United States Government: By the People, for the People

Coursebook



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Introduction

Why study United States government? Beyond fulfilling a graduation requirement, how might learning about government systems have value? We all, in a sense, govern our own lives, and we usually have more power to do so as we grow older. Government systems are an extension of self-government—a way to help improve the lives of individuals and society as a whole.

Education is often most meaningful when it can be applied for the betterment of the self and others. So, ask yourself this important question:

> **How will learning about the foundations and structure of the U.S. government help me change the world?**

Throughout the semester, you will be creating a long-term project that relates to this question. This course project goes beyond a simple slideshow and will have many more revisions and reflections than a research essay. The process of developing your project is as important as the outcome. You will find activities and instructions related to your course project in each lesson. It is important that your project be meaningful to you and be of use in the wider world. This type of project-based learning lets you contribute to the world as you conduct your studies.

What to Expect in This Course

This single-semester course is divided into 18 lessons, and each lesson is designed to take about one week to complete (approximately one hour per day). In the lessons, you will find the following sections (not every section will be found in every lesson):

An **Assignment Checklist** is included at the beginning of each lesson; you can see all your assignments at a glance, and check off assignments as you complete each one. Assignments are fully explained in the lesson.

The **Learning Objectives** outline the main goals of the lesson and give you an idea of what to expect.

Information in the **Before You Begin** section provides context and important background knowledge about the lesson topic.

The **Reflect and Discuss** section provides ways to think deeply about relevant issues and discuss your ideas with others to help further your understanding of the lesson topics. You do not need to write anything down for these prompts.

Assignments are designed to help you understand key concepts and apply your knowledge.

The **Course Project** section includes step-by-step guidance through each phase of developing your course project.

Extend Your Learning activities offer additional ways to explore the topics you are studying. You can choose any that interest you (all are optional).

The **Share Your Work** section provides reminders and information for students who are submitting their work to a teacher.

This course is textbook independent, which means that you can use any relevant textbook or combination of resources. The bulk of your research will probably come from the internet. It is recommended that you also use your local librarian as a resource. Your local library will be able to get you connected with journals, videos, and specific websites (most of these services are available online as well). You will also find a list of resources on the Oak Meadow website at www.oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links.

This course is designed for independent learning, so hopefully you will find it easy to navigate. However, it is assumed you will have an adult supervising your work and providing support and feedback. If you have a question about your work, please ask for help!

When you begin each lesson, scan the entire lesson first. Take a quick look at the number of assignments and amount of reading. Having a sense of the whole lesson will help you manage your time effectively.

Academic Expectations

The appendix contains important information about academic expectations, original work guidelines, citing sources, and more. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the resources in the appendix. You will be expected to read and incorporate these guidelines into your work throughout the year.

A Note About the Workload

Students vary greatly in terms of reading speed, reading comprehension, and writing ability. Some may find the reading in this course takes longer than expected; others may find the writing assignments take a great deal of time. In general, you can expect to spend about five hours on each lesson. If you need more time to complete the work, you might modify some lessons to focus on fewer assignments, or you might arrange with your teacher to complete some lessons orally instead of in written form. Modifications like these can allow you to produce work that is of a higher quality. Each lesson in this course can be customized to suit your needs.

Keep an eye on the workload as you progress through the course, and make adjustments so you have time for meaningful learning experiences rather than rushing to try to get everything done. Please consult with your teacher when making adjustments to the workload.

Lesson

1

Inquiry

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Analyze elements involved in governing a group of people.
- Identify areas of civic concern.
- Reflect on personal strengths, experience, and interests.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read the Before You Begin section.
- ☐ Choose words to describe government.
- ☐ Describe the governing structure of a group you belong to.
- ☐ Course Project: Identifying Civic Concerns

Before You Begin

Why do we look back in time to learn how to move forward? How can looking at the history of government in the United States help us find new solutions to today's problems?

One of the main ways we learn is through inquiry. By inquiring or questioning, we not only explore the main topic but often journey into a diverse array of related topics. Learning in this way is like a treasure hunt—you never know what you might find!

However, you've probably already learned that there are effective and ineffective ways to ask questions, especially if you are trying to get a specific piece of information or are making a request. (Think about the last time you tried to find something on the internet and couldn't get the answer because of the search terms you used. Or think of a time you asked an adult for permission and didn't get what you wanted because of the way it was asked.)

This course is all about inquiry. What do *you* want to know? How do you articulate what you are curious about? What are the best questions to ask to get the information you seek? Where do you find the answers? If you can't find the answers, what do you do?

Often, the most intriguing questions are open-ended. There's not one answer. Answering them requires diving into information, thinking deeply, and reflecting; finding answers almost always means seeking sources from many different places.

Here are a few examples of open-ended questions that can lead to multiple answers:

- How can we overcome prejudice in my community?

- What are the ideals of a model society, and why are they important?
- What role do (or should) data and statistics play in shaping governmental policies and decisions?
- How can public art encourage change for social justice?

With this in mind, let's dive into our study of U.S. government and see where it leads.

Throughout this course, you will be creating a project that is designed to address a problem or issue that you are interested in. The form your course project takes is up to you, and as you learn about how societies are structured and governed, you will gather information that will help you refine your project's focus. Your project may be related to community service or to educating the public; it may be an innovative design, a community event, a creative work, or a grassroots political campaign. As you develop your project, you will become involved with others who are participating in similar work or working toward similar goals. The purpose of this course project is to somehow—in ways large or small—make the world a better place.

What groups do you belong to? How is each group organized? How is it governed?



(Image credit: NPS)



(Image credit: IUP Marching Band)



(Image credit: Pikist)



(Image credit: Northwestern High School Concert Choir/A. Bailey)

Assignments

1. Write down three or four words that come to mind when you think of government. For each word, give a short explanation of why you chose it.
2. Describe the organizational structure governing a group to which you belong. This could be a shared-interest group, a community-based group, an employee group, or an online group. It could be a sports team, music class, homeschooling co-op, summer camp, sustainability coalition, or book club. The group could be organized around a river cleanup, community garden, online gaming, religious activities, or camping.

   Here are a few of the questions you might address as you describe your group's governing structure:

   - Who organized the group? Who runs it? How were these leaders chosen?
   - Are there fees involved? What do you get in exchange for those fees?
   - Are there rules for the group, either written or unspoken? What is the purpose of these rules? Who made up the rules, and how are they communicated to members of the group?
   - How are conflicts within the group handled? Who is responsible for reporting and mediating conflicts? How are rule-breakers dealt with?
   - Is there a process for accepting members into the group or for removing members from the group?
   - What are the responsibilities of individual group members? What are the privileges?

   Write two or three paragraphs, presenting your thoughts and information in an organized way. Take the time to review what you've written, revise it to bring added clarity, edit it to ensure effective word choice and grammar, and proofread it after all the changes have been made. (Throughout the course, use this writing process to help you express your ideas clearly and produce your best work.)

Course Project

Identifying Civic Concerns

Do you want to change the world? If you had the power to make a positive change that would benefit others, what might that be? What sphere of living (such as food systems, social justice, health, politics and law, or environmental sustainability) might you like to influence?

As you begin your study of U.S. government, you might wonder how it relates to changing the world. That is the question you will explore in this course.

To begin, you'll answer two questions:

1. **What are some of the burning questions you have about the world?**

   Is there a topic you are interested in? Here are some questions you might be curious about:

   - Why don't more people recycle? Is recycling even useful?
   - Is there a place for me in the future world?
   - How can we best help people who are displaced from their homes or homeless?
   - Is illegal immigration a problem or are immigration policies the problem?
   - What would it take to eradicate hunger or poverty?
   - What actions are needed on a global level to stop climate change?

   Feel free to ask your friends or family members what burning questions they have. Sometimes the ideas of another person will help spark your own line of inquiry.

2. **What do you like to do?**

   Think about projects you've enjoyed doing in the past. Do you enjoy doing research, being involved in community service, engineering designs on paper or the computer, or building models? Consider what you might already be doing that you could connect to this course. Are you a musician? A traveling athlete? An older sister? A chef? A poet?

   Consider the question, "What do I want to be when I grow up?" Do you want to be a journalist? An advertising executive? A filmmaker or playwright? An app developer? A podcaster? A photographer?

   Spend some time pondering these questions before you write down your thoughts. These initial thoughts could help shape your course project and the experience of creating it. You'll learn and value the experience the most when you connect your interests, skills, and curiosity to create something useful or meaningful.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher. Make sure each assignment is clearly labeled. Please proofread your work and make any corrections before notifying your teacher that it is ready to review.

If you are using a shared Google doc to submit your work, when you have finished adding your responses for this lesson, click on the File tab in the upper left corner, and use the Email Collaborators command to let your teacher know your work for lesson 1 is ready for review.

If you have any questions about your work, the lesson assignments, or how to share your work, let your teacher know.

Lesson

2

Media and Bias

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Track quotes back to their source.
- Search for corroborating evidence.
- Identify signs of false or misleading information.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read the Before You Begin section.
- ☐ Reflect on and discuss subjectivity and objectivity in news and other media.
- ☐ Read and respond to articles related to how young adults access news.
- ☐ Analyze a news item to determine its validity.
- ☐ Course Project: Asking Questions

Before You Begin

You might wonder what media and bias have to do with your study of government systems and the development of your project. However, as you consider in detail how various forms of government work and why different societies have put governing structures in place, it is vital that you simultaneously explore how we receive information when doing research. Not all information you find in your research is accurate, and some of it might have been designed to be intentionally misleading. Understanding media and bias means recognizing its power to disrupt society. If you think of government as a kind of powerful narrative that shapes our daily lives, you can begin to see how effectively false narratives can disrupt society. Developing the skills to analyze media is vital to the study of government.

At this point in your schooling, you have probably done quite a bit of research. Maybe you identified plant cells in a biology course, looked up the causes of the American Revolution in a history class, or reviewed different interpretations of a novel in English class. As a tech native—someone who has never known a world without computers—you have most likely searched online for answers to questions ranging from "When is the new movie opening at the theater?" and "Where's the nearest pizza place?" to "Is a light-year a measure of time or distance?" and "Which college is right for me?" It wasn't too long ago that all research was gathered from newspapers, books, and periodicals. (Ask your older friends and relatives about microfiche!)

These days, information is so easily obtained from our cell phones and laptop computers that we can have our questions answered in a few seconds. This is fantastic but also a cause for concern. When information is published in printed books, there are quality-control checks built in to try to make sure the writing is accurate. Publishing information is expensive, and making corrections is time-consuming. With the internet, online publishing is fast and easy; anyone can do it without any quality assurance at all. Far-fetched theories pop up in search results right alongside legitimate research. False information—sometimes unsupported claims and other times outright lies—is disguised as fact and is spread around the world without control. This creates a phenomenon known as the *illusory truth effect*, which is caused by hearing wrong information so often that we start to believe it must be true.

Media messages are continually bombarding us with biased opinions, persuasive rhetoric, and alarmist ideas that often encourage fear, prejudice, and behavior designed to benefit a certain cause, company, or individual. These messages seek to influence our behavior in every sphere of life: medical, educational, social, environmental, and political. Where and how we learn about what is going on in our government affects what we think about it, whether we desire change, and how we might seek it.

Media has such a powerful influence on the public's understanding about government, politics, and current events that it is sometimes called the Fourth Estate. Journalists take on the role of critical observers of politics and politicians, effectively forming an independent fourth system. This role is crucial to holding all branches of the government accountable and keeping the American public informed and involved. Election coverage, debates and political commentary, analysis of legislative bills, and supplying information to the voting public are just a few of the ways that media outlets affect government and politics.

The press also has the power to sway public opinion. Politicians often use media outlets for their own purposes. Journalists have a code of ethics that most follow, which helps ensure that the majority of news stories strive to present unbiased information, letting readers make up their own minds. (Read the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics online to learn more.) The freedom of the press is embedded in the Constitution of the United States. It is, and always has been, a powerful voice in safeguarding the nation's democracy.



What is the role of news media in government? (Image credit: Marcello Casal Jr/ABr)

Throughout your study of U.S. government, you will be asking many questions and doing research to gain perspective and information. In this lesson, you will be writing and thinking about bias and research. You may have heard it before, but it is always worth remembering: be careful about what you read and believe.

Reflect and Discuss

Consider the difference between subjective and objective information. In the media, subjective opinion is often presented as objective facts. Do you think it is important for all news to be reported as objectively as possible? What effect does it have on the public when news is reported subjectively? Is this a problem?

Reflect on these thoughts, and form an opinion. Discuss these questions with someone else, such as a friend, family member, coworker, neighbor, or classmate. After considering their opinion, you might find your opinion changing somewhat. This is a natural part of learning—as we gather new information, experiences, and perspectives, our understanding grows and shifts to include this greater knowledge.

Terms to Know

The terms listed below represent important concepts and information. You will want to be able to define, understand, and use them in the context of your assignments and final project. Look up any concepts or words you don't know or would like to learn more about.

- Media bias
- Plagiarism
- Citations (MLA format) and works cited pages
- Subjective versus objective

Assignments

1. Read the following articles from Common Sense Media and National Public Radio.

   "Our New Research Shows Where Kids Get Their News and How They Feel About It"

   www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/our-new-research-shows-where-kids-get-their-news-and-how-they-feel-about-it

   "Students Have 'Dismaying' Inability to Tell Fake News from Real, Study Finds"

   www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/11/23/503129818/study-finds-students-have-dismaying-inability-to-tell-fake-news-from-real

   Do you think these articles accurately represent you and your peers? Why or why not? Write a brief response.

2. Public and college libraries are at the forefront of educating all of us about media bias. Read this article from Boston University:

   "Fake News and News Bias"

   library.bu.edu/fakenews

   Armed with information about spotting fake news, find a news article or tweet with false or misleading information. Using the signs listed in the article above and the box below, "Evaluating Online Sources," explain how you determined the information to be faulty.

Evaluating Online Sources

When evaluating an online source, here are some red flags that should make you question the validity of the source:

- Inflammatory language, such as name-calling or derogatory remarks
- Extreme emotions or appealing to emotions
- One-sided viewpoint, particularly one conveyed by criticizing or insulting an opposing viewpoint
- Unsupported claims that cannot be confirmed by a reliable source
- Vague or contradictory claims
- Short quotes that are unattributed or taken out of context
- Messages that are hard to believe, negative, or threatening

Always ask yourself: Who created this message? What is their primary objective?

Use the checklist below when evaluating a news source (adapted from Common Sense Media):

- ☐ **Look at the quotes in a story (or lack of quotes).** Most news reports have multiple sources who are professionals with relevant expertise. In articles about serious or controversial issues, there are more likely to be several quotes from multiple experts. Take the time to research these quotes by doing an internet search. Do you find the quote attributed the same way in other news articles?
- ☐ **Check other (reputable) sources** before trusting or sharing news that seems too good (or bad) to be true. Are other credible, mainstream news outlets reporting the same news? When a source is used to support a claim, do an internet search to evaluate the source. Can you find it? If so, does it seem to support what is being said in the article? Sometimes scientific claims are made in news items, but when you look up the actual scientific study being cited, the results or conclusions do not always back up what is being claimed.

- ☐ **Check a site's "About Us" section.** Find out who supports the site or who is associated with it. If this information can't be found, consider why they aren't being transparent. Who is behind it? Why was it produced? Who stands to benefit?
- ☐ **Look for signs of low quality**, such as words in all caps, grammatical errors, bold claims with no supporting evidence, and sensationalist images (such as revealing, unflattering, or compromising photos).
- ☐ **Beware of clickbait** lures that lead to ads or other sponsored sites.
- ☐ **Check your emotions.** Fake news strives for extreme reactions. If the news you're reading makes you feel angry, smug, indignant, or self-righteous, it could be a sign that you're being manipulated rather than informed. News organizations are in business to make money, and often news media can make more money by publishing extreme, inflammatory, or controversial views that do not represent what is actually happening or the views of the majority.

Course Project

Asking Questions

Continue to turn over ideas in your head about an issue or problem you would like to explore in your course project. If you have an idea for your topic, seek out someone who is currently working in this area. If you don't yet have an idea, find someone whose work you admire or are interested in.

Come up with a list of questions (at least three) that you would like to ask this person. For instance, if you are interested in creating a pocket park in your neighborhood, you might contact a member of your city council and ask if this has been done before, what permissions or permits might be involved, and if there are city regulations regarding this type of project.

If you have an idea for your project, you can ask very specific questions. If you don't yet know your topic, come up with questions that can be useful no matter what topic you choose. Here are some questions to get you started:

- If there was one thing you wish the general public understood better about this issue or your work, what would it be?
- What areas or issues are most in need of attention in this community?
- What resources to you regularly use in your work?
- Are you familiar with other groups (local, national, or international) that are doing similar work?

Come up with several more questions of your own. Write down your questions, who you contacted, and what you found out.

Extend Your Learning

(All Extend Your Learning sections are optional.)

Practice being a careful consumer of the news. Choose one issue or event, and find an article online or in a printed source, such as a newspaper, magazine, or professional journal.

Answer these questions:

1. Who is the author of the article? What is the news organization?
2. What are the sources of the facts in this article? Does the article cite interviews, research, scientific studies, or other sources?
3. Find another article on the same topic. Who is the author of the article? What is the news organization? What are the sources of the facts in this article?
4. Did you find any differences in the way the facts were reported? If so, what were these differences, and what do you think might have caused them?
5. Review the information on evaluating online sources. (It can apply to print sources as well.) Do you feel confident about the facts in the articles you read? Explain your answer.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, proofread your work carefully. Are you showing what you've been learning and thinking about? You always can add more than is asked for.

When you are ready, share your work with your teacher, and include any questions you might have. Notify your teacher when your work is ready to be reviewed.

Lesson

6

The Constitution of the United States

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Identify and explain key concepts of primary source material.
- Identify similarities and differences between statements of human rights.
- Locate contacts for current work being done in an area of interest.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read the Before You Begin section.
- ☐ Reflect on the current relevance of concepts in the Federalist Papers.
- ☐ Identify and explain the key elements of the U.S. Constitution.
- ☐ Compare the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the U.S. Bill of Rights.
- ☐ Propose a constitution for a future Mars colony.
- ☐ Course Project: Identifying Resources and Current Work Being Done

Before You Begin

It can be hard to grasp the everyday importance of the U.S. Constitution. The rights that many Americans have come to take for granted are guaranteed in the Constitution. Every single law and policy passed in the United States is created in alignment with the Constitution, which was signed in 1787 and ratified (officially approved) the following year. However, this historic document was almost immediately amended to include ten essential civil rights and freedoms. These first ten amendments are called the Bill of Rights, which was ratified in 1791. Since that time, there have been many more amendments; there are now a total of 27 amendments, each one an integral part of the U.S. Constitution.

In the appendix of this coursebook, you will find the text of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, which you will read in their entirety in this lesson. You might find some of the language difficult to grasp, but do your best to identify the key themes and understand them. You aren't expected to become an expert on the Constitution or its first ten amendments (the Bill of Rights), but by becoming more familiar with these founding documents, you'll gain a clearer understanding of the purpose, structure, and principles of the federal government.

The Constitution consists of a preamble (the opening paragraph) and seven articles:

Article I: Legislative (10 sections)

Article II: Executive (4 sections)

Article III: Judicial (3 sections)

Article IV: States' Relations (4 sections)

Article V: Mode of Amendment

Article VI: Prior Debts, National Supremacy, Oaths of Office

Article VII: Ratification

In this lesson, you will use active reading techniques to help make sense of these important American documents.

In writing the Constitution, the framers (writers) drew on many philosophies of government. They wanted to create something that would prevent the kind of tyranny that caused the colonists to revolt and declare independence from England. Of course, it wasn't enough to just write the Constitution; it then had to be ratified, or approved, by the leaders of the colonies.

To gain public support and convince others to ratify the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton decided to publish a series of essays; he recruited James Madison and John Jay to help. These essays later became known as the Federalist Papers. In these essays, the authors outlined in great detail their reasons for supporting the Constitution. Other people were opposed to the Constitution, believing it either gave too much power to the government or did not have enough safeguards against tyranny. Some wrote rebuttals to the Federalist Papers (known as the Anti-Federalist Papers). In the end, Hamilton, Madison, and Jay wrote 85 essays in all, and public opinion was swayed. The Constitution was ratified by the required 9 of the 13 colonies on June 21, 1788.



The first words of the U.S. Constitution are "We the People."
(Image credit: goodfreephotos.com)

Active Reading Techniques

The term *active reading* refers to careful reading techniques that help you engage with the text in order to fully understand it. There are many ways to do this. Here are some guidelines:

1. With a pencil in your hand, scan the entire text to get a sense of how the content is divided. Notice the different sections of the text and the length of each one as well as the length of the entire piece. You might want to circle the section headers to make them stand out.
2. Starting at the beginning, read the first paragraph of the text. Read it once without stopping, and then go back and reread it, underlining any words that are unfamiliar to you. Look up these words, and write the definitions in the margin.
3. Read the first paragraph again, one sentence at a time. After each sentence, make sure you understand the meaning. For long sentences, it can help to look at each individual phrase. If the meaning is not clear even though you understand all the words, ask an adult for guidance.
4. Once you have a clear idea of each sentence, read the paragraph one final time. Afterward, try to explain, in your own words, the key ideas in the paragraph. Circle key phrases or write them down in the margin.
5. Repeat this process for each paragraph.

Active reading takes a lot more time than skimming or quick reading, but for challenging documents such as the U.S. Constitution, careful reading will help you gain a more comprehensive understanding.

Assignments

1. The Federalist Papers were written to encourage the ratification of the Constitution. Read the following excerpts. Choose one, and write a brief reflection on whether the ideas are still relevant today. (Read all of them before deciding which one to write about.)

   Federalist Paper No. 1: Alexander Hamilton

   . . . a dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidden appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of government. History will teach us that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism than the latter, and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people; commencing demagogues, and ending tyrants.

Federalist Paper No. 21: Alexander Hamilton

The natural cure for an ill-administration, in a popular or representative constitution, is a change of men.

Federalist Paper No. 22: Alexander Hamilton

The fabric of the American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of THE CONSENT OF THE PEOPLE. The streams of national power ought to flow from that pure, original fountain of all legitimate authority.

Federalist Paper No. 47: James Madison

The accumulation of all powers legislative, executive and judiciary in the same hands, whether of one, a few or many, and whether hereditary, self appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.

Federalist Paper No. 51: James Madison

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place, oblige it to control itself.

Federalist Paper No. 78: Alexander Hamilton

If then the courts of justice are to be considered as the bulwarks of a limited constitution against legislative encroachments, this consideration will afford a strong argument for the permanent tenure of judicial offices, since nothing will contribute so much as this to that independent spirit in the judges, which must be essential to the faithful performance of so arduous a duty.

2. Use active reading to mark up the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, which are found in the appendix. (See the box "Active Reading Techniques.") It is up to you how you would like to do this. You can use underlining, highlighters, or colored pencils. You can also make margin notes. For instance, you might underline unfamiliar words in blue and define them in the margin, circle key phrases in red, and write the main focus or purpose of each section in green.

   Mark the main sections of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights as follows:

   - In the Preamble, mark the six main purposes of the Constitution. Underline or circle any words you don't know, look them up, and define them in the margin.
   - For Articles I–VII of the Constitution, read each article, section by section, one paragraph at a time. Note any unfamiliar words and look them up.
   - Mark the key phrases in each section.
   - As you complete each section, write down its main focus.
   - As you complete each article, label its primary purpose.
   - In the Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments), label the purpose of each amendment. Mark the key phrases.

3. In 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which you'll find in the appendix of this coursebook. Read this document in its entirety. Compare it to the U.S. Bill of Rights. Where are there areas of overlap? Where do these important documents differ? Why do you think those who wrote and adopted it felt it necessary to make a universal declaration of human rights? Do you think it is still necessary?
4. Imagine you have been chosen to help establish the first human colony on Mars. Your team is in charge of setting up the governance of the new colony. Your first task is to develop a proposal for a new constitution. What are the key elements that will help this new society thrive? You might use elements of the U.S. Constitution as a basis for the Mars Constitution, or you might research constitutions from other nations and use parts of many different ones.

   In your Constitution Proposal, outline the basic structure of the new Mars government and the key elements related to citizens' rights and freedoms. What are the essential features of a civil society? Use the political philosophies you've learned about to defend and support your proposal. Make sure to cite where your ideas come from, whether they are constitutions from other countries or political philosophers. Feel free to use as many modern sources as you like, including political figures from current and recent history.

Course Project

Identifying Resources and Current Work Being Done

Before you launch your project, it can be very valuable to get a sense of the work others are doing toward the same goals.

If you know of a local or national organization dedicated to the topic you have chosen, start there. If you aren't sure which individuals or organizations are involved, start with an internet search. Here are some sample search prompts based on different topics:

- What is being done to promote animal welfare near me?
- What organizations honor and care for the well-being of elders?
- What is being done to improve water quality in the U.S.?
- How can I help protect bees and other pollinators?
- How can I support military veterans?
- What can be done to improve safety for bicyclists?

Search for information about your topic by rewording your search prompt in different ways. Look at what is being done locally, in other communities, and at the national level. Keep track of all your sources (and add them to your resource file).

Write a brief summary of what is already being done. This can be in bullet list form.

Extend Your Learning

Now that you are more familiar with the U.S. Constitution, take some time to explore the constitutions of other nations. Visit the following website:

Constitute: The World's Constitutions to Read, Search, and Compare

www.constituteproject.org

Choose three countries, and look up their constitutions. Constitutions are often very long, complex documents. You aren't expected to read each constitution in full. Read the preamble or introduction in full, and then skim the articles and sections to get a sense of the scope and length. For each of the three countries you look up, answer the following questions:

- What similarities did you find between the country's constitution and the U.S. Constitution?
- What differences did you notice?
- What rules surprised you or stood out to you? Include a passage (in quotation marks) from that section.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher. If you have any questions about your work, the lesson assignments, or how to share your work, let your teacher know.

Lesson

14

Power to the People

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Conduct research using multiple sources.
- Choose or create relevant graphics to support key ideas in a multimedia project.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read the Before You Begin section.
- ☐ Create a multimedia project related to a citizen-led protest or a new democracy.
- ☐ Course Project: Organizing Your Workforce

Before You Begin

As you've heard before, democracy is not a spectator sport. Democracy is a process. Maintaining a successful democracy is challenging. Sometimes civic debate is not enough. Sometimes democracy can lead to civil unrest, petitions, protests, marches, civil disobedience, and other nonviolent change agents. Sometimes it leads to violent clashes.

The Declaration of Independence proclaims that people are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness . . . whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government . . ."

Foundational to the U.S. government, then, is that it should be radically altered or torn down if it ceases to serve the people. Think about the colonial leaders of the Revolutionary War—they were determined to overthrow the established government. They could have been convicted of treason and put to death, but they felt the risk was worth it. They envisioned a government that was more equitable, and they were willing to fight for it.

When is civil dissent, or even revolution, necessary? What might be the problems in a society or the flaws in a government system that lead to civil unrest? What role and responsibility do citizens have to remain vigilant in their oversight of governmental actions?

The United States has always enjoyed a peaceful transfer of power. Elections are held each year, and a president is elected every four years. New leaders move into positions of power while former leaders

step down. This is the essence of a working democracy: the ability to elect leaders and to remove them from office. However, not all nations have this freedom.



Graffiti inspired by racial justice protests in Portland, Oregon, August, 2020: "The more you know your history, the more liberated you are." (Image credit: Riley Hughes)

History has shown that a transfer of power sometimes can result in mass arrests of political dissidents, suppression of media, human rights abuses, oppression or forced removal of minority groups, and even genocide. Governments—especially those under authoritarian leadership—sometimes spy on or harass citizens in order to control or punish any actions that are contrary to or critical of those in power. Could this happen in a democracy? Is it happening today?

It seems like there would be a wide gulf between civil dissent and revolutionary tactics, or between revolutionary ideas and an oppressive regime or terrorist actions. But where is that line? What causes one nation to develop in a positive direction as a result of civil unrest and another to fall into anarchy or a dictatorship?

How does a nation succumb to tyrannical leadership? Often, a leader will emerge during times of national crises, when people are frustrated, desperate, angry, and eager for change. Economic depression, failing social systems, and political chaos create an atmosphere of vulnerability that strong, charismatic leaders can take advantage of. They convince the public that if power is put into their hands, they will use it for the good of all people. The reality often turns out to be very different.

In Federalist Paper No. 1, written in 1787, Alexander Hamilton warned, "of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people; commencing demagogues, and ending tyrants." This scenario of gaining power by telling the public what they want to hear and then abusing that power has been seen throughout history.

In 1917, Vladimir Lenin won the support of the Russian people by offering them "peace, land, and bread." But instead of delivering good on his promises, Lenin instituted harsh measures to maintain control over the people. Later, under the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union developed into a police state, where the people were ruled by fear. Stalin established total control over people's lives, and millions of people who were accused of opposing the government were sent to labor camps in Siberia.

When Benito Mussolini rose to power in Italy in 1922, Italians were looking for a strong leader who would bring order to their chaotic country. However, it soon became clear that those who did not show loyalty and obedience to their leader would be tortured and murdered. In Spain, Francisco Franco took over the government in 1939. Under his rule, many people suffered horrendous atrocities. In 1933, Adolf Hitler promised to bring harmony and order to Germany. Instead, terrorism and mass murder marked his reign.

In 1975, Cambodia became a one-party state under the rule of Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge forces, whose plans for developing an egalitarian communist society included forced relocation and the suspension of many civil liberties. Over a million people (one quarter of Cambodia's population at the time) were killed in what later became known as the Cambodian genocide. In 1985, a former member of Khmer Rouge, Hun Sen, came into power. His regime oppressed all political opposition by controlling the media, police, and military.

In 1979, Saddam Hussein became president of Iraq, and he immediately began arresting and sentencing to death those who opposed him. In Nigeria, Sani Abacha staged a military coup and ruled as a dictator from 1993 until his death in 1998. He was responsible for widespread corruption, human rights abuses, and political assassinations. The list goes on and on.

What do these types of tyrannical government have in common? What were the warning signs? How does a nation become oppressed? Common elements of dictatorial rule include suppression of personal freedoms, control of the press, censorship and control of educational systems, widespread corruption of public officials, control of the police and military, and violent punishment for dissenters. These oppressive regimes are the antithesis of a successful democracy. The very elements that are abolished in a dictatorship—freedom of speech and the press, protected civil liberties, fair and open elections, independent judiciary, civilian control of schools and police, and tolerance for political dissent—form the foundation of a strong democracy.

In a successful democracy, individual citizens of all ages and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in advocating for human rights, social welfare, sound economic policies, and reparations of past injustices. In the United States, the freedoms of political activism and the right to criticize the government are exercised on a daily basis.



Student protests brought greater awareness to the urgency of the climate change crisis. (Image credit: NiklasPntk)

For instance, on January 21, 2017 (the day after President Donald Trump was sworn into office), hundreds of thousands of people gathered in Washington, DC, while millions assembled in smaller gatherings across the country and around the world to protest sexual harassment and to support women's rights. In 2019, students across the United States staged regular school walkouts to protest the government's inability to make meaningful progress toward halting and reversing climate change. In 2020, mass protests—mostly peaceful, but some violent—played out around the world in support of racial justice as citizens demanded rapid and significant change to address systemic racism. As these examples show, active citizenship is vital to a healthy democracy.

Assignments

1. Choose one of the topics below to conduct research and create a multimedia presentation (see lesson 11 for tips). Use relevant graphics to highlight key ideas or information in your presentation. Use multiple sources for your research, and include them on a works cited page.

   a. Research and create a multimedia project about a citizen-led protest happening today. Provide some context about what led to the protest, presenting evidence given to support the cause. Highlight the tactics involved in bringing attention to the issues and their relative effectiveness.

   b. Research and create a multimedia project about an emerging or newly established democracy. Consider the hallmarks of a democratic society, such as freedom of speech and the press, protection of civil rights, and tolerance for political dissent. Give a snapshot of the nation's past. For instance, was a tyrannical government overthrown to establish the democratic rule? Present your findings, and provide evidence of the success of the new democracy.

Course Project

Organizing Your Workforce

Now that the work has begun, you need to keep everything and everyone on track. You are the team leader! It's your project and your job to make sure everything gets done on time. Assign tasks based on your action plan and the strengths, interests, experience, and availability of your helpers. Provide each person with specific instructions about each task. Listen to ideas from your helpers; they might come up with suggestions that will improve the project. You will take ownership of your course project, but it will also become a collaborative process. (Your teacher is part of this collaboration, so remember to reach out if you have questions or would like guidance.)

Make a list of what still needs to be done, and check off tasks as they are completed. Make a new list each week, adding the next steps and then checking them off. Give your teacher a brief progress report.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher.



Appendix

Primary Source Material

Mayflower Compact 96
Declaration of Independence 96
Constitution of the United States 100
Bill of Rights and Constitutional Amendments 110
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 119

Student Resources

Academic Expectations 125
Original Work Guidelines 125
Finding Reputable Sources 126
Citing Your Sources 127
Elements of Good Writing 130
The Writing Process 133