

Kolbe Academy Home School

HIGH SCHOOL U.S. GOVERNMENT (SEMESTER 1)

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COURSE TITLE: U.S. Government

COURSE TEXTS:

Ferrier, Richard, and Andrew Seeley. *Declaration Statesmanship: A Course in American Government*. 4th ed. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.

Ferrier, Richard, and Andrew Seeley. *Declaration Statesmanship: Teacher manual*. 4th ed. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.

Ferrier, Richard, and Andrew Seeley. *Book of Readings: Supplementary Readings for Declaration Statesmanship*. 4th ed. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.

Modern Language Association of America. *MLA Handbook Eighth Edition*, 2016.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the character and history of American democracy in light of the principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence. It highlights three pivotal periods in our nation's history: our separation from Britain and the establishment of the Constitution; the sectional conflict over slavery that culminated in civil war; and the struggle for racial equality in the 20th century that eventually saw a triumph of Declaration principles over unjust laws. Throughout the course, the influence of philosophy and religion on the evolution of American thought is emphasized. The course ends with a meditation on the dangers that threaten our democracy today.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course will enable the student to:

- ❖ Name the principles stated in the Declaration of Independence that have been most influential in American political thought;
- ❖ Recite a portion of the Declaration of Independence, the preamble to the Constitution, and selected portions of the speeches of Abraham Lincoln;
- ❖ Know and explain the significance of the important historical events leading up to American independence from Britain;
- ❖ Trace the Scriptural and philosophical roots of the democratic ideals expressed in our founding documents;
- ❖ Describe the development of the sectional controversy over slavery leading up to the Civil War;
- ❖ Know the important developments in the history of the civil rights movement, from Reconstruction through Jim Crow to the present day;

- ❖ Explain why our American government was unique at the time of its founding and what factors contributed to its success where other new democracies of the time failed;
- ❖ Describe the inherent conflict between government power and individual freedom in a democracy, particularly with regard to moral issues;
- ❖ Name the dangers threatening our freedom today and explain why they have the potential to destroy democracy.

WEEKLY COURSE WORK:

- ❖ Weekly reading (main text and supplemental readings). Optional study guide questions can be found in both volumes, with additional questions in the teacher's manual.
- ❖ Memorization and recitation of important excerpts from important documents.
- ❖ Fill-in-the-blank outlines to be completed while reading the three longest and most complex reading assignments: the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and Lincoln's speech at Peoria. The outlines are included as guides to highlight important facts and to keep students' minds engaged as they read. This will enable them to read with greater understanding and less frustration.
- ❖ A weekly paper on one of the topics listed in the Course Plan. These papers should be 1-2 pages typed, size 12 font, double-spaced, or neatly handwritten in cursive. For assessment guidelines, see the Answer Key.
- ❖ 2 Exams, consisting of four sections: multiple choice or true/false, fill in the blank, short answer, and essay. Answers and grading guidelines can be found in the Answer Key.

SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED:

- ❖ Determining the main arguments of a piece of primary source text
- ❖ Connecting past events and written works to present-day issues
- ❖ Writing clear, concise, and well supported papers in response to the course material
- ❖ Building vocabulary through the use of context clues
- ❖ Memorization and recitation

DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS:

Summa Cum Laude students may take the U.S. Government course as an elective in addition to the courses required to complete their graduation requirements. ***Summa Cum Laude***, ***Magna Cum Laude*** and ***Standard*** diploma candidates may choose to pursue the (K) designation, but are not required to do so. If not pursuing the designation, the parent has the option of altering the course plan as desired. ***Magna Cum Laude*** and ***Standard*** diploma students may use the U.S. Government course to satisfy one semester of their American History or elective history requirement.

KOLBE CORE (K) COURSES:

- ❖ Students pursuing the **Kolbe Core (K)** designation should do all the readings. **Kolbe Core students need to complete at least 4 of the 14 weekly papers**; they should have discussions or write informal essays in response to the rest of the weekly paper topics as these are major themes and will appear in some way on the final exam.
- ❖ For students who are not seeking the Kolbe Core (K) designation for this course, parents may alter the course as they wish.

SEMESTER REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Designation*		K
Course Title	U.S. Government	U.S. Government
Semester	1. Any Two (2) written samples of work	1. <i>Complete</i> Exam I 2. <i>Complete</i> Exam II

*Designation refers to designation type on transcript. K designates a Kolbe Academy Core course.

The Kolbe academic advisor will verify that the required work was completed successfully and award the Kolbe Core (K) designation. The Kolbe academic advisor has the final decision in awarding the designation for the course. **If no designation on the transcript is desired, parents may alter the lesson plan in any way they choose and any written sample work is acceptable to receive credit for the course.** If you have any questions regarding what is required for the (K) designation or diploma type status, please contact the academic advisory department at 707-255-6499 ext. 5 or by email at advisors@kolbe.org.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE:**I. Declaration Statesmanship**

Chapters 1-6: Covers the founding of our country, our founding documents, and the present form of our government.

Readings: *The Gettysburg Address*, *Common Sense*, *Speech On the 150th Anniversary*, *The Articles of Confederation*, *Federalist Papers*, *Constitution of the United States*

II. Declaration Statesmanship

Chapters 7-9: Covers the Civil War, the civil rights movement, and the current state of our government.

Readings: Excerpts from *Our Government Local, State, and National*, *House Divided*, *Second Inaugural Address*, *Democracy in America*

COURSE PLAN METHODOLOGY:

1. Each week's readings, paper topic, and any other assignments are listed in the first line of the week's daily course plan.
2. Some of the paper topics and discussion questions ask students to make their own judgments about issues presented in the readings. The Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and relevant writings by Catholic theologians can be very important resources for students in evaluating the morality of certain acts or beliefs and in forming their political conscience. However, in order to develop the life skills of thinking independently and making moral judgments, it is important for students to be allowed to exercise their own God-given reason and intellect in considering these questions. Therefore, rather than immediately pointing them to a source that the parents feel gives the "correct" or "required" answer, we encourage parents to allow students to give their own opinion first and then, by way of discussion, bring up any Catholic moral teachings that may be relevant to the topic.
3. Some of the assigned readings are not in the Readings book but can be found in the Appendix at the back of the course plan.
4. The Chapter Review questions in the Teacher's Manual, the Questions for Reflection and Research in DS, and the Review Questions in the Readings book are optional. Parents who choose to use these additional questions might either ask them questions orally or assign them as written work in order to assess students' understanding or help with studying for exams. When assigning extra written work, parents should carefully consider both the student's academic abilities and his or her workload in other courses, so as to avoid causing unnecessary frustration and burnout. Learning occurs more easily when the student retains a positive attitude towards the material because he or she is challenged but not overwhelmed by the work.
5. Memorization and recitation of portions of famous speeches and documents is included as part of this course. Sometimes specific portions of the document or speech are designated in the course plan. In other assignments, parents and students will be directed to make their own selection.

6. The weekly vocabulary words are not intended to be assigned as written work, but rather to be used as a reading comprehension aid where necessary. To maximize learning, we suggest using the following three steps for vocabulary:
- ❖ Before beginning each week's readings, the student looks over the week's vocabulary words and marks any of which he/she is unsure of the meaning.
 - ❖ When one of the marked words comes up in the reading, the student attempts to figure out the word's meaning using the context.
 - ❖ The student looks up the word in the glossary to check the actual definition and then continues reading.

ABBREVIATIONS:

DS	=	Declaration Statesmanship
BR	=	Book of Readings
APP	=	Appendix. See list in Table of Contents

◆◆◆ FIRST SEMESTER ◆◆◆

WEEK 1		
DS	Introduction, p. 1-3, Ch.1 pages 7-14	
BR	<i>The Gettysburg Address</i> Abraham Lincoln	
ASSIGNMENT	Memorize <i>The Gettysburg Address</i> to be recited next week.	
PAPER TOPIC	The first chapter of DS compares our nation to a marriage. What are the reasons given for this comparison? Are there any important ways in which the two types of union differ? If our nation is like a marriage, what did the Civil War represent and why was it so significant?	
VOCABULARY	consecrate, resolve	

Reminder: The vocabulary words are not an assignment. See the Course Methodology section in the Syllabus for more explanation.

→ **Key points**

Introduction to American democracy; the events leading up to independence from Britain

Chapter 1 of DS sets the stage for the course by describing the similarities between a nation, which is a union of several states, and a marriage, which is a union of two people. As we will see in later weeks when we read the essays known as the *Federalist Papers*, the creation of the United States was a political experiment whose success or failure was highly significant. It would demonstrate whether or not the people of a nation were capable of governing themselves through peaceful and structured decision-making rather than being ruled by a single powerful individual such as a king.

This experiment began with the Declaration of Independence, the document which we can consider the true foundation of our government. It set up the principles by which the nation was to be governed. The most important of these principles were those stating that “all men are created equal” and that they receive from their Creator certain “inalienable rights” and the authority to govern themselves in defense of those rights.

The 1760s and 1770s were a time of growing tension and hostility between Great Britain and its thirteen American colonies. The colonists had grown accustomed to being left alone to govern their own affairs without much intervention from the king or Parliament, the British legislature, so they were unhappily surprised when their relationship with the mother country began to change. In 1764, needing to generate revenue to pay off Britain’s debts from the French and Indian War, Parliament began for the first time to impose taxes on the colonies directly. These taxes, as well as the new law requiring colonists to provide “quarter,” or lodging, for British soldiers in their homes, created resentment that continued to grow as Parliament added more interventions and restrictions in the colonial economy. When Britain created a government monopoly on tea by requiring the colonists to buy tea only from the British East India Company, and then raised the price of tea by levying taxes on the shipments, colonists staged a massive protest at Boston Harbor.

Colonial resistance led in turn to more drastic measures on the part of the British government as King George III and Parliament attempted to show the American colonists who was in charge. The Coercive Acts of 1774, known to the colonists as the Intolerable Acts, effectively shut down both the economy and the political process in Massachusetts. The colonists sent representatives to a Continental Congress to work out a united colonial response; Parliament declared some of the colonies to be in a state of rebellion; and the stage was set for war. The first military confrontations occurred at Lexington and Concord in 1775.

When the Second Continental Congress met the following month, they made efforts towards both war and peace. The Congress organized a colonial military to be led by general George Washington but also sent one last appeal, known as the Olive Branch Petition, to King George III. The King refused to even receive the petition and effectively disowned the colonies, declaring them to be out of his protection and no longer allowed to trade with Britain. By early 1776, as two colonial cities had been burned and bombarded, the war had begun in earnest.

In order not to sentimentalize or oversimplify our history, we must remember that the desire for independence was at first felt only by a minority of Americans. Throughout these tumultuous years of growing separation and conflict, most colonists were still unwilling to break completely with Great Britain. The majority still had family members and friends back “home” in Britain and were generally happy with the prosperity and protection they enjoyed as members of the powerful British empire. Perhaps if the American colonies won this war, many reasoned, they could remain part of the British empire but enjoy greater autonomy and power in their relationship with the mother country.

Even among those who wished to declare independence and establish a new nation, there was much disagreement about whether this nation should be a popularly governed republic or a monarchy. Many were hesitant about democracy due to its track record of political instability and civil wars in the ancient world, notably in Greek city-states and the early Roman republic. These early experiments in democratic-style governments, however, were not the same as the one established in the United States. Religion was not a matter of personal choice in ancient Greece or Rome, but rather imposed and regulated by the state. Slavery was so extensive that slaves outnumbered free citizens. Only a small portion of the population was eligible to vote or participate in the government, and there were no systems of checks and balances to prevent the majority faction from simply imposing their will on the rest of the people. Considering these failings of past republics, many political thinkers in the late 1700’s doubted the ability of any popularly ruled government to succeed.

For the first eighty or ninety years, there was no reason to doubt that the United States had proved its doubters wrong. Then, as Abraham Lincoln declared in his address at Gettysburg, our union faced its greatest test, the Civil War. The test was whether a democratic nation could endure in the face of deeply divided public opinion. If the government is in the hands of the people, what if the people do not agree? What if they disagree so strongly that they are willing to fight and die for their point of view rather than accept the outcome of presidential elections or congressional votes that do not go their way? These were the questions facing Abraham Lincoln and other political leaders during the time of the Civil War.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- * Summarize the grievances the colonies had against Great Britain.
- * If you had been alive at that time, would you have felt these grievances were sufficient cause for war and for declaring independence?

- * From the British perspective, why might some of Parliament and the King's actions have seemed necessary?
- * If the United States is an experiment in whether or not a people can govern themselves, what responsibilities does this place on us as citizens and voters?
- * What, according to Lincoln, was at stake in the Civil War?
- * Why do you think the United States has been able to survive, despite going through a civil war, when ancient democracies were not?

 Notes

◆ COURSE PLAN ◆

WEEK 2		
DS	Ch.1 pages 14-21, Ch.2 pages 27-32	
BR	<i>Common Sense, Section III: Thoughts On The Present State Of American Affairs</i> , Thomas Paine	
ASSIGNMENT	Recite the portion of <i>The Gettysburg Address</i> memorized in Week One.	
PAPER TOPIC	Write a dialogue between two colonists who are disagreeing over the question of independence. One is in favor of independence; the other wants to address the colonies' grievances while still remaining part of the British Empire. Each person should give several specific reasons for their position and at least one of them should quote (or paraphrase with reference) an argument made in <i>Common Sense</i> . (Note: This should be a back-and-forth conversation, not two separate monologues.)	
VOCABULARY divest, supersede, espouse, interested (not the modern definition), deliberation, precarious, sycophant, sanguine, fallacious, contend (for), inveterate, inviolate, disquietudes, deluge		
→ Key points The reasons for independence What led the founders of our country to believe that the colonies not only could, but should pursue the course of independence and establish a new and democratic government? Why, after almost two centuries of rule by Parliament and the King, just like the colonies of other European countries, did the Americans suddenly decide they had had enough? This week's readings attempt to answer these questions in examining the historical and philosophical causes of the movement for American independence and democracy. English government in the late 1700s had two main centers of power: the King and the Parliament. When the American colonies were established, the King's power was represented by local governors whom he had appointed. Instead of having representatives who served in the overall British Parliament, as did the various cities and towns of England, the colonies had their own local assemblies that took over Parliament's role. These assemblies were responsible for making laws and approving taxes, so the colonies had little to do with the Parliament in London until the middle of the eighteenth century. It came as a shock, therefore, when new taxes and laws were proclaimed that originated not in the local assemblies but in London, where the colonies had no representation and therefore no say in the decisions. At first the colonists believed King George III would be their ally in the power struggle with Parliament, but by the end of 1775 many were losing faith in him and even considered him a potential tyrant. Thomas Paine published a pamphlet called <i>Common Sense</i> in which he argued that monarchy was against God's will as well as against reason, and that it would always lead to corruption and tyranny. Addressing with sound logical arguments the many objections and hesitations of the day, Paine urged the American people not to fear separation from Britain. He reasoned that the relationship between Britain and the colonies was not meant by God to be permanent and that it had been too damaged by the past two decades' conflicts to be successfully repaired. Since a break was inevitable, he argued, now was the best time. <i>Common Sense</i> was widely circulated and read in 1776, and it swayed the hearts and minds of many toward the cause of independence. There were other influences as well, the most important being the Bible. Most colonists were raised in the Christian faith, and even those who were not active, devout believers as adults had been shaped by the important moral teachings of the Bible. One such teaching was the idea that we are all made in God's image and therefore have a dignity and value as human beings that ought not to be violated. Reflecting on this truth, along with the political writings of John Locke and others who taught		

that natural law makes all men equal, many colonists came to the conclusion that no government should be able to infringe on the rights of its people without their consent. It was their divine and natural right, they reasoned, to determine their own political destiny.

In the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, the founders laid out their vision of a good government: one that “derives [its] just powers from the consent of the governed” and fulfills its purpose of securing the “unalienable rights” of its people to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” In other words, the government should exist to serve the people’s interests and should act only with their consent. The Declaration accused King George of trying to put more power in his own hands and of moving toward establishing tyranny rather than a just government.

A “long train of abuses and usurpations” was listed, which can be roughly divided into five categories. First, the King had interfered with and even blocked the political process in the colonies. He required that all legislation have royal approval; he ignored many of the colonies’ requests for new laws; he dissolved legislatures; and he prevented new elections. Second, King George had increased British presence and power in the colonies by creating new offices, sending in a standing army, and trying to make the army “independent of and superior to the civil powers.” Third, he had limited the colonies’ ability to expand through immigration or addition of new territories. Fourth, he had caused economic hardships by cutting off trade and imposing unwanted taxes. Fifth, he had taken concrete military actions such as burning cities, plundering colonial ships, inciting Indians to attack the borders, and hiring foreign mercenaries to supplement the British army.

With the Declaration of Independence, the American colonists were taking a bold step to throw off their old government and create a new one. It was a clear statement that they had no intention of reconciling with Britain. The great experiment of American democracy had now officially begun; the next task for the new country was to come up with a plan for its own government. Our next three chapters will deal with the process by which we moved from the Declaration to the Constitution.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- * Thomas Paine argued that the colonies didn’t need England either for protection or for economic success. What were his reasons for this view?
- * Explain what you think Paine mean by this statement: “Ye that oppose independence now, ye know not what ye do; ye are opening a door to eternal tyranny, by keeping vacant the seat of government.”
- * Which of the grievances listed in the Declaration do you consider the most serious causes for revolution?
- * What does it mean to say that our government “derives its power from the consent of the governed”? In what way was this a change from the type of government the colonies had under British rule?

Notes

WEEK 3		
DS	Ch.3 pages 35-55	
BR	<i>Speech On the 150th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Calvin Coolidge</i>	
ASSIGNMENT	Begin memorizing <i>The Declaration of Independence</i> , excluding the charges against the king, to be recited next week.	
PAPER TOPIC	Coolidge argues that the American Revolution was different from most other political revolutions and that the Declaration of Independence “rises above the ordinary conception of rebellion.” What reasons does he give for this view? Summarize some of his arguments and then offer an opinion of your own: is he right or wrong, and why? (Note: In addition to revolutions of the 1700s and 1800s, also consider whether or not ours was different from most modern-day revolutions you have read or heard about.)	
VOCABULARY	preponderance, assertion, promulgate, encroach (upon)	
<p>↪ Key points</p> <p>The philosophical and religious roots of the Declaration</p> <p>As mentioned in week 2’s summary, the belief that the American colonists had a right to rebel against the British government and establish a new nation had its roots in both ancient and contemporary works of religion and philosophy. One of the most important of these influences was the Bible. The book of Genesis tells us we are made in God’s image; this concept has long been believed to include the powers of reason and free will. St. Paul’s letter to the Romans speaks of a law written on the hearts of all human beings, the “law of nature.” The 18th century preacher John Wise of Massachusetts wrote that in the act of Creation man is given an “original liberty instampt [sic] upon his rational nature,” and we are all equals because we are children of the same God. One man can only rule over another man by his consent or by the use of force. Any power that a government has, therefore, has been given to it by the people.</p> <p>These same ideas can be found in the writings and sermons of other colonial preachers of the time, such as Samuel West, Gad Hitchcock, and John Witherspoon, one of the signers of the Declaration. These men and others like them were no doubt influenced in their interpretations of Scripture by the writings of John Locke and other philosophers, whose political ideas were widely discussed and debated in the 17th and 18th centuries. It is clear that Locke was a major influence on Thomas Jefferson; the famous paragraph beginning with “We hold these truths to be self-evident...” closely resembles what Locke wrote in his <i>Second Treatise of Government</i>, published in 1689: “Reason, which is that [natural] law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, liberty, or possessions.” A crucial difference in Jefferson’s version is the change from the concrete idea of “property” to the more vague “pursuit of happiness.”</p> <p>In an attempt to describe the nature and purpose of government, Locke defined the “state of nature” as a state of equality and the “law of nature” as that basic reason and morality with which all human beings are naturally endowed. The law of nature teaches us not to harm one another and enables us, if we obey it, to live together in society peacefully. These ideas can be traced back to not only St. Paul but also the writings of ancient philosophers such as Cicero and Aristotle. Aristotle held that all men share a common nature, and Cicero wrote, “True law is right reason, harmonious with nature...nor does it require any but yourself to be its expositor or interpreter.”</p> <p>Because humanity is flawed, however, individuals don’t always obey the law of nature; therefore,</p>		

according to Locke, we need some form of political power capable of enforcing it. For this reason, men agree, of their own free will, to unite into a community and be subject to a governing body of leaders. As stated in the Declaration of Independence, the government is given power “by the consent of the governed.” This was literally true of the first generations of colonists, who established their own local governments while agreeing to allow these governments to be subject to the larger authority of the British King and Parliament. But what about later generations, who grew up with this system of government and did not have the opportunity to either give or withhold their consent in its formation?

They too have a choice, Locke argued; they could decide to establish a new government if they felt the existing one was trampling on their rights to life, liberty, or possessions. This idea of the right to rebel was new in Locke’s day and was considered by many to be dangerous because it could encourage civil war, which was often both destructive and bloody. What was to prevent a nation from having to suffer through one rebellion after another? This fear of political instability and war was one of the reasons some colonists were hesitant about independence; they did not want to establish a precedent for future revolutions. Locke’s response to such arguments was that people are aware of the costs of war and, using their natural reason, will tend to rebel only if they see a “long train of abuses...all tending the same way.” A list of such abuses, in fact, made up most of the text of the Declaration.

In addition to Aristotle, Cicero, and Locke, we know of one other important influence on Jefferson: a lesser-known 17th century British political writer by the name of Algernon Sidney. His *Discourses Concerning Government* was very popular among revolution-minded American colonists. Most of the ideas from the *Discourses* that found their way into the Declaration are actually quotes from an Italian Jesuit named Robert Bellarmine. One of these, countering the common belief in the divine right of kings, is that God has given power to no particular man; rather, He has given it to the collective body, the People. Another is that, “if there be lawful cause, the people may change the kingdom into an aristocracy or a democracy.” In writing the Declaration of Independence, the founders of our nation were making a bold statement that there was indeed lawful cause and that they were ready to accept the risk of making such a change.

In his 1926 speech commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Declaration, President Calvin Coolidge praised the honorable nature of the American Revolution. “It was in no sense a radical movement,” he said, “but took on the dignity of a resistance to illegal usurpations.” Coolidge also argued that it is the people, not the government, who sustain the ideals and determine the character of a nation. It is also from the heart of the people that positive and lasting reform arises; therefore, the character of the people is a crucial matter. In a bold statement of support for religious faith, Coolidge stated that without religion to strengthen the people’s character and enable them to maintain the principles of the Declaration of Independence, those principles will eventually perish.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- * Look back at Aristotle's definition of happiness (p.30 in DS). What might it mean, practically speaking, for a government to protect a person's right to pursue happiness?
- * What is the government to do if one citizen's pursuit of happiness would injure the life, liberty, or happiness of another?
- * According to Wise, Locke, and Sidney, why does a government need to have the consent of the people?
- * What do you think of Locke's argument that believing in the people's right to overthrow their government doesn't have to lead to a long series of rebellions? Does it hold up in the case of the U.S.? In other countries?
- * In your opinion, does the right to overthrow an unjust government justify violence and/or war if the government refuses to give up power?

Notes