution and b) his argument about factions in <i>Federalist No. 10</i> .
3	1.8	Case Notes Have students create case notes for <i>McCulloch v. Maryland</i> and <i>United States v. Lopez</i> that include the following information: facts of the case, majority opinion, and the reasoning (constitutional question) for the majority opinion. Make sure students focus on the constitutional reasoning behind the Court's decision.
4	1.9	Making Connections Write concepts related to one of the course big ideas on index cards, place them in a box, and have students pick a card at random. Give students a few minutes to gather and recall information about the term, and then pair students and ask them to find the connection between their concepts. Finally, ask the pairs to write a brief explanation of how the concepts are related.



Unit Planning Notes

Use the space below to plan your approach to the unit. Consider how to introduce your students to the required documents, including the Constitution, and its development and principles.

SUGGESTED SKILL

 **Concept Application**

1.D

Describe political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors illustrated in different scenarios in context.



OPTIONAL READINGS AND ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES (NOT REQUIRED)

- Thomas Hobbes's definition of an anarchic "state of nature" in the absence of government, as in the failed state of Somalia
- The Mayflower Compact (1620)
- John Locke's *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1690)
- Baron de Montesquieu's ideas about separating powers in government found in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748)

AVAILABLE RESOURCE

- Classroom Resources > Analytical Reading (Declaration of Independence)

TOPIC 1.1

Ideals of Democracy

Required Course Content

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

LOR-1

A balance between governmental power and individual rights has been a hallmark of American political development.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

LOR-1.A

Explain how democratic ideals are reflected in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

LOR-1.A.1

The U.S. government is based on ideas of limited government, including natural rights, popular sovereignty, republicanism, and social contract.

LOR-1.A.2

The **Declaration of Independence**, drafted by Jefferson with help from Adams and Franklin, provides a foundation for popular sovereignty, while the **U.S. Constitution** drafted at the Philadelphia Convention and led by George Washington, with important contributions from Madison, Hamilton, and members of the "Grand Committee," provides the blueprint for a unique form of political democracy in the U.S.

REQUIRED FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENT

- Declaration of Independence