
STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

10-20 Days

GRASPING THE WAY THINGS WORK

OVERVIEW

Knowledge of the structure of government is clearly of the utmost importance to students' completion of their *PARTICIPATION* project. The curriculum is not, however, designed to teach students specifically *about* the structure of the government, but rather, *how to use it*. Thus, this section is intended both to refresh and expand students' previous understanding of U.S. national and local political systems and to introduce an understanding of government as an interactive process. The unit can be expanded or contracted based on need.

While instructional approaches are suggested in this unit, we recognize that teachers have taught this material and have engaging and interactive strategies for addressing this content that they may prefer to use. We would simply urge teachers to design all lessons within the "Structure of Government" unit to increase students' ability to interact with government. Thus, the goal is not to teach "how a bill becomes a law," but rather, "how you can affect lawmaking and your society." Students, ideally, should understand how, when, and why they should address different areas of the government when they want to make a change.

In addition, while comparing and contrasting the powers and processes of local, state, and federal governments is essential, it is also beneficial to compare the democratic republic of the United States with generic despotic, oligarchic, parliamentary, and true democratic forms of government to impart a better understanding of the differences to the students.

We recommend that, directly before this unit, students be given the task of recording their activities for a twenty-four hour period (use the 24-Hour Study handout).

COLORADO CIVICS STANDARDS ADDRESSED: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2., 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4

SAMPLE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

- To what extent is your life affected by government? How do you feel about that level of influence?
- List the benefits and weaknesses of a republic versus a true democracy or a monarchy.
- What right is most important to you? Why?
- What right or rights are relevant to your group's issue? Explain the connection.
- What rights are most important to citizens in influencing policy? Explain your choice.

- What local government issues have been in the news lately? How do they help you understand the power of local government?
- What government official would you most like to interview? Why?
- What office in government would you most like to hold? Explain your choice.
- How will you will be able to use what you have learned about the structure of government in your group's project?
- How might you refine your group's goals based on what you have learned about influencing legislation at the national, state, and local levels?
- How prepared are you to influence the government? What else do you need to know to be effective in planning a campaign to influence policy?

VOCABULARY

Anarchy: Absence of government; normally characterized by lawlessness and disorder.

Authoritarian government: System of rule in which the government recognizes no formal limits but may, nevertheless, be restrained by the power of other social institutions.

Authority: The right to control or direct others' actions because of law, morality, custom, or consent.

Bicameral legislature: A legislature that has two legislative chambers.

Checks and balances: Constitutional mechanisms that authorize each branch of government to share powers with the other branches and thereby check their activities.

Civil rights: Fundamental rights of people to be treated fairly by, and to participate in, their government; these rights belong to every member of a society.

Common good: Benefit or interest of a politically organized society as a whole.

Constitution: Written or unwritten body of fundamental law, establishing basic principles, structures, processes, and functions of a government and placing limits upon its actions.

Constitutional government: System of rule in which formal and effective limits are placed on the powers of the government by a constitution.

Constitutional republic: System of government in which power is held by voters and is exercised by elected representatives responsible for promoting the common welfare within the parameters of a constitution.

Due process: Constitutional guarantee that the government will not deprive any person of life, liberty, or property by any unfair or arbitrary action.

Equal protection: A constitutional requirement of the Fourteenth Amendment that protects individuals against unlawful discrimination by the government.

Executive branch: Branch of government that carries out the laws made by the legislative branch and, in the federal government, makes treaties and conducts wars.

Federalism: Division of power between state and federal government; the federal government's powers are listed in the Constitution; remaining powers are relegated to the states.

Independent judiciary: Court system that resolves disputes by adherence to the rule of law and is independent of transient social or political pressure.

Individual rights: Rights possessed by individuals rather than those rights claimed by groups.

Judicial branch: Branch of government that interprets and applies the constitution and laws through a system of courts.

Legislative branch: Branch of government that makes the laws; in the federal government it is Congress, in the Colorado state government it is the General Assembly.

Liberty: Freedom from unjust or undue governmental control.

Limited government: The constitutional principle that governmental power is limited through restrictions imposed by the constitution.

Litigation: Legal proceedings.

Majority rule: A system of making decisions in which the position of the larger number of voters is binding on all (note that in the United States, it is not truly majority—half plus one—rule; in elections, the largest number of votes, even if only a plurality, wins).

Nation: Political organization that claims sovereignty over a defined territory and jurisdiction over the people in that territory.

Natural rights philosophy: Belief that individuals are naturally endowed with basic, human rights, rights that are so much a part of human nature that they cannot be taken away or given up, as opposed to rights conferred by law; the Declaration of Independence states that natural rights include the rights of “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

Oligarchy: A government in which a small group exercises control.

Patriotism: Loyalty to one’s country and its values and principles.

Political party: Any group that seeks to elect government officials under a given label.

Public policy: Body of laws, rules, guidelines, and court decisions by which an open society organizes and conducts its affairs.

Representation: The right or privilege of being represented by delegates having a voice in a legislative body.

Republic/Republicanism: A form of government in which power is held by the people; the government is administered by officers elected by the people to serve their interests.

Rule of law: Principle that every member of a society, even a ruler, must follow the law.

Separations of powers: Division of governmental power among several institutions that must cooperate in decision-making.

Social contract: A theory developed by Locke to explain the origin of all legitimate government; this theory posits agreements among all the people in a society to give up part of their freedom to a government in return for protection of their natural rights.

Sovereign: A person or body of persons in whom the supreme power of the state is vested.

Totalitarian government: Government in which one person or party exercises absolute control over all spheres of human life and opposing parties are not permitted to exist.

Unicameral legislature: A legislature that has a single legislative chamber.

Unlimited government: Governmental power not limited through constitutional restrictions.

RESOURCES

The White House, www.whitehouse.gov

The U.S. Senate, www.senate.gov

The U.S. House of Representatives, www.house.gov

The Center on Congress, <http://congress.indiana.edu/>

State of Colorado, Learn More About Colorado Government, <http://www.colorado.gov/colorado-get-involved/participate-government.html>

Colorado Election Center (voter registration forms),
<http://www.elections.colorado.gov/DDefault.aspx?tid=415>

National Conference of State Legislatures, <http://www.ncsl.org>

Denver, <http://www.denvergov.org/TabId/37910/TopicId/1230/default.aspx>

Name: _____

24-Hour Study

Teacher: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

For the next 24 hours, record one or two activities you do for each half-hour increment in the grid below; record the activities as you are doing them. For each activity, make note of any laws or other government policies that affect that activity. It will be useful to note where the products you are using are made. Two examples are provided.

Examples:

Time	Activity/Location	Government Law/Policy
6:30 a.m.	Wake up to alarm/home Brush teeth/home	Government establishes time zones. FDA (govt. agency) regulates tooth paste.
8:00 a.m.	Write essay in English class using pencil from Taiwan/school	School district requires four years of English in high school. Government regulates international trade.

Grid to Be Completed:

Time	Activity/Location	Government Law/Policy
7:00 a.m.		
7:30 a.m.		
8:00 a.m.		
8:30 a.m.		
9:00 a.m.		
9:30 a.m.		
10:00 a.m.		

10:30 a.m.		
11:00 a.m.		
11:30 a.m.		
12:00 noon		
12:30 p.m.		
1:00 p.m.		
1:30 p.m.		
2:00 p.m.		
2:30 p.m.		
3:00 p.m.		
3:30 p.m.		
4:00 p.m.		
4:30 p.m.		
5:00 p.m.		
5:30 p.m.		
6:00 p.m.		
6:30 p.m.		

7:00 p.m.		
7:30 p.m.		
8:00 p.m.		
8:30 p.m.		
9:00 p.m.		
9:30 p.m.		
10:00 p.m.		
10:30 p.m.		
11:00 p.m.		
11:30 p.m.		
12:00 m.		
12:30 a.m.		
1:00 a.m.		
1:30 a.m.		
2:00 a.m.		
2:30 a.m.		
3:00 a.m.		

3:30 a.m.		
4:00 a.m.		
4:30 a.m.		
5:00 a.m.		
5:30 a.m.		
6:00 a.m.		
6:30 a.m.		