



BRI

Government & Politics

Civics for the American Experiment

Pacing Guide

Semester-Long Course




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Overview

This resource provides teachers with curriculum support to implement the Government and Politics curriculum. It offers a brief overview of the scope and sequence of content, along with a pacing guide for a semester-long course. This resource helps high school educators seamlessly integrate the materials into their classrooms, whether they have 45 minutes a day or 90 minutes a day of dedicated time.

Unit 1 - Scope and Sequence

Number of Days	Unit 1:	Unit 1: Overview	Unit 1: Guiding Questions
10 Days + 1 Assessment	Foundations of American Self-Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principles and Virtues The Federalist Papers Founding Documents <p>Understand the framers' intentions.</p> <p>Explore concepts like limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances, and popular sovereignty.</p>	How and why was the United States Government formed?

AP Required Foundation Documents and SCOTUS Cases

- Federalist #10, 51, 70, 78
- Brutus 1
- Declaration of Independence
- Articles of Confederation
- Constitution
- McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)

Unit 2 - Scope and Sequence

Number of Days	Unit 2:	Unit 2: Overview	Unit 2: Guiding Questions
5 Days + 1 Assessment	Federalism	Examine the relationship between the federal and state governments.	How does the division of power and shared responsibilities between federal and state governments affect the authority and purpose of government at each level?

AP Required Foundation Documents and SCOTUS Cases

- Constitution
- U.S. v. Lopez (1995)
- McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)
- Roe v. Wade (1973)

Unit 3 - Scope and Sequence

Number of Days	Unit 3:	Unit 3: Overview	Unit 3: Guiding Questions
5 Days + 1 Assessment	The Legislative Branch	Examine the structure, powers, and functions of Congress.	How does the structure of government influence the process of lawmaking and reflect the will of the people?

AP Required Foundation Documents and SCOTUS Cases

- Constitution

Unit 4 - Scope and Sequence

Number of Days	Unit 4:	Unit 4: Overview	Unit 4: Guiding Questions
5 Days + 1 Assessment	The President and the Bureaucracy	Analyze the powers and roles of the executive branch, including the bureaucracy.	What is the legitimate exercise of executive powers?

AP Required Foundation Documents and SCOTUS Cases

- Constitution
- Federalist #70

Unit 5 - Scope and Sequence

Number of Days	Unit 5:	Unit 5: Overview	Unit 5: Guiding Questions
5 Days + 1 Assessment	The Judiciary	Explore the role of the Supreme Court and the judicial review process. Analyze the structure of the court system.	What is the role of courts in the American constitutional order?

AP Required Foundation Documents and SCOTUS Cases

- Constitution
- Federalist #78
- Marbury v. Madison (1803)

Unit 6 - Scope and Sequence

Number of Days	Unit 2:	Unit 2: Overview	Unit 2: Guiding Questions
13 Days + 1 Assessment	Political Participations and Elections	Examines how political parties, interest groups, public opinion, political ideologies, and the media each shape and influence the U.S. political system.	How do we work through existing institutions (civic and political institutions) to achieve a healthy civic society?

AP Required Foundation Documents and SCOTUS Cases

- Federalist #10
- Brutus 1
- Baker v. Carr (1962)
- Shaw v. Reno (1993)
- Citizens United v. FEC (2010)

Unit 7 - Scope and Sequence

Number of Days	Unit 7:	Unit 7: Overview	Unit 7: Guiding Questions
15 Days + 1 Assessment	Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	Examine how the Bill of Rights, constitutional amendments, and Supreme Court decisions define individual freedoms, limit government power, and address issues of equality and discrimination.	How do individuals, groups, and the government interact to protect and promote civil rights and civil liberties in the United States?

AP Required Foundation Documents and SCOTUS Cases

- Letter from Birmingham Jail
- Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972)
- Tinker v. Des Moines (1969)
- Schenck v. United States (1919)
- New York Times v. United States (1971)
- Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
- Engel v. Vitale (1962)
- McDonald v. Chicago (2010)
- Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)

Total Units	Total Instruction Days	Total Assessment Days	Total Instruction + Assessment Days
7 Units	58 Days	7 Days	65 Days

Calendar

The table is organized by unit and day. Topics are listed along with resources. Choose the resources that will work best for your students.

Unit 1: Foundations of Our Government				
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Principles and Virtues	The Constitutional Convention	The Constitutional Convention	Influence on the Founders	Influence on the Founders
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Influence on the Founders	Influence on the Founders	The Constitutional Convention	The Constitution	The Bill of Rights
Day 11				
Assessment				

Unit 2: Federalism				
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Federalism	The Founding and Federalism	The Founding and Federalism	Federalism Case Studies	Federalism Case Studies
Day 6				
Assessment				

Unit 3: The Legislative Branch				
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
The Nature of Representation	Article I Enumerated and Implied Powers	The House	The Senate	Consensus Building and Check and Balances
Day 6				
Assessment				

Unit 4: The President and the Bureaucracy				
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
General Introduction	What is the Executive Branch?	The Presidency and the Constitution	The Changing Nature of the Presidency	The Bureaucracy
Day 6				
Assessment				

Unit 5: The Judiciary				
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
General Introduction	The Court and the Constitution	Landmark Cases	Landmark Cases	Jurisprudence and Precedent
Day 6				
Assessment				

Unit 6: Political Participation and Elections				
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
General Introduction	General Introduction	Politics and Parties	Politics and Parties	Politics and Parties
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Voting and Elections	Voting and Elections	Voting and Elections	Civil Societies and Local Parties	Civil Societies and Local Parties
Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	
Interests, Interest Groups, and the Media	Interests, Interest Groups, and the Media	Interests, Interest Groups, and the Media	Assessment	

Unit 7: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties				
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
General Introduction	First Amendment: Freedom of Religion	First Amendment: Freedom of Religion	First Amendment: Freedom of Religion	First Amendment: Freedom of Religion
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Second Amendment	Second Amendment	Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments	Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments	Eighth Amendment
Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
Ninth and Tenth Amendment	Substantive Due Process and the Fourteenth Amendment	Substantive Due Process and the Fourteenth Amendment	Social Movements: Justice, Equal Rights, and Equal Protection under the Law	Social Movements: Justice, Equal Rights, and Equal Protection under the Law
Day 16				
Assessment				

Daily Breakdown

The following daily breakdowns include suggested resources from the Bill of Rights Institute’s free online resource: [Government and Politics: Civics for the American Experiment](#). These examples are designed to help educators select high-quality lessons, primary sources, and activities that support the content and skills required by the AP Government and Politics curriculum.

These are not exhaustive or prescriptive. BRI offers additional resources for each unit, including videos, essays, and extended activities. Educators are encouraged to explore the full unit pages and select the resources that best suit their students’ needs, interests, and time constraints.

Unit 1: Foundation of Our Government How and why was the United States Government formed?	
Day 1: Principles and Virtues — What are principles and virtues?	Day 2: The Constitutional Convention — What was the challenge facing the United States in 1787?
Video: Introduction to Founding Principles Video: Introduction to Civic Virtues Lesson Plan: What are Civic Virtues? Or Activity: Creating a Classroom Constitution	Lesson Plan: The Articles of Confederation Graphic Organizer: Articles of Confederation vs. U.S. Constitution Video: The Articles of Confederation Explained
Day 3: The Constitutional Convention — What was debated at the Constitutional Convention?	Day 4: Influences on the Founders — What informed these debates?
Essay: An Energetic, yet Limited Government Primary Source: Madison's Notes on the Constitutional Convention Activity: Timeline Examination of the Constitutional Convention	Essay: The Ancient and Modern Influences that Shaped the American Founding
Day 5: Influences on the Founders — What informed these debates?	Day 6: Influences on the Founders — What was the understanding of republican government held by the Founders and Framers?
Lesson Plan: Locke and the Declaration of Independence Discussion: Explore how Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke and Montesquieu influenced the Founders.	Essay: Representation and Self-Governance Activity: Opinion Sorting Federalist #10 and Brutus 1 Discussion: Analyze the principles of consent and republicanism in the context of the Founding era.

<p>Day 7: Influences on the Founders — What was the understanding of republican government held by the Founders and Framers? (Continued)</p>	<p>Day 8: The Constitutional Convention — What was decided at the Convention?</p>
<p>Activity: Debate on the merits of a republic versus a pure democracy, using historical examples.</p>	<p>Essay: The Separation of Powers Primary Source: Federalist #51 Primary Source: Federalist #70 Primary Source: Federalist #78 Activity: Battle of the Branches</p>
<p>Day 9: The Constitution — What was decided at the Convention?</p>	<p>Day 10: The Bill of Rights — Was the new Constitution enough to protect Natural Rights and produce justice?</p>
<p>Resource: The U.S. Constitution Suggested Use: Use a Constitution Scavenger Hunt to guide students in locating and summarizing key features (e.g., powers of each branch, separation of powers, checks and balances). Break into small groups to explore one article or section and report findings to the class. Discussion Prompt: How did the Constitution aim to fix the problems of the Articles of Confederation?</p>	<p>Essay: Madison and the Bill of Rights Activity: Understanding Positions of Federalists and Anti-Federalists Or Point-Counterpoint: Were the Federalists or Anti-Federalists more convincing? -- What the Federalists Were For / What the Anti-Federalists Were For</p>
<p>Day 11: Assessment</p>	
<p>Multiple Choice Questions Free Response</p>	

Unit 2: Federalism How does the division of power and shared responsibilities between federal and state governments affect the authority and purpose of government at each level?	
Day 1: General Introduction	Day 2: The Founding and Federalism — Why does each level of government have different responsibilities?
<p>Lesson Plan: Which Level of Government can Solve this Problem? Activity: Federalism Infographic Video: Federalism</p>	<p>Essay: The Founders, The Principle of Federalism, and the Constitution Primary Sources: Federalist #39, Article I, Section 10, Tenth Amendment Graphic Organizer: Evidence of Federalism in the Constitution</p>
Day 3: The Founding and Federalism — Why does each level of government have different responsibilities?	Day 4: Federalism Case Studies — What happens when powers are shared among levels of government?
<p>Lesson Plan: Angusville Wins a Grant Simulation Or Point-Counterpoint: Is American federalism an outdated principle that is ineffective in solving twenty-first century problems? -- Federalism: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly / Federalism: A Prop., Not a Principle?</p>	<p>Select one or more of the following case studies: Case Study: Drinking Age and Federal Highways -- Background Essay, Primary Sources, Teacher Supports Case Study: Education -- Background Essay, Primary Sources, Teacher Supports Case Study: Abortion Rights -- Background Essay, Primary Sources, Teacher Supports</p>
Day 5: Federalism Case Studies — What happens when powers are shared among levels of government?	Day 6: Assessment
<p>Class discussion Discussion Protocols</p>	<p>Multiple Choice Questions Free Response</p>

<p>Unit 3: The Legislative Branch How does the structure of government influence the process of lawmaking and reflect the will of the people?</p>	
<p>Day 1: The Nature of Representation — What does it mean to be represented in government?</p>	<p>Day 2: Article I Enumerated and Implied Powers — How do the enumerated and implied powers of Congress allow Congress to represent the will of the people in the lawmaking process?</p>
<p>Video: The Nature of Representation Lesson Plan: Gerrymandering, Representation, and Consent of the Governed Or Lesson Plan: The Challenges of Representation</p>	<p>Essay: Congress: Enumerated & Implied Powers Primary Source: Article I, U.S. Constitution, 1787 Activity: Article I and Enumerated and Implied Powers</p>
<p>Day 3: The House — How do the responsibilities of the House and Senate affect the overall legislative process?</p>	<p>Day 4: The Senate — How do the responsibilities of the House and Senate affect the overall legislative process?</p>
<p>Video: How does the House of Representatives Work? Primary Source: Federalist #55 Lesson Plan: Who is Your Representative?</p>	<p>Video: How does the Senate Work? Primary Source: Federalist #62 Lesson Plan: Who is Your Representative?</p>
<p>Day 5: Consensus Building and Check and Balances — How does Congress build consensus in making laws?</p>	<p>Day 6: Assessment</p>
<p>Activity: Congressional Consensus Building Graphic Organizer: Consensus Building Case Studies Point-Counterpoint: Is Congress Broken? -- Yes, Congress is Broken / No, Congress is Not Broken</p>	<p>Multiple Choice Questions Free Response</p>

Unit 4: The President and the Bureaucracy What is the legitimate exercise of executive powers?	
Day 1: General Introduction	Day 2: The Executive Branch — What is the Executive Branch?
Activity: The Presidential Oath of Office Primary Source: The Presidential Oath of Office	Essay: What is the Executive Branch? Primary Source: Federalist #70 Primary Source: Constitution Article II
Day 3: The Presidency and the Constitution — What is the role of the executive branch?	Day 4: The Changing Nature of the Presidency — How does the modern presidency differ from the role envisioned by the Founders in a constitutional republic?
Activity: The Roles of the President Activity: The Role of the Executive Branch	Choose one or more of the following case studies: Case Study: War Powers Case Study: Federal Regulation of the Economy and Society Case Study: Executive Orders
Day 5: The Bureaucracy — How does the executive branch influence the execution of laws, and to what extent does this impact daily life?	Day 6: Assessment
Lesson Plan: Structured Academic Controversy: Does the federal bureaucracy wield too much power in the U.S. constitutional republic?	Multiple Choice Questions Free Response

Unit 5: The Judicial Branch What is the role of courts in the American constitutional order?	
Day 1: General Introduction	Day 2: The Court and the Constitution – What Are the Roles and Responsibilities of the Different Court Levels, and How Do These Courts Interact?
Lesson Plan: The Rule of Law	Lesson Plan: Levels of the Court
Day 3: Landmark Cases – How do Landmark Cases Impact the Way Government Works and the Daily Lives of Citizens?	Day 4: Landmark Cases – How do Landmark Cases Impact the Way Government Works and the Daily Lives of Citizens?
Background Essay: Timeline of Periods of the Court Activity: Supreme Court Cases Scenarios: How Would You Decide?	Discussion Guide: Landmark Cases
Day 5: Jurisprudence and Precedent – Why Do We Defer to the Supreme Court for the Final Say over the Constitution?	Day 6: Assessment
Point-Counterpoint: The Supreme Court is not the Final Authority on the Meaning of the Constitution / The Supreme Court is the Final Authority on the Meaning of the Constitution	Multiple Choice Questions Free Response

Unit 6: Political Participation and Elections How do we work through existing civic and political institutions to achieve a healthy civic society?	
Day 1: General Introduction	Day 2: General Introduction
Lesson Plan: Founding Principles and Civic Virtues in the American Political System	Lesson Plan: Simulating Popular Sovereignty: The "We the People" Town Hall Or Lesson Plan: Perception Gap, from More Like Us
Day 3: Politics and Parties How do political parties influence and facilitate political participation in the United States?	Day 4: Politics and Parties How do political parties influence and facilitate political participation in the United States?
Activity: Timeline of Political Party Changes and Adaptations in U.S. History	Lesson Plan: Modern Campaigns Or Lesson Plan: Campaign Finance: PACs and SuperPACs
Day 5: Politics and Parties How do political parties influence and facilitate political participation in the United States?	Day 6: Voting and Elections How do voting laws and electoral systems impact democratic participation in the United States?
Research Activity: Political Parties	Lesson Plan: Expansion of Franchise Primary Source: Voting Amendments to the Constitution Primary Source: Elections and the Constitution
Day 7: Voting and Elections How do voting laws and electoral systems impact democratic participation in the United States?	Day 8: Voting and Elections How do voting laws and electoral systems impact democratic participation in the United States?
Lesson Plan: Methods of Election: The Popular Vote and the Electoral College Or Lesson Plan: Electing a President	Case Study: The Electoral College

<p>Day 9: Civil Societies and Local Parties How does engagement with civil society and local political institutions empower citizens to address community challenges and shape their local environments?</p>	<p>Day 10: Civil Societies and Local Parties How does engagement with civil society and local political institutions empower citizens to address community challenges and shape their local environments?</p>
<p>Primary Source: Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Book One, Part Two, Chapter Two</p>	<p>Lesson Plan: Engaging with Local Associations and Groups Educator Resource: Student Involvement in Civil Society Groups</p>
<p>Day 11: Interests, Interest Groups, and the Media How do interest groups, campaign finance, and evolving media landscapes influence public opinion, policy-making, and political polarization in modern governance?</p>	<p>Day 12: Interests, Interest Groups, and the Media How do interest groups, campaign finance, and evolving media landscapes influence public opinion, policy-making, and political polarization in modern governance?</p>
<p>Primary Sources: Federalist #10 and Federalist #51 Activity: The Sphere of Federalist #10</p>	<p>Lesson: Interest Groups at Work</p>
<p>Day 13: Interests, Interest Groups, and the Media How do interest groups, campaign finance, and evolving media landscapes influence public opinion, policy-making, and political polarization in modern governance?</p>	<p>Day 14: Assessment</p>
<p>Case Study: Campaign Finance Case Study: Media Technology and Candidate-Centered Campaigns</p>	<p>Multiple Choice Questions Free Response</p>

Unit 7: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties How do individuals, groups, and the government interact to protect and promote civil rights and civil liberties in the United States?	
Day 1: General Introduction What are principles and virtues?	Day 2: First Amendment
Lesson Plan: Launching Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	Lesson Plan: Introducing the First Amendment
Day 3: First Amendment: Freedom of Religion How does the First Amendment protect religious freedom?	Day 4: First Amendment: Freedom of Speech Why is freedom of speech essential in a free society?
Essay: Origins of Religious Liberty Case Study: Religious Freedom	Educator Resource: Freedom of Speech Case Study: Freedom of Speech
Day 5: First Amendment: Freedom of Press How does freedom of the press contribute to a democratic society?	Day 6: Second Amendment How does the Second Amendment protect the individual right to bear arms?
Lesson Plan: Why Does a Free Press Matter? Case Study: Freedom of the Press	Lesson Plan: Understanding the Second Amendment: A QFT Lesson
Day 7: Second Amendment How does the Second Amendment protect the individual right to bear arms?	Day 8: Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments How does the Bill of Rights protect the rights of the accused?
Case Study: Second Amendment Primary Sources: Second Amendment Educator Resource: Second Amendment Discussion Guide Or Lesson Plan: The Second Amendment Legislation Action Debate	Activity: Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments Graphic Organizer: Supreme Court Cases Case Study: Rights of the Accused Court Cases
Day 9: Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments How does the Bill of Rights protect the rights of the accused?	Day 10: Eighth Amendment How does the Bill of Rights protect the rights of the accused?
Activity: Rights of the Accused Scenario Cards Educator Resource: Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments Discussion Guide	Lesson Plan: Understanding Cruel and Unusual Punishment

<p>Day 11: Ninth and Tenth Amendment How do the Ninth and Tenth Amendments protect inalienable rights and address the balance of power between federal and state governments?</p>	<p>Day 12: Substantive Due Process and the Fourteenth Amendment How has the Bill of Rights been applied to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause?</p>
<p>Lesson Plan: Supreme Court DBQ South Dakota v. Dole (1987)</p>	<p>Essay: Substantive Due Process and Incorporation Infographic: Substantive Due Process and the Fourteenth Amendment Key Terms</p>
<p>Day 13: Substantive Due Process and the Fourteenth Amendment How has the Bill of Rights been applied to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause?</p>	<p>Day 14: Social Movements: Justice, Equal Rights, and Equal Protection under the Law What does it mean for all individuals to be treated equally under the law, and how has this principle been interpreted throughout American history?</p>
<p>Activity: Fourteenth Amendment Graphic Organizer Primary Source: Fourteenth Amendment</p>	<p>Essay: The Women's Movement and the Seneca Falls Convention Essay: Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)</p>
<p>Day 15: Social Movements: Justice, Equal Rights, and Equal Protection under the Law What does it mean for all individuals to be treated equally under the law, and how has this principle been interpreted throughout American history?</p>	<p>Day 16: Assessment</p>
<p>Primary Source: Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" Primary Source: Letter from Birmingham Jail</p>	<p>Multiple Choice Questions Free Response</p>