

Syllabus

Civics A

Course Overview

A citizen is a person who is legally recognized by a state and entitled to the state's rights and privileges. Civics is the study of the rights and duties of such a person. One of the best ways to understand your rights and duties as a citizen is to study the government that defines and upholds them. In Civics A, you will learn about politics and government, and you'll analyze democracy which is the system of government used in the United States. Finally, you will examine the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the U.S. Government. A course in Civics teaches you how to actively participate in governance and how you can help improve the quality of governance at all levels.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand the terms *power*, *authority*, *government*, and *public goods*.
- Know the importance of the rule of law in establishing limits on those who govern and those who are governed.
- Analyze a variety of economic issues, including growth of labor unions and farming issues.
- Compare the U.S. system of government with other political systems.
- Identify different methods of filling public offices at national, state, and local levels.
- Evaluate how the federal government serves the purposes set forth by the U.S. Constitution.
- Describe the processes by which the U.S. Constitution can be changed.
- Explain how certain provisions of the Constitution provide for checks and balances among the three branches of government.
- Analyze the structure of the legislative branch of government, including the role of committees and the procedure for enacting laws.
- Analyze the structure of the executive branch of government, including the constitutional powers of the president and the role of the Cabinet.
- Explain the process for electing the president of the United States.
- Understand the role of the Supreme Court and the structure and jurisdiction of the federal court system.
- Summarize the issues, decisions, and significance of landmark Supreme Court cases.
- Understand the meanings behind a variety of legal terms.

General Skills

To participate in this course, you should be able to perform online research using various search engines and library databases.

For a complete list of general skills that are required for participation in online courses, refer to the Prerequisites section of the Plato Student Orientation document, found at the beginning of this course.

Credit Value

Civics A is a 0.5-credit course.

Course Materials

- Notebook
- Computer with Internet connection and speakers or headphones

Course Pacing Guide

This course description and pacing guide is intended to help you keep on schedule with your work. Note that your course instructor may modify the schedule to meet the specific needs of your class.

Unit 1: Basic Concepts of Power and Authority

Summary

In this unit, you will study politics and government and learn about the features of democracy, a system of government ruled directly or indirectly by the people. You will understand the reasons for establishing sources of authority and how authority can protect individual rights and promote the common good. You will also learn more about your individual rights and your personal and civic responsibilities.

| Day | Activity/Objective | Type |
|-------------|---|--------------------|
| 1 day: 1 | Syllabus and Plato Student Orientation <i>Review the Plato Student Orientation and Course Syllabus at the beginning of this course.</i> | Course Orientation |
| --- | What Are Politics and Government? <i>In this lesson, you will cover the following objectives:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understand the concepts and applications of “power,” “authority,” “government,” and “public goods.”</i> • <i>Understand the importance of the rule of law in establishing limits on both those who govern and those who are governed – protecting individual rights, and promoting the common good.</i> | |

| | | |
|-----------------|--|------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the argument that all rights have limits and knows the criteria commonly used in determining when and why limits should be placed on rights. • Discuss limited government and the protection of individual rights. | |
| 2 days: 2–3 | What Are Politics and Government? <i>Read the Overview.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 4 | What Are Politics and Government? <i>Review the Glossary and fill in the Glossary activity sheet.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 5 | What Are Politics and Government? <i>In Study Questions, complete the Factual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 6 | What Are Politics and Government? <i>In Study Questions, complete the Conceptual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i> | Courseware |
| 2 days: 7–8 | What Are Politics and Government? <i>In Special Topics, complete the Conflict Resolution section.</i> | Courseware |
| 2 days: 9–10 | What Are Politics and Government? <i>In Fundamentals, complete the Women’s Rights section.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 11 | What Are Politics and Government? <i>Take the Practice Test (not graded).</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 12 | What Are Politics and Government? <i>Take the Mastery Test (graded).</i> | Courseware |
| --- | What is Democracy? <i>In this lesson, you will cover the following objectives:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze economic issues such as the growth of labor unions, farm issues, and the rise of various businesses. • Compare the U.S. system of government with other political systems. • Describe features of a federal system of government. • Describe features of a confederate system of government. • Understand the roles of limited government to the protection of individual rights. • Define terms such as nation, popular sovereignty, indirect democracy, etc. • Identify different methods of filling public offices, including elected offices, at the national, state, and local levels. • Describe the process of electing the president of the United States. • Explain the concepts of absolute and comparative advantages. | |

| | | |
|------------------|--|-----------------|
| 2 days: 13–14 | What is Democracy? <i>Read the Overview.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 15 | What is Democracy? <i>Review the Glossary and fill in the Glossary activity sheet.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 16 | What is Democracy? <i>In Study Questions, complete the Factual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 17 | What is Democracy? <i>In Study Questions, complete the Conceptual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 18 | What is Democracy? <i>In Art, complete the Voting Machine section.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 19 | What is Democracy? <i>In Special Topics, complete the Campaigns section.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 20 | What is Democracy? <i>In Special Topics, complete the Voting section.</i> | Courseware |
| 2 days: 21–22 | What is Democracy? <i>In Fundamentals, complete the Civil Disobedience section.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 23 | What is Democracy? <i>Take the Practice Test (not graded).</i> | Assessment |
| 1 day: 24 | What is Democracy? <i>Take the Mastery Test (graded).</i> | Assessment |
| 3 days: 25–27 | Internet Research Project: Migration and Assimilation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Explore the historical and contemporary demographics of immigrants to the United States.</i> • <i>Explore the motivations, experiences, and challenges faced by immigrants in moving to the United States, as well as assimilating to the dominant culture.</i> | Online Research |
| 1 day: 28 | Posttest—Unit 1 | Assessment |

Unit 2: National Institutions of Government, Part 1

Summary

In this unit, you will learn about the basic principles of the U.S. Constitution, how the Constitution places checks and balances on government rule, and the steps officials can take to amend the document. You will also study the organization and responsibilities of the legislative branch of the U.S. Government.

| Day | Activity/Objective | Type |
|------------------|--|------------|
| --- | <p>The U.S. Constitution</p> <p><i>In this lesson, you will cover the following objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Evaluate how the federal government serves the purposes set forth in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.</i> • <i>Evaluate constitutional provisions for limiting the role of government.</i> • <i>Analyze the processes by which the U.S. Constitution can be changed.</i> • <i>Analyze the functions of the legislative branch of government, including the bicameral structure of Congress.</i> • <i>Explain how certain provisions of the U.S. Constitution provide for checks and balances among the three branches of government.</i> • <i>Categorize government powers as national or shared.</i> • <i>Discuss the limits on the national and state government in the U.S. federal system of government.</i> | |
| 2 days: 29–30 | <p>The U.S. Constitution</p> <p><i>Read the Overview.</i></p> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 31 | <p>The U.S. Constitution</p> <p><i>Review the Glossary and fill in the Glossary activity sheet.</i></p> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 32 | <p>The U.S. Constitution</p> <p><i>In Study Questions, complete the Factual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i></p> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 33 | <p>The U.S. Constitution</p> <p><i>In Study Questions, complete the Conceptual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i></p> | Courseware |
| 2 days: 34–35 | <p>The U.S. Constitution</p> <p><i>In Art, complete four of the following writing activities: U.S. Constitution, Declaration of Independence, United States Flag, Fireworks, Pilgrims, or Statue of the Republic.</i></p> | Courseware |

| | | |
|------------------|--|------------|
| 3 days: 36–38 | The U.S. Constitution <i>In Documents, complete all of these writing activities: Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and Amendments to U.S. Constitution.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 39 | The U.S. Constitution <i>In Fundamentals, complete the American Government section.</i> | Courseware |
| 2 days: 40–41 | The U.S. Constitution <i>In Fundamentals, complete the American History section.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 42 | The U.S. Constitution <i>Take the Practice Test (not graded).</i> | Assessment |
| 1 day: 43 | The U.S. Constitution <i>Take the Mastery Test (graded).</i> | Assessment |
| --- | National Institutions - Congress <i>In this lesson, you will cover the following objectives:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Analyze the structure of the legislative branch of government, including the bicameral structure of Congress, the role of committees, and the procedure for enacting laws.</i> • <i>Explain how certain provisions of the U.S. Constitution provide for checks and balances among the three branches of government.</i> • <i>Categorize and explain the functions and powers of Congress, including its non-legislative functions (such as oversight).</i> | |
| 2 days: 44–45 | National Institutions - Congress <i>Read the Overview.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 46 | National Institutions - Congress <i>Review the Glossary and fill in the Glossary activity sheet.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 47 | National Institutions - Congress <i>In Study Questions, complete the Factual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 48 | National Institutions - Congress <i>In Study Questions, complete the Conceptual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 49 | National Institutions - Congress <i>In Graphs/Charts, complete the following sections:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>U.S. Federal Budget</i> • <i>How a Bill Becomes a Law</i> | Courseware |

| | | |
|------------------|--|--------------------|
| 1 day: 50 | National Institutions - Congress • <i>In Maps, complete the section on the United States.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 51 | National Institutions - Congress <i>In Art, complete the following sections:</i> • <i>Capitol Building</i> • <i>Congress</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 52 | National Institutions - Congress <i>In Special Topics, complete the Parliamentary Procedure section.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 53 | National Institutions - Congress <i>In Fundamentals, complete the Congressional Record section.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 54 | National Institutions - Congress <i>Take the Practice Test (not graded).</i> | Assessment |
| 1 day: 55 | National Institutions - Congress <i>Take the Mastery Test (graded).</i> | Assessment |
| 3 days: 56–58 | Internet Research Project: A Modern Constitutional Convention <i>Identify issues of national political importance, evaluate alternative constitutional methods of dealing with these issues, and use a parliamentary decision-making process to choose among the alternatives.</i> | Online Research |
| 1 day: 59 | Posttest—Unit 2 | Assessment |

Unit 3: National Institutions of Government, Part 2

Summary

In this unit, you will study the executive and judiciary branches of the U.S. Government. The executive branch is responsible for carrying out laws and is made up of the president, the vice president, and the Cabinet. The judiciary branch is responsible for evaluating and upholding laws and is comprised of the Supreme Court and other courts.

| | | |
|------------------|---|------------|
| --- | <p>National Institutions - President</p> <p><i>In this lesson, you will cover the following objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Analyze the structure of the executive branch of government, including the constitutional powers of the president, the growth of presidential power, and the role of the Cabinet.</i> • <i>Analyze the structure of the executive branch of government, including the role of the executive departments.</i> • <i>Describe and categorize the functions of the different departments of the federal bureaucracy.</i> • <i>Explain how certain provisions of the U.S. Constitution provide for checks and balances among the three branches of government.</i> • <i>Explain the process of electing the president of the United States.</i> • <i>Explain how the president could use his powers to influence Congress and the people.</i> • <i>Explain the major responsibilities of the president for foreign policy.</i> | |
| 2 days: 60–61 | <p>National Institutions - President</p> <p><i>Read the Overview.</i></p> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 62 | <p>National Institutions - President</p> <p><i>Review the Glossary and fill in the Glossary activity sheet.</i></p> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 63 | <p>National Institutions - President</p> <p><i>In Study Questions, complete the Factual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i></p> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 64 | <p>National Institutions - President</p> <p><i>In Study Questions, complete the Conceptual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i></p> | Courseware |
| 2 days: 65–66 | <p>National Institutions - President</p> <p><i>In Art, complete four of the following writing activities: Cabinet Meeting, Abraham Lincoln, American Leaders, United Nations, George Washington, or White House.</i></p> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 67 | <p>National Institutions - President</p> <p><i>In Maps, complete the World section.</i></p> | Courseware |

| | | |
|------------------|--|------------|
| 1 day: 68 | National Institutions - President <i>In Special Topics, complete the Armed Forces Literacy section.</i> | Courseware |
| 2 days: 69–70 | National Institutions - President <i>In Fundamentals, complete Relations with Neighbors.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 71 | National Institutions - President <i>Take the Practice Test (not graded).</i> | Assessment |
| 1 day: 72 | National Institutions - President <i>Take the Mastery Test (graded).</i> | Assessment |
| --- | <p>National Institutions - Judiciary</p> <p><i>In this lesson, you will cover the following objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Analyze how the Constitution established the Supreme Court and how Congress established the federal court system, its structure, and its jurisdiction.</i> • <i>Explain how certain provisions of the U.S. Constitution provide for checks and balances among the three branches of government.</i> • <i>Analyze issues addressed in selected cases such as “Engel v. Vitale” and “Miranda v. Arizona” that involve Supreme Court interpretations of rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.</i> • <i>Summarize the issues, decisions, and significance of landmark Supreme Court cases including “Marbury v. Madison.”</i> • <i>Analyze the role of the judiciary in protecting the rights of individuals.</i> • <i>Examine the relationship between the state and federal court systems.</i> • <i>Examine how the Supreme Court functions, decides which cases to take, and how cases are decided and decisions issued.</i> • <i>Understand the meaning behind various legal terms such as amicus curiae brief, stare decisis, civil liberties, civil rights, affirmative action, and writ of certiorari.</i> | |
| 2 days: 73–74 | National Institutions - Judiciary <i>Read the Overview.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 75 | National Institutions - Judiciary <i>Review the Glossary and fill in the Glossary activity sheet.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 76 | National Institutions - Judiciary <i>In Study Questions, complete the Factual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 77 | National Institutions - Judiciary <i>In Study Questions, complete the Conceptual section. Use the Overview Library and the Chronology Library as references.</i> | Courseware |

| | | |
|------------------|---|-----------------|
| 2 days: 78–79 | National Institutions - Judiciary <i>In Maps, complete the following sections:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europe • Russia and the Eurasian Republics | Courseware |
| 1 day: 80 | National Institutions - Judiciary <i>In Graphs/Charts, complete the section on U.S. Branches of Government.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 81 | National Institutions - Judiciary <i>In Art, complete the section on Supreme Court Justices.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 82 | National Institutions - Judiciary <i>In Fundamentals, complete the section on Jury Duty.</i> | Courseware |
| 1 day: 83 | National Institutions - Judiciary <i>Take the Practice Test (not graded).</i> | Assessment |
| 1 day: 84 | National Institutions - Judiciary <i>Take the Mastery Test (graded).</i> | Assessment |
| 3 days: 85–87 | Internet Research Project: Budget Process <i>Gain an understanding of the budget process, the tradeoffs required in budgeting, and the major funding requirements of the U.S. government.</i> | Online Research |
| 1 day: 88 | Posttest—Unit 3 | Assessment |
| 1 day: 89 | Semester Review | |
| 1 day: 90 | End-of-Semester Test | Assessment |