American Politics and the U.S. Constitution Course Syllabus

American Politics and the U.S. Constitution

Hello, and welcome!

Do you vote, pay taxes, or use a seatbelt? Whether we recognize it or not, politics and the government's reach are all around us. The basics of our daily lives are built on a foundation of laws and rights. These can be state, federal, local, or all three. And they often have their origins in the Constitution. Understanding how the government functions, why it exists, and how it impacts us can be complicated. And that's okay. By the end of this course, you will be able to explain the basic functions of the U.S. government. You will better understand the forces that shape our policy and politics. And you will be better prepared to participate in this nation's civic institutions.

We invite you to take a minute to learn about the course by reviewing the information that follows. This way, you will be better able to understand the expectations of the course as a whole. Then you can determine how to manage your time and efforts as you navigate through it.

We are so excited that you're on this journey. We can't wait to see what you will achieve!

Course Description and Competencies

WHAT TO EXPECT

This course contains five modules. And each module contains a set of smaller units. These will help you better understand American politics and the U.S. Constitution. Topics include the development of American democracy, the structure of the U.S. government, political participation, and civil rights. They also include public opinion and media.

Throughout the course, you will find a variety of interactive elements. These include knowledge checks to help deepen your understanding of the content. Engaging with these activities reinforces new learning. It also complements the knowledge you bring to this area of study.

This course covers the following competencies:

1. The graduate describes the influence of competing political ideologies on the development of the United States government.
2. The graduate explains how the structure and powers of the United States government interact to form public policy.
3. The graduate examines the influence of political parties, citizens, and non-governmental organizations on elections and other political processes inside a participatory democracy.
4. The graduate examines the struggle to balance individual liberty, public order, and state's rights.
5. The graduate examines the influence of the media, public opinion, and political discourse on American democracy.

Assessment

The performance assessment includes three tasks. Completing this assessment provides an opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of the competencies in this course. You may attempt the assessment two times before additional support is necessary. If you require further attempts, please contact your Course Instructor or Student Experience Specialist.

◆**3** performance assessment tasks   ◆**3** competency units

Course Outline

Module	Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:
The Constitution	A. Describe the influence of Enlightenment ideas on the founding documents B. Explain the development and influence of social contract theory C. Outline the structure and powers of the government under the Articles of Confederation D. Discuss separation of powers outlined in the Constitution E. Explain the system of checks and balances F. Describe the principles of federalism
Checks and Balances	A. Examine the main powers of each branch of the federal government B. Describe how the legislative branch makes laws C. Explain reapportionment, redistricting, and gerrymandering D. Explain the differences between expressed, implied, reserved, and concurrent powers E. Describe the growth of the federal government's power relative to the states
Participation	A. Describe the various factors that shape House and Senate elections B. Discuss how the Electoral College works and its impact on presidential candidate strategy during the general election C. Explain how social movements have influenced American politics D. Examine the factors that influence voter registration in elections E. Explain how voting laws and amendments have influenced political participation

Civil Rights	A. Describe civil rights that are protected under the Constitution B. Discuss the struggles that many Americans and others face in securing and protecting civil rights C. Explain how certain Amendments offer protections and privacy to citizens D. Explain the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause E. Explain how federal laws and Supreme Court decisions have protected or expanded individual rights, and in some cases restricted them
Media's Role	A. Examine the media's role in shaping opinion and political discourse B. Discuss the role of the media as a political watchdog organization C. Describe the factors that shape our political views and beliefs D. Analyze differences in public opinion among various groups E. Explain how political actors and policy are influenced by public opinion

Technology Requirements

We want to be sure you have the tools to succeed! Review the Computer System and Technology Requirements to learn about the technology you'll need. If you have questions about your setup, contact support@academy.wgu.edu.

You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader DC. If you haven't already, download this free software. You may encounter an interactive form that contains fields that you can select or fill in. Review how to fill in a PDF form.

Key Contacts

Resource Hub	Check out the Course Lobby to take advantage of course resources, including videos and tips from our educators. There, you can ask and answer questions, provide feedback on your progress, and connect with fellow students. You will find this platform in the Student Resources section of the course. Log on and do some exploring!
Tutor.com	If you need academic support, don't hesitate to contact Tutor.com. There, you have access to thousands of tutors. And they are available 24/7 from any internet-ready device. You can also benefit from instructional videos, study tools, and other assistance.
Technical Support	If you encounter technical issues, be sure to contact the Help Desk. Just submit a Support Request for assistance.
Program Support	Do you have questions about your account? Student Support has answers. They can help with billing, switching courses, and other requests. You can contact them at (888) 320-0540 or support@academy.wgu.edu.

Accommodations

WGU provides compliant and accessible learning experiences. If you require accommodation, please contact us at the start of the course. You can email support@academy.wgu.edu or call (888) 320-0540. We are committed to ensuring that all students with disabilities have equal access to WGU's services and materials. We strive to use best practices for accessibility. Our goal is to conform to existing U.S. laws. These include the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Our learning management system (LMS) platform is Open edX. Open edX's commitment to accessible content is published on their Website Accessibility Policy.