

History At Our House

The Ultimate History Resource for Homeschoolers



History At Our House

American Government

High School Syllabus

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Introduction

This syllabus presents an overview of the content and general objectives for an academic year of the *History of American Government* with HistoryAtOurHouse for the High School class. Its purpose is to indicate what will be covered and what will be required of students during the year of study.

The 2012-13 academic year is the first year that HistoryAtOurHouse will be offering an American *Government* high school program, thus, inevitably, the curriculum at this level represents a work in progress. It is the first time there have been students able and ready to move up from having studied American history in detail at the junior high and high school levels to have established a sufficient intellectual foundation for exploring the various threads of the evolution of American government within their proper broader context.

Course Summary

In broad outline, the course is broken into four segments:

1. Republican Government to the Civil War
2. America's Early Foreign Policy
3. Economic Regulation until the 20th Century
4. American Government in the Long 20th Century

Each segment will run 8-9 weeks.

Unlike the American History program of HistoryAtOurHouse, which is pre-requisite to participation in the live classes of this course, the *History of American Government* begins right at the Founding. It is assumed that students know the history of America, including its European background. As a history of *American* government, this course does not cover intellectual and political precursors to story of that government, such as the writings of John Locke or Montesquieu, or the stories of the Roman Republic, the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights of 1689, etc. It begins with the debate based on those ideas and precedents, as understood by the Founders, as they created the Constitution of the nation. It then proceeds to present the story of American Government in three related threads.

The first is the history (up to the Civil War) of the government *as such* by which is meant, the apparatus of government, as divided into legislative, executive, and judicial branches, all designed in their original conception to protect individual rights. Thus in this segment, we'll look at the early presidents, their cabinets, and the originative policies they adopted in forging the government through their choices and actions in relation to the fundamental values they had enunciated in the Revolution. This will include a revealing look at the birth and evolution of the Supreme Court, which continues to feature so prominently as perhaps the most decisive republican institution in modern America, which culturally is now a democracy. The segment will end with the decline of all branches of government, as historical institutions, during the nineteenth century, until the Civil War. Of course, especially important will be

the issue of slavery as a moral and institutional problem.

Having pursued the study of the parallel evolution of the various branches of government under the separation of powers, we will then go back over the same period, with a focus on a distinctive challenge of governance, namely the protection of citizens' rights from foreign aggressors. Within the republican framework of the Founders, this culminated in the Monroe Doctrine, which held largely until 1898, though we will trace how it was challenged by America's conduct in and around the Mexican-American War, as well as other smaller episodes before the turning point of the Spanish-American War and the subsequent presidency of Theodore Roosevelt in particular.

Having thus traced the story of American government through its first hundred years or so from two key perspectives, we'll go over it again – a third and final time, focusing on the problem of economic regulation in American thinking. The question of monopolies and the regulation and taxation of international and colonial trade was very important to the Revolution, and the Founders tried to establish a system of freer trade for America, with the most crucial gap in their thinking pertaining to the concept of “property,” which was polluted by the continuation of slavery. Not surprisingly, it was the combined damage of the conflicts over the taxation of international trade (the Tariff) and—most fundamentally—slavery which brought about the Civil War. The republic could not stand with these with these aberrations present, and it almost toppled right then. Following, the war, the further complication of thorough-going industrialization gave rise to a new conflict over the unresolved question of regulation within a republic, which became known as the “Industrial Problem.” The answer to this problem in the end was more regulation.

Which brings us to the “Long Twentieth Century,” a period characterized by a change in American culture, away from the conception of America as a republic towards the now prevalent view of the United States as a “democracy,” and a rapid consequent growth of government—growth as a means of “making the world safe for democracy” and of regulating the American and even the global economy, according to newly popular and democratically expressed values. Following America's transition to internationalism and towards a pragmatic form of socialism in the “Progressive” era, the trajectory of American government was fundamentally altered. However, the Supreme Court, in relation to the 14th Amendment in particular, has tended to obstruct this transformation. Our study of twentieth century government will carry through to the presidency of Barack Obama, the 2012 election, and a projection of future trends in American government.

Readings and Class Work

One feature of this high school program will be the use of more “primary” and “secondary” sources than even in the general high school program. These materials will be read in class either in part or in full. Homework readings will also be a regular feature, not the exception. A list of anticipated readings in the program is also included in this document, in the section entitled “Course Readings.” (It will not be necessary for parents to purchase most of these readings. They are all either available for free on-line, or I will make them available to students via the class web page.)

Some of the additional in-class time will be dedicated to individual study projects that the students will be tasked with. Each of the students in the live class will for instance have to prepare a number of short presentations on a particular Supreme Court decision, presidential doctrine, or governmental agency.

As in the general high school class, students will be expected to take notes independently in class. They will receive guidance from me on how to do so, and I will perform periodic checks on their note-taking to assist them in this area as well. Importantly, students will *not* receive “test preparation sheets” for tests. *This applies to any potential “freshman” participants as well as continuing high school participants.* There will be only brief in-class review for tests, although students will be given explicit guidance on what the tests will contain and how to prepare for them. It will be necessary for parents to coordinate with me in conducting the tests and submitting them to me, to insure the integrity of the testing process. This will be addressed as the school year proceeds.

I am very excited about the year to come. In creating the HistoryAtOurHouse curriculum, I have striven to offer world-class history instruction for my homeschooling students. I believe the expanding High School program will meet that standard as well, and I look forward to working with you to make this academic year a terrific success.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott Powell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Best regards,".

Mr. Powell

Program of Study

SEGMENT 1 (Weeks1-9): Republican Government to the Civil War

Introduction and Course Design (Week 1)

- Review of the Fundamental Periodization of American Government
- Extension of the Framework of Abstract Particulars from Periodization to Historical Entities
 - The philosophical challenge and meaning of abstract particulars and the meaning of history
 - The American Republic, the Presidency, Congress, the Supreme Court, etc. as historical entities

Government During the Revolution and Founding Era (Week 2-4)

- Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists: The Theoretical and Historical Debate
- The Constitution and Bill of Rights: The Theory put into Concrete Form
- Washington's Presidency: Theory put into Practice

SEGMENT ONE QUIZ: Revolutionary Republican Government

- Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe (Week 5-6)
 - The evolution of the Presidency and other branches of government
 - The *12th Amendment* and Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections
- The Supreme Court During the Founding Era (Week 7)
 - The Jay, Rutledge, Ellsworth Courts: *Chisholm vs. Georgia*
 - *The 11th Amendment* and "State Sovereign Immunity"
 - The Marshall Court (1801-35) and the Separation of Powers

Post-Revolutionary American Government during the Era of Growth and Decline (Week8)

- The Electoral System: Adams vs. Jackson in the 1824 Presidential Election
- The Webster-Hayne Debate, the South Carolina Nullification Crisis
- The Taney Court (1836-1864): the *Amistad* case, the *Dred Scott* decision

The Civil War and Republican Government (Week 9)

- Republican Government in a Nation at War with Itself
- Abraham Lincoln and Executive Power

SEGMENT ONE TEST: Republican Government, from Revolution to Civil War

SEGMENT 2 (Weeks10-18): America's Early Foreign Policy

Introduction and Course Design Review (Week 10)

- Review of the Framework of Abstract Particulars and the Periodization of American Government

Foreign Policy During the Founding Era (Week 11-13)

- Washington: Defining the Foreign Policy of a Republic
- Adams, Jefferson and the Evolving Threats
- Madison, Monroe & John Quincy Adams and the Emergence of the Monroe Doctrine

SEGMENT TWO QUIZ: America's Founding Foreign Policy

Foreign Policy in Transition: Foreign Policy during the Era of Growth and Decline (Week 14-15)

- The Periodization of Foreign Policy
- The Growth of the Nation, the Mexican-American War (1846-48), reaching the Pacific
- Early Globalization and America's Contact with Asia

Foreign Policy during the Civil War and Reconstruction (Week 16)

- The Challenge of Avoiding Foreign Intervention
- European Invasion of Mexico
- America's evolving relationship to Latin America and Asia

The Transition to Internationalism (Week 17-18)

- Adapting Foreign Policy to Rapid Globalization and Industrialization
- The Spanish-American War (1898) and the Panama Affair (1903)
- A New Theory: The Roosevelt Corollary (1904)

SEGMENT TWO TEST: From the Monroe Doctrine to Internationalism

SEGMENT 3 (Weeks19-26): Economic Regulation Until the 20th Century

Introduction and Course Design Review (Week 19)

- Review of the Framework of Abstract Particulars and the Periodization of American Foreign Policy
- Periodization, Abstract Particulars: Interpretive Framework for the Study of American Government

Revolutionary Context (Week 20)

- British Economic Regulation and Colonial America
- Economic Regulation and the American Revolution

Regulation during the Period of Growth & Decline (Week21,22)

- National Banking, the Tariff, and the "American System"
- *Gibbons v. Ogden* and "Interstate Commerce"

SEGMENT THREE QUIZ: Economic Regulation in the Early Republic

The Civil War, Reconstruction and Economic Regulation (Week23,24)

- The Origins of the Income Tax
- Reconstruction Amendments
- The Supreme Court, the *Slaughter-House Cases* and "Substantive Due Process"

The Era of the Industrial Problem (Week25,26)

- The Transcontinental Railroad, the Credit Mobilier Scandal and the "Railroad Problem"
- New Industries and the "Trust Problem"
- The Interstate Commerce Act (1887)
- The Theory of "Economic Power" and Anti-Trust Legislation

SEGMENT THREE TEST: The Emergence of Pragmatic American Socialism

SEGMENT 4 (Weeks 27-35): American Government in the Long 20th Century

Introduction and Course Design Review (Week 27)

- The Periodization of American Economic Regulation
- Continuity and Change in American Government During the First Hundred Years

Era of the Industrial Problem, Continued (Week 28)

- The Era of the Trustbusters
- The Birth of the Income Tax (The 16th Amendment)
- The Federal Reserve System of Banking

The Supreme Court vs. Socialism (Week 29)

- The Lochner Era (1897-1937)
 - Freedom of Contract: *Lochner v. New York (1905)*, *Adair v. United States (1908)*, and *Adkins v. Children's Hospital (1923)*
 - Freedom of Education: *Meyer v. Nebraska (1923)*, *Pierce v. Society of Sisters (1925)*

The Interwar Period and Normalcy: the Reaction against Internationalism (Week 30)

- Retreat, Neutrality, Isolation and Isolationism in Foreign Policy
- Social legislation: the Advance of Women's Suffrage; the Corruption of Prohibition

SEGMENT FOUR QUIZ: Tentative Change in an Evolving Context

The Great Depression, WWII and the Expansion of Socialism (Week 31)

- Competing Theses Concerning the Causes of the Great Depression
- FDR and the New Deal, Price Controls, Fair Labor Standards
- The Supreme Court: Proposed Judicial Reform and *West Coast Hotel Co. v. Parrish (1937)*
- The Federal Reserve and the Problem of Catastrophic Deflation
- WWII and the Internment Problem: *Korematsu v. United States (1944)*

The Early Cold War (Week 32)

- The Truman Doctrine and subsequent Presidential Doctrines
- America's Undeclared Wars: The Korean War, the Vietnam War, etc.
- America's Early Entanglement in the Middle East

Civil Rights (Week 33)

- Expansion of Economic Regulation from the "Fair Deal" to the "Great Society"
- The Warren Court (1953–1969) and Civil Rights
 - *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* and *Miranda v. Arizona (1966)*

American During the Later Cold War (Week 34)

- Iran, Afghanistan, and America's Expanding Entanglement with the Middle East
- *Roe vs. Wade (1973)* and the further application of the 14th Amendment
- Environmental Regulation

Contemporary American Government (Week 35)

- The Islamist Entanglement, 9/11, the War on Terror and changes to American Government
- Expanding Economic Regulation, the Financial Crisis, and Neo-Mercantilism
- The Obama Presidency, Obamacare and the Supreme Court, the 2012 Election and Beyond

SEGMENT FOUR TEST: Modern American(istic) Government

Sample Course Readings

The following is a list of possible readings to be used over the course of the year. Not all the listed items will necessarily be used, nor is the list exhaustive. It is merely offered as an indication of the types of materials that students will be working with.

SEGMENT 1 (Weeks1-9): Republican Government to the Civil War

Ralph Ketcham, ed., *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates*
Clinton Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers*
The Constitution of the United States of America
The Bill of Rights
Joseph Story, *A Familiar Exposition of the Constitution of the United States*
Daniel Webster's Second Reply to Hayne
Chief Justice Taney, *Dred Scott v. Sanford*
Abraham Lincoln, *The Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address*

SEGMENT 2 (Weeks10-18): America's Early Foreign Policy

George Washington's Farewell Address
Felix Gilbert, *The Beginnings of American Foreign Policy*
W.F. Reddaway, *The Monroe Doctrine*
David Thomas, *One Hundred Years of the Monroe Doctrine*

SEGMENT 3 (Weeks19-26): Economic Regulation Until the 20th Century

Burton W. Folsom Jr., *The Myth of the Robber Barons*
The Sherman Antitrust Act
The Federal Reserve Act

SEGMENT 4 (Weeks27-35): American Government in the Long 20th Century

Foster Dulles, *America's Rise to World Power*
William Leuchtenberg, *The Perils of Prosperity (1914-32)*
Dexter Perkins, *The New Age of Franklin Roosevelt (1932-45)*
Woodrow Wilson, *The Fourteen Points*
Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *The "Four Freedoms" Speech*
The Atlantic Charter and the Truman Doctrine
George Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East*
50 Most Cited US Supreme Court Decisions (50 Most Cited Cases)