

# United States Government

## End of Course Exam Review

### Enlightenment Concepts

---

- Natural rights- rights that all individuals are born with such as life, liberty, and property.
- Sovereignty- the idea that the people are the source of all power and not a ruler or government.
- Consent of the governed- rulers and governments only rule because the people give them the authority to do so.
- Limited government- the idea that the government is not all powerful and there are limits to what they can and cannot do.
- Social contract theory- a theory supported by John Locke and others that states the purpose of government is to protect the people's rights, and if it doesn't, the people have the right to alter or overthrow that government and put a new government in place.

### The Founding Documents

---

- Declaration of Independence- the founding document of the United States. Written by Thomas Jefferson, the document draws on many principles of the Enlightenment philosophers such as the social contract theory, natural rights, right to revolt, and consent of the governed.
- Articles of Confederation- the first governing document of the United States. The document created a government in which we had a weak central government with most of the power residing with the states.
- Federalist Papers- a series of articles written to try and persuade citizens that the Constitution should be ratified.

### Ratification of the Constitution

---

- Connecticut Compromise (Great Compromise) settled the issue of representation at the Constitutional Convention by creating a bicameral congress with equal representation in one house and proportional representation in the other.
- Federalists- people that supported ratifying the Constitution.
- Anti-Federalist- individuals that were against ratifying the Constitution.
- The Anti-Federalists did not believe the Constitution in its original form adequately protected the rights of the people so they wanted a Bill of Rights added.

### Constitutional Principles

---

- Separation of Powers- dividing the power of a government between different groups, such as our three branches of government.
- Checks and balances- dividing power in the government so that one part of the government can keep another from becoming too powerful.
- Federalism- a system of government in which the power is shared or divided between levels of government such as national, state, and local governments.
- Democracy- the idea that the power rests with the people.
- Republic- a system of government in which the people elect representatives to govern on their behalf.
- Rule of law- the idea that no one person or individual is above the law.

### The Legislative Branch

---

- Primary duty is to create or make laws.
- Contains the House of Representatives and the Senate.

- Has expressed, implied, and inherent powers.
- Expressed powers- written in the Constitution. Examples: collect taxes, declare war, and regulate foreign and interstate commerce.
- Implied powers- not written in the Constitution, but suggested. Examples: military draft and minimum wage.
- Inherent powers- powers of any free and independent nation. Example: ability to acquire new territory.
- The House of Representatives
  1. 435 members.
  2. Serve a two year term.
  3. Sole power to impeach high ranking officials and choose the President if no candidate receives a majority of the Electoral College vote.
- The Senate
  1. Two senators from each state.
  2. They serve a six year term.
  3. Sole powers include the advice and consent power and holding impeachment trials.

### **How a Bill Becomes a Law**

---

- A bill is a proposed law.
- Once the bill is introduced, it goes to a committee, where most bills die.
- If the bill passes both the House of Representatives and the Senate, the bill is sent to the President for their signature. If the President signs the bill, it becomes a law. (veto, pocket veto)
- Rules committee- play a major role in the House of Representatives. They establish the course for the bill to be heard by the entire House.
- Filibuster- this is holding the floor so that a vote can't be taken in an effort to defeat a measure. Happens in the Senate only because there is unlimited debate.
- Cloture- a vote to end a filibuster.

### **The Executive Branch**

---

- Primary duty is to enforce the laws.
- Elected by the Electoral College.
- Serve four year terms.
- Presidents are limited to two terms in office.
- Roles of the President include:
  1. Commander in Chief.
  2. Chief Diplomat.
  3. Chief Legislature.
- Powers of the President include:
  1. Veto.
  2. Negotiating treaties.
  3. Appointing officials in the government.
  4. Pardon.

### **The Bureaucracy**

---

- The bureaucracy is made up of the executive departments, regulatory and independent agencies.

- The President appoints the leaders of the various departments and agencies and they are approved by the Senate.
- The bureaucracy assists the President in enforcing the policies of the government.

## **The Judicial Branch**

---

- Primary duty is to interpret the laws.
- Made up of the federal courts including the Supreme Court.
- Nine members in the Supreme Court.
- Federal judges serve “as long as they exhibit good behavior” (lifetime appointment).
- Jurisdiction- can have original jurisdiction (hearing a case for the first time) or appellate Jurisdiction (hearing a case that has been previously heard in a lower court).

## **Limits to the Government’s Power**

---

- The Constitution forbids the national government from doing the following:
  1. Suspending the writ of habeas corpus, unless in times of war.
  2. Issuing bills of attainder.
  3. Issuing ex post facto laws.
  4. Issuing titles of nobility.
  5. Placing taxes on exports.

## **Elections**

---

- Congressional elections.
  1. Every state receives two senators that are elected at-large in each state.
  2. Each state is given a certain number of Representatives based on their population that is determined by the Census.
  3. Reapportionment- every ten years the 435 representatives are recalculated. If a state gains a representative, that means another state has to lose a representative.
  4. Redistricting- the redrawing of congressional districts in the states based on changes to population or the number of representatives.
  5. Gerrymandering- drawing congressional districts that favor one party or group of people over another.
- Presidential elections
  1. The President is chosen by the Electoral College.
  2. It is a winner-take-all system.
  3. There are 538 total votes.
  4. A candidate needs 270 votes to win the presidency.
- Primary elections
  1. Narrowing down of candidates.
  2. Closed primary- only declared party members may vote.
  3. Open primary- any registered voter can cast a ballot.
- Caucus
  1. A meeting of party members in which they hear speeches about the candidates and then cast their preference.
  2. Iowa holds the first caucus.
- General election
  1. Making the final decision for an office.

## **Citizen Participation in a Democracy**

---

- Voter turnout.
  1. 18-24 year olds usually have the lowest voter turnout.
  2. 65 & older usually have the highest voter turnout.
  3. Turnout is the highest in presidential elections and drops in midterm elections.
- Civil Disobedience- knowingly breaking a law because you feel the law is unjust.
- Grassroots movements- the average citizen gets involved in trying to bring about change.
- Political socialization- how one acquires their political beliefs.
- Political efficacy- the belief that an individual has an impact on the government and policies.
- Citizenship- can be a citizen if born in the United States, go through the naturalization process, or if one of your two parents is a citizen.

## **Political Parties**

---

- The first political parties were the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans.
- The roles of the parties include nominating candidates, running candidates for office, and governing.
- Today's two-party system includes the Democratic Party and the Republican Party.

## **Interest Groups**

---

- Organizations in which its members share a similar goal and try to further that goal.
- Examples of interest groups include the National Rifle Association (NRA), Sierra Club, PETA, NAACP, and the AARP.
- Roles of interest groups include supporting candidates and trying to influence those that are elected to office.
- Interest groups effectively use lobbying to accomplish their goals. (lobbying is trying influence policymakers)

## **Mass Media**

---

- Mass media is reaching a large number of people at the same time with some form of communication.
- Examples of mass media include television, radio, newspaper, magazines, and the Internet.
- Many groups and individuals use propaganda in the mass media to get public opinion on their side.
- Forms of propaganda include transfer, glittering generalities, card-stacking, name calling, and the bandwagon approach.

## **The Bill of Rights**

---

- The first ten amendments to the Constitution.
- Added to the Constitution to satisfy the Anti-federalists concerns.

## **Landmark Supreme Court Cases**

- Marbury v. Madison- established the concept of judicial review.
- McCulloch v. Maryland- reinforced the Supremacy clause and the use of implied powers.
- Gibbons v. Ogden- expanded the meaning of the commerce clause giving Congress more power.
- Plessy v. Ferguson- established the principle of "separate but equal".
- Brown v. Board of Education- ended segregation in public schools.

- Mapp v. Ohio- dealt with illegal searches and incorporated the exclusionary rule.
- Gideon v. Wainwright- incorporated the right to a lawyer.
- Miranda v. Arizona- established the principle that those arrested must be informed of their rights.
- Roe v. Wade- established the principle that abortion was legal based on the implied right to privacy.
- Texas v. Johnson- upheld an individual's right to burn an American flag based on the principle of symbolic speech.

### **Expansion of Civil Rights**

---

- 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment- abolished slavery.
- 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment- citizenship clause, due process clause, and equal protection clause.
- 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment- right to vote could not be denied based on race or color.
- 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment- right to vote could not be taken away based on gender.
- 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment-eliminated poll taxes as a qualification for voting.
- 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment- lowered the voting age to 18.
- Civil Rights Act of 1964- ended segregation in public accommodations such as restaurants and hotels.
- Voting Rights Act of 1965- eliminated literacy tests as a qualification for voting and instituted mandatory preclearance.
- Americans With Disabilities Act.
- Title IX.

### **Limits to Individual Rights**

---

- Can be limited in times of war.
- Your rights can't infringe upon the rights of others.
- Rights can be limited in certain locations such as schools or airports.
- Rights can be limited for the protection of society (Patriot Act).

### **State Governments**

---

- Powers of state governments include the ability to regulate education and issue professional licenses.
- State's powers come from the 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment and are known as reserved powers.
- Concurrent powers are those that the national and state governments share.
- Sunshine laws- the idea that all governmental meetings must be open to the public.
- Initiative- citizens place items on the ballot through the petition process.
- Referendum- citizens get to vote on items placed on the ballot.
- Recall- citizens can remove elected officials from office before their term is completed.
- Eminent domain-seizing private property for the good of the public as a whole.

### **Foreign Affairs**

---

- Presidents have a great role in foreign policy because of their roles as Chief Diplomat and Commander in Chief.
- For most of our history we have practiced isolationism.
- Because of our involvement in NATO and the United Nations, we have abandoned the policy of isolationism.