



Your competence will be assessed as you complete the BZC1 objective assessment for this course of study. This course of study may take up to 6 weeks to complete.

Introduction

Overview

In this assessment you will study the major features of the United States government. You will, through your study, develop a solid understanding of Constitutional principles such as Civil Rights, limited government, and voting. As you complete the assessment and demonstrate competence, you will come away from your study with an understanding of the structure of government, your role in the government and in the ways in which government and the Constitution have changed over time.

Outcomes and Evaluation

There is 1 competency covered by this course of study; it is listed in the "[Competencies for U.S. Constitution, Law, and Citizenship \(BZC1\)](#)" page.

You will complete the following assessments as you work through the course of study.

Pre-Assessment

You will complete the following pre-assessment:

- PZC1

Objective Assessment

You will complete the following objective assessment:

- BZC1

For specific information about this assessment, select this course under the "Course Details" section of your Degree Plan.

Preparing for Success

The information in this section is provided to help you become ready to complete this course of study. As you proceed, you will need to be organized in your studies in order to gain competency in the indicated areas and prepare yourself to pass the final assessments.

Your Learning Resources

Enroll in or order the learning resources for this course as early as possible so as to give them time to arrive and give you enough time to become familiar with them.

Automatically Enrolled Learning Resources



You will be automatically enrolled at the activity level for the following learning resources. Simply click on the links provided in the activities to access the learning materials.

Soomo E-Textbook

The following textbooks are available to you as e-texts within this course of study. You will be directly linked to the specific readings required within the activities that follow.

- [Evans, J., & Michaud, K. \(2011\). *Central Ideas in American Government*. Soomo Publishing.](#)

Note: This e-text is available to you as part of your program tuition and fees.

Additional Preparation

There are many different learning tools available to you within your course of study in addition to the learning resources already discussed. Take the time to familiarize yourself with them and determine how best to fit them into your learning process.

US Constitution and Government Community

At the **US Constitution and Government Community** you will find a discussion board where you can discuss the course with your fellow students and with the Course Mentors as well as read announcements and blog posts from the Course Mentors.

Message Boards, FAQs, Note-Taking Tool

Message boards, FAQs, and a note-taking tool are available in every course of study.

Use the “[Additional Learning Tools](#)” page to review these tools.

The WGU Central Library

The [WGU Central Library](#) is available online to WGU students 24 hours a day. The library offers access to a number of resources, including over 60,000 full-text e-books; articles from journals, magazines, and newspapers; course e-reserves; and tutorials on how to use these resources and the library. The library also includes a reference service for help with research questions or navigating the library.

For more information about using the WGU Library, view the “WGU Library: Finding Articles, Books & E-Reserves” video in the Student Resources section of [The WGU Channel](#).

Center for Writing Excellence: The WGU Writing Center

If you need help with any part of the writing or revision process, contact the Center for Writing Excellence (CWE). Whatever your needs—writing anxiety, grammar, general college writing concerns, or even ESL language-related writing issues—the



CWE is available to help you. The CWE offers personalized individual sessions and weekly group webinars. For an appointment, please e-mail writingcenter@wgu.edu.

Course Mentor Assistance

Course mentors are available to help you. Their job is to aid understanding in areas where you need to improve and to guide you to learning resources. Request their help as needed when preparing for assessments.

Course mentors cannot provide reviews of entire assessments. If you fail assessment attempts, review the provided feedback first, then ask the course mentor specific questions about what you can do to meet the competency standard. Request course mentor assistance as necessary in preparing for second attempts at objective assessments or performance task revisions. Mentors cannot guarantee you pass as they do not evaluate assessments; however, they can provide the assistance and advice necessary to help you succeed.

Please review this [presentation](#) on the benefits of collaborating with course mentors.

U.S. Constitution, Law, and Citizenship

After completing this section, students will be able to explain the roles of major institutions in American Government, explain the contents and importance of historical documents, understand major principles in the Constitution of the United States and the ways that American citizens participate in government.

Competencies covered by this subject

102.6.6 - U.S. Constitution, Law, and Citizenship

The graduate explains the roles of major institutions in American Government, explains the contents and importance of historical documents, and understands major principles in the Constitution of the United States and the ways that American citizens participate in government.

The Constitution

After the Revolutionary war the American colonies approved a national government by ratifying the Articles of Confederation (in 1781). The government established under the Articles, however, soon proved to have insufficient power to address important problems facing the young nation, including, for example, repayment of debt contracted to finance the war. The insufficiency of the Articles prompted the call for a convention to be held in Philadelphia for purposes of improving the Articles of Confederation. As we now know, the convention did not revise the Articles but rather disregarded them entirely in favor of drafting a new constitution. The Constitution of United States, produced during that convention (between May and September, 1787), provides for a strong central government but also reserves a great deal of power to the individual states. The American founders who drafted the Constitution drew upon their knowledge of general political history, the history of English common law and also the ideas of political thinkers such as John Locke. An



adequate understanding of the Constitution requires familiarity with the history of some the major ideas it embodies.

As you complete the readings and activities, you should develop a solid understanding of the historical foundations of the United States' system of government. When you have finished, you will be able make connections between earlier government systems and ideologies and the United States' founding documents.

The Constitution and Federalism

Federalism is an organizational structure for government. Federalism is when the constitutional power is divided among different levels of government in the same political jurisdictions; hence, in our country we have many levels of government over the same area. Think about all of the levels of government you pay taxes to—the Federal Government, your state government, your county and city, borough, parish or township. All of these levels of government have some kind of constitutional authority and pass laws. Understanding how each level of government operates and interacts with the other levels will build a strong foundation for your understanding of the United States government as a whole.

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:

- [Chapter 1 \(“The Founding and the Constitution”\)](#)
- [Chapter 2 \(“Federalism”\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.

Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:

- [Chapter 3 \(“Civil Liberties”\)](#)
- [Chapter 4 \(“Civil Rights”\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.

The Federal Government

The Constitution establishes a system of federalism in which powers are divided between the national (federal) government and the various state governments. The Constitution outlines which powers are given to the federal government and which are given to the states. Here you’ll also learn about the constitutional powers, checks and balances given to the Three Branches in the Federal Government: the Legislative Branch (which is the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives); the



Executive Branch (which is the President and all Federal bureaucracies); and the Judicial Branch (which is the U.S. Supreme Court).

In this section, you will study the Federal Government's organization and structure as it is outlined in the Constitution.

The Legislative Branch

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:

- [Chapter 5 \("Congress"\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.

The Executive Branch and the Administrative Bureaucracy

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:

- [Chapter 6 \("Presidency"\)](#)
- [Chapter 7 \("Bureaucracy"\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.

The Judicial Branch

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:

- [Chapter 8 \("Judiciary"\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.

Public Opinion and Political Participation

In this section you'll learn the roles of public opinion, socialization, and participation in Government and be able to answer the following questions:

- What makes individuals participate in Government?
- How do people decide which political party to join?
- How do public opinion polls influence government, political parties and voting?
- Voting is the main way people participate with Government, yet what is the voting turnout percentage?
- What are the different groups within society and how do they vote and participate in Government?



- How does your education level affect your voting and political participation?

Public Opinion

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:

- [Chapter 9 \(“Public Opinion”\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.

Voting

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:

- [Chapter 10 \(“Voting and Political Participation”\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.

Elections and Campaigns

Free and fair elections are the very essence of what American government is all about. For the past 150 years the political contests in American politics have been dominated by the democratic and republican parties with other ‘third parties’ attempting to have their voices heard. To study elections and campaigning is simultaneously the effort to study messaging and polling, to analyze strategies and tactics, to examine individuals and group dynamics.

Politics is ultimately about power. Elections are about deciding winners and losers. The winners obtain, amongst other things, the power to make authoritative decision about how to allocate the scarce resources of the society. The successful candidates are those who are able to fashion a campaign strategy, centered on their personal attributes and a mix of policy statements meant to capture the imagination of voters. Campaign managers then must think heavily about the composition of their supporters and their opposition. Who votes and who doesn’t? How will the candidate do with women voters, African-Americans, the working class, the senior citizens? These questions are the mechanics of modern elections and campaigns.

Political Parties

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:

- [Chapter 11 \(“Political Parties”\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.



Campaigning and Elections

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:

- [Chapter 12 \(“Elections and Campaigns”\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.

Influencing Government

The very idea of democracy means that elected representatives should be responsive to the people that send them to office. Indeed Democracy literally means rule of the people. Practically, this means that the people can influence the government because the electorate can influence the representatives who make decision on behalf of the government. Remember Abraham Lincoln’s famous words “...government of the people, by the people, for the people...”

While voting is a singular personal act that occurs when individuals go to the polls, influencing government is a group activity. Citizens become active, engaged and will organize themselves around common desires and ideological positions. These groups are commonly called interest groups and they exist to represent the desires of their members before the elected representatives who in turn make decisions for the government. When the citizens are active and engaged, asking questions of their elected officials there needs to be a means by which both groups can communicate with each other. This is where the media comes into play. The chief responsibility of the media is to be the forum for the two way communication that is so necessary to a fully functioning democracy. The governmental officials call press conferences and issue press releases to speak to the American people and the voters allow themselves to be polled by the media so that their wishes, en masse can be transmitted to the officials. Thus this curious mix of citizens, elected representatives, government officials, interest groups and the media are all ingredients that make the pie of American democracy taste so fulfilling.

Interest Groups

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:

- [Chapter 13 \(“Interest Groups”\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.

The Media

Access and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following chapters in the *Central Ideas in American Government* text:



- [Chapter 14 \(“The Media”\)](#)

Once you have completed all of the work for this section, mark this activity as complete in this course of study using the checkbox above.

Final Steps

Congratulations on completing the activities in this course of study! This section will guide you through the assessment process.

Assessment Information

The activities in this course of study have prepared you to complete the BZC1 objective assessment. If you have not already completed the assessment, you will do so now.

Accessing Pre-Assessments

Complete the following pre-assessment:

- PBZC

For directions on how to receive access to pre-assessments, see the “[Accessing Pre-Assessments](#)” page.

If there are any sections on the pre-assessment that you are not completely comfortable with, take the time to reread and review those sections of the learning resource before completing the objective assessment.

Accessing Objective Assessments

Complete the following objective assessment:

- BZC1

For directions on how to receive access to objective assessments, see the “[Accessing Objective and Outside Vendor Assessments](#)” page.

Feedback

To provide feedback for this course of study, please use the [College of Liberal Arts COS Feedback](#) form.

ADA Requirements

Please review the [University ADA Policy](#).