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# Why Government?...Why Our Government? [12th grade]

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# UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

## Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: Why Government?...Why Our Government?

Grade Level: 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

Subject/Topic Area: US Government

Designed By: Samuel DeJohn

Time Frame: 8 – 10 Days (Block Scheduling)

School District: Spring Branch ISD

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### **Brief Summary of Unit**

This unit was constructed as an introduction to 12<sup>th</sup> grade US Government. It is an attempt to provide enduring understandings of the United States Constitution and how it compares with other forms of government. There are many options of governing systems, but through an evolutionary process, the United States Constitution contains sound principles which allowed a republic endure through regional infighting, civil unrest, and infinite political reforms. The unit begins with taxonomy of various governing systems and ideas. After the classification process, students will look at how regional politics play into nation building. While reflecting on the Constitutional Convention and the context in which it was created, students will begin to weigh the relationship between civil liberties, state government powers, and federal government powers. In the end, the students will process their knowledge of the six basic principles of the Constitution (popular sovereignty, limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, and judicial review) into a holistic project that requires them to find how profound and relevant the principles are to America's 200+ year success.

# Why Government?...Why Our Government?

**Grade: 12<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Subject: US Government, AP US Government & Politics, AP Comparative Government**

## Stage 1: Desired Results

### Understandings

*Students will understand that...*

**There are many options of governing systems, but through an evolutionary process, the United States Constitution contains sound principles which allowed a republic endure through regional infighting, civil unrest, and infinite political reforms.**

### Essential Questions

- What makes a government?
- What are the differences between various types of governing systems and classifications?
  - How is the US Government different from other governments?
- How has US Government changed since the Revolution?
- How profound are the 6 basic principles of the Constitution in today's and history's context?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the US Government?

### Knowledge

*Students will know and be able to answer...*

#### TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- The student understands how constitutional government, as developed in the United States, has been influenced by people, ideas, and historical documents.
  - (A) analyze the principles and ideas that underlie the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including those of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Charles de Montesquieu;
  - (B) analyze the contributions of the political philosophies of the Founding Fathers, including John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, on the development of the U.S. government;
  - (C) analyze debates and compromises necessary to reach political decisions using historical documents; and
- The student understands major political ideas and forms of government in history.
  - (A) explain major political ideas in history such as natural law, natural rights, divine right of kings, and social contract theory; and
  - (B) identify the characteristics of classic forms of government such as absolute monarchy, authoritarianism, classical republic, despotism, feudalism, liberal democracy, and totalitarianism.
- The student understands why certain places and regions are important to the United States.
  - (B) analyze the economic significance to the United States of the location and geographic characteristics of selected places and regions such as oil fields in the Middle East.
- The student understands the American beliefs and principles reflected in the U.S. Constitution.
  - (A) explain the importance of a written constitution;
  - (B) evaluate how the federal government serves the purposes set forth in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution;
  - (D) evaluate constitutional provisions for limiting the role of government, including republicanism, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights;
  - (F) analyze how the American beliefs and principles reflected in the U.S. Constitution contribute to our national identity.

#### NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT 9-12 CONTENT STANDARDS

- What are Civic Life, Politics, and Government?
  - What is civic life? What is politics? What is government? Why are government and politics necessary? What purposes should government serve?
  - What are the essential characteristics of limited and unlimited government?
  - What are the nature and purposes of constitutions?
  - What are alternative ways of organizing constitutional governments?
- What are the Foundations of the American Political System?
  - What is the American idea of constitutional government?
  - What values and principles are basic to American constitutional democracy?
- How Does the Government Established by the Constitution Embody the Purposes, Values, and Principles of American Democracy?
  - How are power and responsibility distributed, shared, and limited in the government established by the United States Constitution?
  - How is the national government organized and what does it do?
  - What is the place of law in the American constitutional system?

## US GOVERNMENT – WHY GOVERNMENT?... WHY OUR GOVERNMENT?

### Skills

#### Students will be able to...

- The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize & use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology.
  - (A) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;
  - (B) create a product on a contemporary government issue or topic using critical methods of inquiry;
  - (C) explain a point of view on a government issue;
  - (D) analyze and evaluate the validity of information from primary and secondary sources for bias, propaganda, point of view, and frame of reference;
  - (E) evaluate government data using charts, tables, graphs, and maps; and
  - (F) use appropriate mathematical skills to interpret social studies information such as maps and graphs.
- Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, & visual forms.
  - (A) use social studies terminology correctly;
  - (B) use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation;
  - (C) transfer information from one medium to another, including written to visual and statistical to written or visual, using computer software as appropriate; and
  - (D) create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.
- Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving & decision-making skills, working independently & with others, in a variety of settings.
  - (A) use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution; and
  - (B) use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision.

## STAGE 2: ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

### PERFORMANCE TASKS:

#### 6 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTION ANNOTATED MURAL

Students will process their understanding of the six basic principles of the Constitution into annotated murals.

POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY  
SEPARATION OF POWERS

LIMITED GOVERNMENT  
JUDICIAL REVIEW

CHECKS AND BALANCES  
FEDERALISM

The mural will require a section dedicated to each principle. For each principle, there should be:

- Explanation and purpose of principle
  - Must be created to support your answer to this question: Why our government? The mural must be composed of 6 sections, each dedicated to a principle of the Constitution
- Elements Representing the Principle
  - Create graphics for each section of the mural to represent the important ideas you have learned and/or the important events to which you have connected each principle.
- Connecting Evidence
  - The mural needs to contain a representation of a relevant, real world event that shows a profound presence or a profound absence of the principle.

### OTHER EVIDENCE:

#### ORGANIZED NOTES

- Spectrum – Governing Systems
- T-Chart – Federalists and Anti-Federalists
- Venn Diagram – New Jersey/“Little State” Plan, Virginia/“Big State” Plan, Connecticut/“The Great Compromise” Plan
- Outline – Constitution
- Organized Notes – Principles of the Constitution

#### COOL-DOWN ACTIVITIES

- Exit Slip – Dear John/Jane
- Exit Slip – A Partial Governing System

#### INTERACTIVE NOTEBOOK ITEMS

#### WARM-UP ACTIVITIES

- Reflection – Why government?
- Quick-draw – Anarchists and Autocrats
- Reflection – Assumptions on Human Nature
- Reflection – Freedom Ain’t Free
- Title Page – The Constitution

#### OTHER

- Contract Gallery Walk Participation
- Governing Systems Vocabulary Quiz
- Perspective Piece/Article Analysis – Iraqi Dilemma

## US GOVERNMENT – WHY GOVERNMENT?... WHY OUR GOVERNMENT?

### STAGE 3: LEARNING ACTIVITIES

(Steps taken to get students to answer Stage 1 questions and complete performance task)

#### DAY 1

#### THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE – A SOCIAL CONTRACT Why government? What makes a good government?

##### WARM-UP ACTIVITY

- REFLECTION/THINK-PAIR-SHARE – WHY GOVERNMENT?
  - Reflection to questions in Interactive Notebook titled “Why government?”
  - *Why have a government? What are good characteristics that a government should have?*
  - Think-Pair-Share – Students turn to the student next to them and share their reflections and ideas. Student volunteers share their answers with the class.

##### CONCRETE AND CONCEPTUAL INSTRUCTION

- ORGANIZED NOTES – THE SOCIAL CONTRACT AND OTHER IDEAS
  - Instructor and students discuss the idea of government being a ‘contract’. Survey and discuss with the students what they know about contracts.
    - *What sort of things make a good contract? What do we know about contracts?*
  - Discuss John Locke’s Social Contract
    - *Why did the colonists feel that they needed a new contract? (why did we rebel against Britain?) Why do you think Britain felt that they could bend the terms of the contract?*

##### CONCRETE AND CONCEPTUAL INSTRUCTION

- GALLERY WALK – WRITING THE CONTRACT
  - Break students into groups of 3-4. Using their prior knowledge and personal assumptions, they will outline a contract describing the US government. After they outline it on whiteboard segments, give each student post-it notes.
  - Send the students around the room to review the other ‘contracts’, and the students should comment and/or raise questions regarding the groups’ conceptions of government’s roles.
    - *What sort of things do we give up in order to have law and order? What does government do for us? Is it a good contract? Does any part violate the terms of the contract? What happens when someone does not honor the contract?*
  - When the students are done circulating, ask a person from each group to share a good comment found on their board, and ask a person from each group to respond to one of the questions left on their board.
    - ASSESS THE PARTICIPATION LEVEL OF THE STUDENTS. THIS IS WHERE YOU CAN CHECK THE STUDENTS’ PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF US GOVERNMENT.

##### COOL-DOWN ACTIVITY

- EXIT SLIP – DEAR JOHN/JANE
  - Take on the identity of a personified 13 colonies. Pretend that you are writing to Britain, and that you must break-up after a long, committed relationship.
    - *How do you feel about the now impossibly difficult relationship? How do you see the past experiences as Britain’s boyfriend/girlfriend? Is there nostalgia, or, is there a sense of relief that you are going your separate ways? Are you still going to be friends? It’s not you...it’s me. Are you already seeing someone new (they can personify the new government)? Are you basking in your moment as a self-sustaining free individual without the feeling of being clingy to an unaffectionate partner who only offers exploitation and abuse?*

## US GOVERNMENT – WHY GOVERNMENT?... WHY OUR GOVERNMENT?

### DAY 2

#### THE MANY GOVERNING SYSTEMS – 31+ FLAVORS How many different flavors of government are there?

#### WARM-UP ACTIVITY

- QUICK DRAW – ANARCHISTS AND AUTOCRATS
  - After asking the class to briefly brainstorm what anarchists and autocrats (or dictators) are, have the students make caricatures of an anarchist and a dictator.
  - Have the students share their assumptions of how they envision people of those philosophies.
    - *How does your drawing exemplify what you know about opposite ways power is distributed in government? What about their character tells you about how they view the relationship between the People and government?*

#### CONCRETE AND CONCEPTUAL INSTRUCTION

- SPECTRUM – GOVERNING SYSTEMS VOCABULARY
  - Have students reference the text book for definitions of government and economic systems. They copy the notes into their Interactive Notebooks onto the right page.
  - After copying the definitions into their Interactive Notebooks, have the students create flow charts or diagrams showing how governing power flows between the citizens and the governing bodies on the left pages across from the definitions. Provide the symbol reference page to help.
  - Present the classification terms of governments in the form of a spectrum on the board.
    - Authoritarian (1 person has power, government has all power, 1 person has all power)
    - Totalitarian (unspecified amount in government, government has all power)
    - Republican (unspecified amount in government, government shares power with citizens)
    - Democratic (all citizens are in government, therefore all citizens share power)
    - Anarchist (no one has power, there is no government)
  - Students will classify the government systems by writing their terms onto the spectrum ranging from 'oppressive to lawless'
    - *What are the advantages and disadvantages with each classification? How is the power to rule split up in this spectrum? What are the differences between Authoritarian and Totalitarian? What are the differences between Republican and Democratic? What are your assumptions about Anarchy? Challenge the students assumption that Anarchy is associated with violent movements...bring up communal living. Would you want to make every decision on every law? How do we know that representatives in a Republican form of government are reflecting our interests?*
  - Have the students copy down the spectrum so that it covers both a left and right page following the vocabulary section.
    - Annotate the spectrum ranges with definitions and notes regarding to each classification term.
    - *What is the difference between an Oligarchy and a Republican form of government? Can some of these things be combined? What type of government do we have in the United States? What are the differences between these governments and ours? What are the disadvantages to being a Republic?*
  - Find real examples of each type of government system, (past or present) and write the country's name with the respective governing system within the spectrum.

#### COOL-DOWN ACTIVITY

- EXIT SLIP – A PARTIAL GOVERNING SYSTEM
  - Which system would you want to live under? How does your favorite system even with all the drawbacks that we discussed?

## US GOVERNMENT – WHY GOVERNMENT?... WHY OUR GOVERNMENT?

### DAY 3

#### THE FIRST UNITED STATES – ACTUALLY, JUST A BUNCH OF STATES

What ideas contributed to our government? How has our government changed since the Revolution?

#### WARM-UP ACTIVITY

##### • REFLECTION – ASSUMPTIONS ON HUMAN NATURE

- *"It has been so often said, as to be generally believed, that Congress have no power by the Confederation to enforce anything, for example, contributions of money. It was not necessary to give them that power expressly, for they have it by the law of nature. When two parties make a compact, there results to each a power of compelling the other to execute it."* -Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to Edward Carrington, 1787 (optional – don't reveal the quoted speakers until afterwards)
- *"Has it not . . . invariably been found that momentary passions, and immediate interests, have a more active and imperious control over human conduct than general or remote considerations of policy, utility and justice?"* –Alexander Hamilton, Federalist #6, 1788
- Ask a student volunteer to read each quote aloud. Discuss with the students the philosophies which each statement espouses. Then have the students reflect on questions provided.
  - *Which statement do you agree with more? Why? What does the first speaker mean when it is believed that Congress can't enforce laws? What power gives Congress authority, according to the first speaker? How does the second speaker counter the idea that law of nature is the ultimate authority?*
- Ask student volunteers to share their answers. You could also ask which type of government each speaker would prefer.

#### CONCRETE AND CONCEPTUAL INSTRUCTION

##### • PERSPECTIVE PIECE/ARTICLE ANALYSIS – THE IRAQI DILEMMA

- Divide the students into groups of 3-4 and pass out the one or more of the Iraqi Dilemma Articles, and complementary packets. Make sure the packets are evenly distributed.
- Students will analyze maps of Iraq showing ethnological, population, and oil distribution. Questions are asked in the assignment.
  - *Do you lean towards a more local identity or national identity? Would you trust the President over your own local representative? How does geography influence the way each tribe in Iraq favors a particular form of government? Why do certain regions want a decentralized government, while others a strong central government? How is this relevant to US History? Is there more power in state governments than D.C.'s government? What are the advantages to having more localized government? What are the disadvantages to localized government?*

#### CONCRETE AND CONCEPTUAL INSTRUCTION

##### • HOMEWORK – DEBRIEFING THE IRAQI DILEMMA

- What are some of the reasons why Americans would want a decentralized US government?
- What are some of the reasons why Americans would want a centralized US government?
- Bonus Question
  - In what situation would a neighboring country want to decentralize another government?

# US GOVERNMENT – WHY GOVERNMENT?... WHY OUR GOVERNMENT?

## DAY 4 & DAY 5

### 1787 – FROM SOME ARTICLES OF A CONFEDERATION TO A CONSTITUTION

What ideas contributed to our government? How has our government changed since the Revolution?

#### WARM-UP ACTIVITY

- REFLECTION – FREEDOM AIN'T FREE
  - *What freedoms, as a student, are you willing to fairly trade for another privilege? Why is your proposed new privilege more worth it to you than what you will have to give up?*
    - Example: I will give up wearing whatever I want in order to be able to go off campus for lunch.
- OR
- QUIZ – GOVERNING SYSTEMS VOCABULARY

#### CONCRETE AND CONCEPTUAL INSTRUCTION

- T-CHART – FEDERALISTS V. ANTI-FEDERALISTS
  - Have the students take notes on the streaming video “Federalists and Anti-Federalists”.
    - Provide the guiding questions that can help spur discussion.
  - *Why have confederacies failed in the past? What happened to the Articles of Confederation? Why was the Constitution made? Who were the people at odds in the adaptation of the Constitution? What influenced these particular personalities like Jefferson and Hamilton? What events made it evident that the Articles of Confederation were not working?*
  - Pass out the chart showing how the various regions voted in the Constitutional Convention.
    - *What does the chart reveal about regional desires in the framing of the new constitution? Why are the least densely populated areas not in favor of the Constitution? Think back to the Iraq dilemma...what do the people in the country of 18<sup>th</sup> Century America have that is similar to the Shiites and Kurds? How can wealth alter the debate between stronger government control and weaker government?*
  - Create a T-Chart for the students to take notes over the differences between a confederacy and a centralized government.
    - *What are the advantages and disadvantages to this system?*
    - *What did each side want in the Constitution?*
    - *How did the different regions of America take sides? What were their motivations or fears?*

#### CONCRETE AND CONCEPTUAL INSTRUCTION

- VENN DIAGRAM – THE GREAT COMPROMISE
  - Hand out the diagrams of the Virginia Plan, and New Jersey Plan.
  - Have the students make a Venn diagram with the two circles being labeled New Jersey Plan and Virginia Plan respectively, and with the intersecting section being labeled the Great Compromise.
    - Find the obvious differences between the plans, and fill out the Venn diagram. Do not fill out the Great Compromise section yet.
    - Have the students discuss the good and bad items in the New Jersey Plan and Virginia Plan.
    - *Which items would you keep?*
  - Pass out the diagram of our US Government
    - *How did each side compromise? Write the policies were kept in the Great Compromise section, and take note which plan they came from.*



## US GOVERNMENT – WHY GOVERNMENT?... WHY OUR GOVERNMENT?

### DAY 6

#### THE ACTUAL CONSTITUTION – D.C.'S CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS How is the agreement between the US citizens and their governments written?

##### WARM-UP ACTIVITY

- TITLE PAGE – THE CONSTITUTION
  - Have the students rewrite in their own words, the Preamble of the Constitution.
  - Below their warm-up, have them decorate a title page for “The Constitution”
    - Talk about themes and ideas about the Constitution. It is a ‘social contract’, a ‘new beginning’, a symbol of compromise...

##### CONCRETE AND CONCEPTUAL INSTRUCTION

- ORGANIZED NOTES – THE CONSTITUTION ABRIDGED
  - Pass out copies of the Constitution.
  - Have the students outline each article in the document.
    - *No more than one sentence to describe each Section within each Article.*
  - At the end, have them talk about what the Constitution literally does vs. what the Bill of Rights literally does.
    - *What in the contract states what the government can do? What in the contract tells us what the government can't do?*
      - For the purpose of going more deeply into the Amendments of the Constitution at a later date, this unit does not provide a focus on them.

### DAY 7 –

#### PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTION – A GOLD STANDARD IN CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS What are the principles of the US Constitution? Why are they so profound now and in the past?

##### CONCRETE AND CONCEPTUAL INSTRUCTION

- ORGANIZED NOTES – DISSEMINATE PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTION
  - Start by brainstorming a discussion.
    - *What are the characteristics of our government? How would you describe it? What are certain themes?*
  - Then disseminate the Principles of the Constitution.
  - Have them fill out a good organizer for the Interactive Notebook.
    - Sections for definition, processed definition (in their own words), and processed visually (pictured)

##### PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

- PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTION ANNOTATED MURAL ASSIGNMENT.
  - Pass out the Principles of the Constitution Annotate Mural assignment. Read the directions with the students and answer any questions they may have.
  - Divide students into groups of 3-4.
  - Set time requirements and allow the students to work during period. Make sure they brainstorm and divide work evenly.
  - Review the rubric and take questions. Note taking sections are available for the students to annotate the assignment.

##### COOL-DOWN ACTIVITY

- POWER RANKING – THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTION
  - *Rank the principles 1-6. Which principle do you feel is the most important and why does it rank higher than the rest? Is there a principle that you think is superfluous?*

## US GOVERNMENT – WHY GOVERNMENT?... WHY OUR GOVERNMENT?

### DAY OF ASSESSMENT

#### REAP THE FRUITS OF THE LABOR

**What are the principles of the US Constitution? Why are they so profound now and in the past?**

### PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

- Have the students fill out their self-assessment first. Encourage them to be thorough.
  - *What sort of things should the teacher pay close attention to? What are you especially proud of?*
  
- Have the students present their murals.
  - Have the students circulate around.
  - Discuss with the students which things about other projects impressed them.
  - Discuss the symbols, the interpretations, and particularly the events that they researched and portrayed on the murals.
    - *How profound are the 6 basic principles of the Constitution in today's and history's context?*