

U.S. Government & Economic Principles

Boston Collegiate Charter School

12th Grade

Ms. O'Hern

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The 12th Grade US Government and Economic Principles class will introduce students to the political and economic theories and practices needed to make sense of current national and international issues and events. Through the course, students will study the structures of American political and economic institutions, practice analyzing and problem solving complex public issues, strengthen research skills that will allow them to utilize news and commentaries in a variety of formats and incorporate them into their evaluation of current issues, and practice the habits necessary for citizenship in the 21st century. The Big Idea is that representative government and the free market economy derive power from the governed (all of you). The course thus seeks to engage students to be self-reflective about their own values and viewpoints so that they can more confidently take and defend positions, developed through informed and critical inquiry, on the public questions of our day. Thus before heading to college next year, BCCS alumni will be able to individually assert answers to the two essential questions of the course: how do I define myself politically and economically? And: what is the dominating force in the United States?

RESOURCES

We will be using a variety of sources within Gov't/Econ:

- 1) The paperback textbook *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution*
- 2) The textbook *Economics: Principles and Practices*.
- 3) Xeroxed chapters/sections from various sources.
- 4) **It is essential that all 12th graders have a Boston Public Library borrowing card.** Frequent assignments will require either online access to databases using the card or the actual borrowing of books from a local branch, so please plan ahead and pay off any outstanding fines you might have incurred in the past.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- **HANDOUT ORGANIZER (3-ring binder):** You are expected to keep all course handouts (starting with this one), ordered neatly and kept up-to-date.
- **COMPOSITION NOTEBOOK:** In addition to the 3-ring binder, you will need a 100-page bound, hardcover composition notebook (the standard notebook usually has a black and white speckled cover, but any cover will be fine). This will be your complete "record of inquiry" for the class which will include lecture notes, notes from both the text and readings, research, records of discussions (in and out of class), vocabulary and definitions, and questions that might prompt your own independent research of a topic. **Note: You will most likely need several of these throughout the year as your book fills up. Plan on 1 per semester, though students with larger handwriting may need more.**

ASSESSMENTS

- **Homework:** Each week (or partial unit) you will receive a study guide with a complete schedule of homework for the time period. You will need to use your textbooks and Xeroxed readings to complete these study guides. The weekly homework will also include a News Log, in which you summarize and analyze and article from a weekly news source. **HW = 15% of grade**
- **Classwork:** Will include the following: frequent quizzes from HW readings, group activities, PBL journal entries and worksheets, and seminar discussions. **CW = 15% of grade**
- **Minor Assessments:**
 - **Problem Based Learning (Final Products):** These assessments will be the culminating task of each PBL module we complete. You will typically need to work in partners or groups, and the task will often have a presentation or debate component.
 - **Preparation for Projects:** All the work leading up to final projects will fall into this category. This includes: paper proposals, research, outlines, and rough drafts.
 - **Debates (final debate 1st semester; notes both semesters):** Each student will complete two debates throughout the course of the year on issues central to the political and economic principles of our country. Each student is responsible for independently researching the topic, preparing speeches and questions, and executing the debate. Each student will complete one debate each semester. The debate for the first semester will count as a 2nd quarter grade, even if you debated in the first quarter. Similarly, the debate for the second semester will count for a 4th quarter grade, even if you debated in the 3rd quarter. This is to provide an equal assessment for all students. While the preparation for the debate in the second semester will fall into this category, the grade for the debate itself is the Research Project grade for the 4th quarter.

Minor assessments = 15% of grade

- **Research Projects**
 - Every unit is comprised of one major paper/project requiring outside research and reading. The projects are as follows: Quarter 1—a 5-7 analytical paper on Adam Smith; Quarter 2-- a 9-10 page research paper assessing a Supreme Court case; Quarter 3-- a 6-8 page paper analyzing a public policy; Quarter 4—a final debate. The final grade of the project is the ONLY grade in this category.

Projects = 20% of grade

- **Tests:** Approximately twice per quarter you will be given a test or asked to prepare for a culminating in-class unit assessment. This will usually take the form of a 55-minute individual test with multiple choice, short answers, and an application/scenario essay.

Tests = 35% of grade

GRADING

Your final course grade will be calculated as follows:

Quarter 1	23%
Quarter 2	23%
Midterm (Jan)	7%
Quarter 3	23%
Quarter 4*	11%
Final (May)	13%

*Reflects the abbreviated senior 4th quarter due to senior week, and graduation.

LATE WORK/MAKEUP WORK POLICY

Please see the 11th and 12th grade Absence and Late Submission Policy (signed and filed in advisory). This policy applies for ALL assignments in this course. Please note that all assignments are due at 8:00am on the due date.

U.S. Government and Economic Principles COURSE SYLLABUS

EQ: How do we define “freedom” and “equality”? What conflicts are there between capitalism (economic freedom) and democracy (political equality)?

EQ: How do you define yourself politically and economically?

****You will be receiving mini-syllabi for each unit (or partial unit) that will you need to utilize in planning your nightly homework.****

1st Semester:

Intro/Summer Reading: **The Protection and Pitfalls of Executive Privilege: Richard Nixon and the Watergate Cover-Up**

Guiding Questions: *Does a person have to be immoral to be an effective leader?
Who ultimately has power in American society?*

Unit 1: **Foundations of the Free Market**

Guiding Question: *How did the democratic and capitalist systems gain hold in the world?*

Unit 2: **Foundations of Government**

Guiding Question: *Does the structure of our government protect the rights of the people? Why or why not?*

Q1 Project: Adam Smith Analytical Essay

Unit 3: **Constitutional Studies and the Supreme Court**

Guiding Questions: *How should the Constitution be read and interpreted in the 21st century?
What is the relationship between the individual and the Constitution/ the people and the government? What privileges, rights and obligations come with being a US citizen?*

Unit 4: **The Market Forces at Work: Supply & Demand, Prices, Markets, Labor**

Guiding Questions: *How are prices set? Who should get what? What role should the government have in regulating the economy?*

Q2 Project: Supreme Court Research Paper

2nd Semester:

Unit 5: **Congressional Actions (Legislation, Public Policy)**

Guiding Question: *How can I make change happen? How do I define myself vis-à-vis public issues?*

Unit 6: **Executive Branch**

Guiding Question: *What is the role of the president? How is this role perceived by the public?*

Q3 Project: Public policy essay

Unit 7: **Comparative Advantage and Globalization**

Guiding Question: *How do we protect what we have, ensure future growth, and still sleep at night?*

Unit 8: **Taxes and the Federal Budget**

Guiding Question: *How is our money used? How do I believe it should be used?*

Q4 Project: Debate