United States Government: By the People, for the People

Teacher Manual

Oak Meadow

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Introduction

This *United States Government: By the People, for the People Teacher Manual* offers suggestions and strategies to help you support your student throughout this single-semester course. As a project-based learning experience, the process of learning will be as important as the course project. At the end of 18 weeks, the optimal result is that students will continue to actively participate in civics. Gaining content knowledge is, of course, important, but information related to government changes daily, and shifts in leadership, policy, and laws are inevitable. It is essential that students learn how to gather and make use of accurate information so they can make informed decisions and act accordingly.

This is a textbook-independent course, so students are urged to use a variety of sources to learn about the lesson topics. Any U.S. government textbook can be used as a basic reference, but a textbook is not necessary; no textbook will align fully with this course. Students are encouraged to use their local library as well as online sources for their research. Sometimes students are reluctant to ask for help from a librarian. Remind them that most libraries have active websites as a place to initiate conversations with their librarians. You are welcome to do this with the student. Utilizing a librarian's expertise is a wonderful way to have more adults involved in the learning experience.

Many resources for this course have been compiled on the Oak Meadow website at www.oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links. It may be helpful for you to become familiar with what is available so you can provide guidance if your student struggles to find relevant information. It is also important for you to be aware of the information in the appendix of the student coursebook regarding academic expectations, citing sources, plagiarism, and more. Students are expected to apply this knowledge in all their work.

In this teacher manual, answers are seen in **orange**. You will also find all assignments and activities. However, the student coursebook may contain additional information. For the full content of the course, please refer to the student coursebook.

In this course, there are many open-ended and critical-thinking questions. This is not a "right or wrong answer" type of course. Encourage students to discuss, debate, reflect, and reconsider. If you take an active interest in the lesson topics, it can help create a more meaningful experience for your student.

When assessing student work, if a student misunderstands a factual question, you can share the correct answer with them to clarify any misconceptions. If they answer many of the factual questions incorrectly, encourage them to review the lesson material for better comprehension.

It is best not to share this teacher manual with your student, as they are expected to produce original work. Any indication of plagiarism needs to be taken seriously. Make sure your student is familiar with when and how to attribute sources. These conventions are explained fully in the appendix of the student coursebook. Although high school students should be fully aware of the importance of academic integrity, you are encouraged to review its significance with your student at the start of the course. (Information on this is also found in the appendix.)

Opportunities for civic engagement are continually developing and dynamic. If you would like to explore more options with your student, visit iCivics (www.icivics.org), which provides a platform for students to collaborate worldwide on significant issues.

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, students can expect to spend about five hours on each lesson (or ten hours for a double lesson). Students who need more time to complete the work might modify some lessons to focus on fewer assignments or opt to complete some of the written assignments orally. Modifications like these can allow students to produce work that is of a higher quality than if they were rushing to get everything done. Each lesson in this course can be customized to suit your student's needs.

Keep an eye on the workload as your student progresses through the course, and make adjustments so they have time for meaningful learning experiences.

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 SUMMARY

- ☐ 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

This section, found in the student coursebook, provides essential information about the lesson topics. It is required reading. Students will usually need to do additional research on their own (using a textbook or other sources) in order to complete the assignments. A list of online resources can be found at www.oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links. These can be considered a starting point for further research.

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.

   Like many of the assignments in this course, this one has a variety of possible responses. The goal is to have the student explain their rationale for choosing specific words to describe government. For instance, some students might use words like *complicated*, *essential*, or *powerful* while others use words like *wasteful*, *controlling*, or *antiquated*. The words chosen by the student can give a glimpse into their thought processes, assumptions, and previous knowledge as it relates to government.

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.)

Students are asked to analyze the structure of a group to which they belong to help them begin to understand the complex structure underlying government systems and departments. Students may be surprised to realize that even a simple book club, for instance, requires someone to make arrangements regarding when and where to meet, how the meeting is structured, what books to consider for reading, how to keep group members informed, if or when to add new members, and more. It may be the first time they consider unwritten rules as well. For example, a study group might expect members to demonstrate curiosity and good listening skills even though this expectation is not written down anywhere; a volunteer group might expect friendliness and cooperation; a sports team might expect a dedication to physical fitness and teamwork.

In addition to looking at the student's response to gauge their understanding of group organization, this assignment will help you assess the student's writing skills. Information should be organized into paragraphs with logically sequenced ideas and topic sentences to introduce main ideas. Paragraphs should be used to focus attention on main ideas and provide supporting details in the form of specific examples.

Students are expected to revise their first draft to add clarity, eliminate redundancies, expand on topics lacking detail, smooth transitions between ideas, etc. The next draft

should be edited to correct awkward phrasing and errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The final draft should be carefully proofread so that the student presents a polished piece of writing.

Here are some details that can help you assess the student's writings skills:

- ❑ **Is the information presented in an organized way?**
- ❑ **Are paragraphs used to highlight the main ideas?**
- ❑ **Are the ideas clearly stated?**
- ❑ **Do ideas flow logically from one to the next?**
- ❑ **Are statements supported with concrete evidence, examples, or details?**
- ❑ **Does the writing show a variety of sentence types and lengths to keep it interesting?**
- ❑ **Is there an introduction to orient the reader and a conclusion to wrap up the topic?**
- ❑ **Does the writing stay focused on the main thesis or purpose?**
- ❑ **Does the work show evidence of editing and proofreading?**
- ❑ **Is this a good example of the student's best work?**

This checklist can be used to evaluate any piece of writing produced in this course.

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.

   This course project is a major component of the course, and students will work on it in every lesson. It may help you to read the course project sections of each lesson ahead of time so you are better prepared to guide students in this important work. Each lesson will present another step of the development process.

   In this lesson, students are asked to think about issues that are important to them and to reflect on their skills and interests. Many young adults are quite informed about local issues; others may need to spend time searching local news to find out what issues are most concerning. Many communities struggle with homelessness, low-paying jobs that do not match the cost of living, and access to affordable health care. Issues of interest to many young adults include the high cost of college, housing prices that prevent them from living independently, and problems related to substance abuse and mental health. Ideally, the course project will combine the student's interests with topical issues that affect the public.

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.

Students are advised to share their work at the end of each lesson. This will help them receive timely feedback on the project development and coursework. If you (or a teacher the student is working with) prefer a different submission schedule, make sure your student understands when and how to submit work and when to expect feedback.

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 SUMMARY

- ☐ 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

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.

Throughout the course, students are offered reflection and discussion prompts. Giving students the opportunity to think about issues and share ideas in conversation is vital for helping them practice skills in reasoning, constructing an argument, considering alternate viewpoints, and forming and shifting opinions as new information is gathered. Some students will be eager to discuss issues while others will need to be coached in how to engage in effective, respectful civic debate. Adults can model listening skills, ask questions to prompt further discussion, and state opinions in well-reasoned arguments.

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

Students are expected to look up any unfamiliar terms. Sometimes the terms will be found in the Before You Begin section of each lesson and other times students will need to seek out the definition elsewhere.

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.

   Developing the ability to evaluate the validity of a source is essential in today's world. This assignment is intended to help students begin to think more critically about where their information comes from.

   Throughout the course, your student will be asked to give an opinion on a variety of topics. The goal in supporting your student in this work is to provide a safe space for all opinions to be aired. When assessing the work, you will not be judging the student's opinion but rather how it was expressed. Look for the student to communicate ideas clearly and logically, backing them up with specific examples or sound reasoning.

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.

It is often difficult to differentiate between fact and opinion. Facts are based on evidence (such as studies or articles in peer-revised journals), can be verified by a variety of sources, and are stated objectively. Opinions are based on beliefs rather than evidence. They often rely on emotions or subjective perceptions and are not corroborated by objective sources.

Students should supply specific examples to support their response. For instance, an article that uses emotional adjectives (such as "devastating decision" or "gleeful relief") or judgmental terms (such as "complaining critics" or "naysayers") is designed to sway public opinion. An article that uses careful wording that avoids judgment or favoritism is likely trying to inform the public without revealing an opinion one way or the other. Examples of this include giving equal space to the ideas and concerns of each side, using respectful language and neutral labels, and avoiding emotionally laden modifiers.

While students may not be able to identify if a story is accurate or not, they should be able to identify the claims being made and recognize if these claims are supported by valid evidence. Hopefully, they will be able to trace at least one resource to its origin and determine the validity of the source. Students should be able to explain their process of evaluating the reliability of a resource.

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.

It is likely that there are people who are already working on important issues in the area; encourage students to reach out to them for information and inspiration. Students may appreciate help in finding people to talk to about the topics that interest them. Those who work at local businesses and nonprofits, city council members, professionals or professors in related fields, neighbors, and the parents of friends are all possible sources of information on your student's topic of interest. Students who are reluctant to arrange an in-person meeting can be encouraged to make contact via phone, email, or social media.

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.

This section provides further ways to explore the lesson topic. These activities are optional. Based on student interests and skills, you may want to encourage certain students to do some of these extra assignments. Alternately, these options can replace other lesson assignments.

Lesson

3 Research and Resources

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Locate relevant and reliable sources related to the study of government.
- Demonstrate lateral reading by researching related articles and topics.
- Differentiate between paraphrasing and direct quotations.

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read the Before You Begin section.
- ☐ Compile a list of relevant resources.
- ☐ Create a navigational map showing the results of lateral reading.
- ☐ Summarize an article using paraphrasing, quotations, and citations.
- ☐ Course Project: Clarifying Your Focus

Smart Internet Searches

You can use smart internet searches to avoid biased search results.

- Rather than Googling everything, **think about where you might go for good information** on a topic. For example, are you looking for health information? Try the Mayo Clinic, the National Institute of Health, or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For questions about atmospheric science, try NOAA or NASA.
- **Avoid asking questions that imply a certain answer.** Instead of "Why is butter bad for my health?" search for "What are the health benefits and concerns about butter?" Instead of "Is the electoral college outdated?" type "pros and cons of the electoral college."
- **Use different search prompts and compare the results.** As you sift through the results of an initial query, continue to reformulate your search using more accurate terms.

Assignments

1. Create a list of resources that you might use in your study of government. (You can start with the resources listed in the box "Important Research Sites.") You will continue to add to this list as you conduct additional research and work on your course project. Compile the online links in one

computer file and/or bookmark them for easy access. You are encouraged to use print sources as well. (Any textbook related to U.S. government can be useful.)

To begin your list, ask several adults you know where they would look for information about the U.S. government and civics issues in general. If, for example, someone says the town library or the library at the local university is a good place to conduct research, find out the library's hours. Write down this information on your resource list. Visit the library to talk to the reference librarian; add any recommended resource to your list.

Students will begin compiling a list of resources and continue adding to it throughout the course. You may want to check the list periodically to ensure it is being developed. Students can begin their list with the online links found at www.oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links; however, they are expected to locate additional resources throughout the course and add them to their list.

2. Fact-checkers are people who review information to determine its validity. One of their main tools is *lateral reading*. Rather than reading one article, scrolling from top to bottom vertically, they scan information in the first article, and then they read multiple related articles, looking for places where there is agreement or contradiction.

   Practice lateral reading by choosing a topic to explore and then creating a map of where this topic takes you. Wikipedia is a popular starting point for an internet search, and the many related links that are included in most articles make it easy to branch out to get more information. However, you don't want to explore only one article and its related links; the process of lateral reading includes restarting the search repeatedly to find other relevant articles and sites.

   Start with a search question/prompt. It can be related to an issue or area you are considering for your course project, or it can be related to politics or government on the local, national, or international level. Choose one of the top search results (choose wisely!), and read some or all of the article. Click on related links, keeping track of each site. Go back to your original search prompt—you can keep it the same or change the wording to refine the search—and choose another article. Repeat the process until your lateral reading covers at least three text sources and one video.

   For each site you click on, record the following:

   - Author (if known)
   - Title of article
   - Website name
   - Date published or posted
   - URL

   Use this information to create a citation in MLA style. (See the appendix for details on citation formats for online websites, articles, and videos.)

As you navigate your research sources, create a map, outline, or other graphic organizer to show how the sites relate to one another. For instance, in outline form, your map might look like this:

Site 1

1. Related link in article
2. Related link in article
    a. Link from there

Site 2

1. Related link in article
    a. Link from there

On your map, include the article or website name for each site. You will share both your works cited list and your navigational map with your teacher.

It might be helpful to share with students a variety of graphic organizers, mind maps, and organizational charts. (These can be found by searching online.) Students can choose the organizer that best represents their preferred style of thinking and writing.

The goal of this assignment is for students to explore the technique of lateral reading, which means consulting multiple sources related to a topic to corroborate information. The navigational map should reveal related links and show how many original sites were consulted as well as how many links were explored based on each site.

3. From the research you conducted for assignment #2, choose one article and paraphrase the information in it. In your summary of the article, make sure to explain the concepts, ideas, or events in your own words. If you use any specific phrases or sentences, be sure they are in quotation marks with an in-text citation. Include a link to the original article, and credit the source in your summary. (You may want to review the sections on plagiarism and citing sources in the appendix of this coursebook.)

    In this assignment, students gain skills in identifying key ideas in a text, summarizing information, and differentiating between direct citations and paraphrasing. When paraphrasing ideas, the original source of the material still needs to be cited. One way to bring awareness to the necessity of adequate citations is to ask students, "How do you know that to be true?" or "Do you have a way to back this up if someone were to disagree with your statements?"

    Look for writing that explains the topic accurately and clearly. It should be specifically noted where the ideas came from, and direct quotes should be in quotation marks and include in-text citations.

Course Project

Clarifying Your Focus

As you think about how you might like to work for change in your community or beyond, it can help to see what others have done. Read the following:

> "6 Student Stories on Change-Makers in Their Communities"
>
> www.yesmagazine.org/education/2020/06/11/6-student-stories-on-change-makers-in-their-communities

Read/view all six projects. Do any spark your interest? You might find inspiration in the issues these students addressed or in the format they used to share their work.

Afterward, complete one of the following steps.

If you have an idea of the general focus of your course project:

Write a few sentences about what draws you to this issue. Then, write a list of questions you have, information you'd like to know, or possible areas you'd like to explore.

If you are still unsure of the general focus of your course project:

Ask three to five people you know this question: "If you could change something in the community, nation, or world, what would it be?" Or perhaps ask this question: "What do you see as the most pressing problems facing our community, nation, or world?"

Write down their responses. If one response appeals to you, write a few sentences about what draws you to this issue.

It is important for students to identify the focus of their course project soon so activities in later lessons can directly support the development of their project. Sometimes students become overwhelmed while trying to narrow down their options. A conversation can help them clarify where they'd like to put their energy.

Lesson

4

Foundations of Civilization

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Analyze the similarities and differences between types of government.
- Present information in a chart.
- Compare news items from local, national, and international newspapers.

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read the Before You Begin section.
- ☐ Reflect on and discuss how laws relate to values.
- ☐ Reflect on the purpose or benefit of studying government.
- ☐ Watch a video on reasons for studying government and politics, and explain key elements.
- ☐ Create a chart that compares different types of government.
- ☐ Course Project: Identifying Current Events, Concerns, and Issues

Reflect and Discuss

Have you ever thought about how laws relate to values? For example, many people value their health. One law that supports that value is the law that prohibits people from smoking cigarettes in public places (and subjecting others to secondhand smoke). Think about or discuss with others the connection between values and laws. What is something you value? Is there a law that supports it?

Terms to Know

Below are some terms that you will need to know on your journey to understanding how government works. These provide important points of difference in how humans have participated in government as a system.

- Authoritarianism
- Totalitarianism
- Dictatorship
- Theocracy
- Monarchy
- Absolute monarchy
- Constitutional monarchy
- Aristocracy
- Autocracy
- Oligarchy
- Democracy
- Direct democracy
- Representative democracy
- Social democracy
- Republic
- Communism
- Socialism
- Anarchy

Assignments

1. Why study government? Write down your thoughts. Do not research this question. What do you think?

   In the next assignment, students will watch a video outlining important reasons for studying government. However, this question should be answered with the student's own original thoughts before they watch the video.

2. Watch the following video:

   "Introduction: Crash Course U.S. Government and Politics"

   www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrk4oY7UxpQ

   Based on the many reasons given in the video regarding the importance of learning about government, what do you think are the most important reasons? Why?

   Reasons for studying government stated in the video include the following:

   - **To become more engaged and active citizens**
   - **To learn about how to become involved in the political process**
   - **To understand the forces shaping American politics today**
   - **To develop our knowledge**

- **To make our government more responsive and accountable**

Student answers will vary about which reasons they deem most important and why.

3. There are many ways to organize a government, leadership, rules, and the consequences of breaking those rules. Each government system has a different ratio of democracy versus absolutism. Research the following types of government, and create a chart that explains the differences and similarities between them:

   - Dictatorship (autocracy, authoritarian, totalitarian)
   - Monarchy (absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy)
   - Oligarchy (aristocracy, theocracy, corporatocracy)
   - Democracy (direct democracy, representative democracy, social democracy, republic)
   - Communism and socialism
   - Anarchy

   Your chart should include a brief definition (written in your own words) of each type of system and subsystem.

   Students will define each type of government and identify similarities and differences using a chart format. The chart should be clearly labeled. Below is one example of what that might look like. Student definitions and answers will vary, particularly in regard to where similarities and differences are found. Students should be able to explain their ideas.

GOVERNMENT	DEFINITION	SIMILARITIES and DIFFERENCES
Dictatorship	**Dictatorship: governance by a single leader or group with no tolerance for other political ideas.** **Autocracy: governance by a single leader who rules with absolute power.** **Authoritarian: a government demanding obedience through force but not necessarily controlling every aspect of people's lives.** **Totalitarian: absolute control by the government over all aspects of citizens' lives.**	**Similar to a monarchy or oligarchy in that power is concentrated in the hands of one person or a small group.** **Different from a democracy in which there is a balance of power between government systems.**

Monarchy	**Monarchy: rule by a single person (king or queen) who has inherited the position by birth.** **Absolute monarchy: hereditary leader who rules with absolute power.** **Constitutional monarchy: hereditary rule that is limited through constitutional law.**	**An absolute monarchy is similar to a dictatorship in that all power is concentrated in the hands of one person; a constitutional monarchy is similar to a democracy in that elected officials can make laws.** **Different from systems where power is assumed by force or through free elections rather than heredity.**
Oligarchy	**Oligarchy: rule where power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of people.** **Aristocracy: rule where power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of aristocrats (the wealthy or those holding hereditary titles).** **Theocracy: rule where power is concentrated in the hands of religious leaders.** **Corporatocracy: rule where power resides in the hands of corporations and business interests.**	**Similar to a monarchy in that a privileged group has all the power.** **Different from democratic systems where a majority of citizens are eligible for public office.**
Democracy	**Democracy: governance through elected officials.** **Direct democracy: a system where individual voters decide all political issues.** **Representative democracy: a system where elected officials decide most political issues.** **Social democracy: a democracy that supports a strong social welfare system.**	**Similar to socialism in that the power rests in the hands of the public.** **Different from a dictatorship or monarchy where the power is concentrated in the hands of one person or a small group.**

Democracy (*continued*)	**Republic: a government where leaders are elected by the public instead of being appointed or gaining a position through heredity.**	
Communism and Socialism	**Communism: a central political party controls resources and production, with work and resources shared equally among citizens.** **Socialism: the public owns and controls production through communal government structures or elected officials who make sure everyone's needs are met.**	**Similar to a social democracy that seeks to ensure basic needs are met for the entire population.** **Different from systems that uphold a society with class differences.**
Anarchy	**Anarchy: a society without a recognized authority or governing system.**	**Similar to systems that propose all citizens are equal.** **Different from any organized system.**

Course Project

Identifying Current Events, Concerns, and Issues

> *"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."*
>
> **—Jane Goodall**

An essential element of your course project is that it be useful to others. A good place to start is by reflecting on questions like these:

- What kind of help do people need?
- What concerns do they have?
- Are there particular concerns, problems, or issues related to your community or region?

To gain an understanding of current issues, you'll refer to newspapers.

Browse at least five newspapers on Newseum:

"Today's Front Pages"

www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages

Begin with a newspaper that represents your geographic location. Diversify your search by including newspapers from big cities and small towns. You can focus on a single region in the United States or widen your search to include other countries. Browse the headlines to look for common issues or themes. Pay attention to which articles are emphasized with big, bold, front-page headlines and which are relegated to a lower position on the page and smaller headlines.

Compile a summary of your findings, and then use your results to answer the questions listed above.

Students may or may not find a common thread between newspapers from different regions and countries, depending on recent events. If no commonality is found, encourage students to focus on issues and concerns reported in their local area. This will help them continue to focus their project on relevant needs in the community.

Extend Your Learning

To gain a better understanding of issues people face today, expand your search to national and international newspapers. Look for trends that are regional or specific to a certain place. Explore further to find out what, if anything, is being done to address these concerns.

Lesson

5

Philosophies of Government

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Explain key concepts in primary source documents.
- Discuss political philosophy based on the writings of a historical figure.
- Identify essential elements for governing a new colony.

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read the Before You Begin section.
- ☐ Reflect on and discuss balancing individual freedom and the public good.
- ☐ Read and reflect on the Mayflower Compact and the Declaration of Independence.
- ☐ Research a historical figure, and use direct quotes to write a philosophical conversation.
- ☐ Course Project: Refining Your Essential Question

Reflect and Discuss

Tocqueville raised the issue of the risk to individual rights under majority rule (rules established and approved by the majority of—but not all—citizens). Balancing an individual's rights with what those in power believe to be the good of the society is an ongoing challenge. The global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 is a good example of a time when individual rights were curbed for the good of the many.

What would be the benefits of allowing individuals complete freedom? What would be the drawbacks? What is the role of government in determining individual freedoms? How does this role change during times of crisis like a global pandemic?

Discuss your thoughts with someone who is your age and with someone who is much older. What are their thoughts about balancing individual freedom and the public good?

Terms to Know

Here are the key terms to understand:

- Social contract
- Separation of church and state
- Separation of powers
- Mayflower Compact
- The Declaration of Independence
- The Articles of Confederation
- The Constitution of the United States of America

Assignments

1. Read the Mayflower Compact (found in the appendix of this coursebook). Reflect on the phrase "civil body politic." Think about why this agreement was so significant.

   Then, read the Declaration of Independence (also found in the appendix). Write a brief reflection. What did you find surprising or significant? Why do you think this document was so influential, not only at the time it was written but long afterward as well?

   The Mayflower Compact stated a determination to form a united community for self-government ("a civil body politic"). The term *civil* also has connotations of respectful compromise and conflict resolution. Students might note this determination is significant because the colonists recognized the need for self-government in the new colony even while declaring their loyalty to England.

   Students might point to the principles of good government outlined in the Declaration of Independence, such as equality ("all men are created equal"), unalienable rights ("life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"), and self-rule (governments "deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed"). These and other principles continue to frame and guide the values and actions of U.S. citizens today.

2. Choose one of the key figures listed in the Before You Begin section. Do some additional research about that figure's political philosophy. (You will find several good online links for starting your research at www.oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links.)

   Imagine you are having a conversation with this person. To open the conversation, pose this question:

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

If you have an idea about what you'd like to address in your course project, feel free to replace "change the world" with something more specific to your interests (such as, "How will learning about the foundations and structure of the U.S. government help me address illiteracy in the United States?" or "How will learning about the foundations and structure of the U.S. government help me fight cyberbullying?").

Based on their beliefs and historical writings, what advice might this person give you in the pursuit of change? Be creative in your response, but base it solidly in their philosophy of government. If the conversation evolves into a discussion about internet safety or another topic that relates to something that wasn't yet invented, just use your imagination, combined with what you have learned about that person. Long before modern times, political philosophers thought about harassment, injustice, and how people should behave.

In your conversation, include at least two direct quotes from the writings or speeches of the person you choose. Note these quotes by underlining or highlighting them. When read aloud, your conversation should take several minutes—this gives you plenty of time to debate and elaborate on the ideas and issues you are discussing.

You can choose how you'd like to share this conversation. It can be in audio or video form. (Make sure the two people in the conversation have different voices, and make it clear who they are portraying.) It can be written as a play, in story form, or in graphic novel/comic book style. Take your time to polish the writing so the conversation flows smoothly and with purpose.

This is a creative writing assignment that will help students apply political philosophy to today's world. Students will need to do additional research to learn more about the person they have chosen in order to write a dialogue that accurately expresses that person's views. Look for specific references to their ideas and at least two quotes from the historical person's writings.

Course Project

Refining Your Essential Question

Now that you've had several weeks to consider your course project, it is time to develop the essential question that will guide your work. First, take the time to go over the steps you've taken so far in your course project.

Think about the questions in lesson 1:

- What are some of the burning questions you have about the world?
- What do you like to do?

Review your answers to these questions, and then consider ways you might implement them in your course project. Think about the person you talked to in lesson 2 and what they had to say about making change in the world. Think about the questions you came up with (and the answers from others)

in lesson 3. Consider the themes or trends you noticed when surveying current events in the news in lesson 4.

Finally, consider the essential question posed at the beginning of this course:

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

Now, rewrite this question to include the issue or change you'd like to address. Here are some examples:

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

- create a new park for neighborhood kids?
- educate people about how to help keep the local rivers clean?
- encourage more young voters to be involved in policy-making and political campaigns?
- reduce the number of nuclear weapons on the planet?
- promote the cause of eradicating hunger?

As you consider what you'd like to accomplish with your course project, you might write several versions of this essential question. As your project develops, the focus may shift and narrow, so having several versions to begin with may help you see the different avenues you can take.

The essential question students come up with in this lesson will guide the development of their project. The question should begin with "How will learning about the foundations and structure of the U.S. government help me . . . ?"

If the student's question seems too broad, you might have a conversation or pose questions to help them refine and focus their efforts. For instance, if their question is "How will learning about the foundations and structure of the U.S. government help me save the planet?" you might ask them which environmental issues are they most concerned about or which ones seem the most problematic right now. If the student says Earth's rising temperature is the greatest problem, you might ask what is the greatest contributor to that; if the answer is carbon emissions, you might suggest they focus on how to educate people about lowering their carbon footprint, or how to encourage the use of public transit, or how to make bicycling safer and more widespread in their community. Their essential question would then be revised to "How will learning about the foundations and structure of the U.S. government help me increase bicycle use in my community?" This directly supports the goal of "saving the planet" but puts the project on a practical scale.

The more specific the student's essential question is, the more focused the project will become. Since the course project has a relatively short time line, it's best if the project has a smaller scope so it feels doable. Students can always expand the scope in the future if they want to continue working on it after the course ends.

Extend Your Learning

For a greater challenge, research two or more of the historical figures listed in the Before You Begin section, and create a conversation between them. Have them debate the success of the U.S. Constitution based on the nation's history since it was written.