This course supports the assessments for CNC1. The course covers 8 competencies and represents 3 competency units.

**Introduction**

**Overview**
This course is intended as an introduction to the United States national government including the constitutional basis for the processes, institutions, and policies of the United States government and political structure. It covers the Constitution and its development, civil liberties, federalism, the role of political parties and interest groups, and the nature of the presidency, the bureaucracy, the Congress and the national courts.

Watch the following video for an introduction to getting started in this course:

*Note: To download this video, right-click the following link and choose "Save as...": [download video]*

**Competencies**
This course provides guidance to help you demonstrate the following 8 competencies:

- Competency 123.1.1: Founding Principles of the Constitution
  The graduate analyzes the founding principles that shape the U.S. government and Constitution.
- Competency 123.1.2: The Role of Federalism
  The graduate analyzes the principle of division of power between national and state governments.
- Competency 123.1.3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
  The graduate analyzes the development and protection of individual civil liberties and civil rights.
- Competency 123.1.4: Branches of Government
  The graduate analyzes the primary roles and limitations of each branch of government and the relationships among them.
- Competency 123.1.5: Public Opinion and Political Parties
  The graduate analyzes the formation of personal and collective political opinions.
- Competency 123.1.6: Political Participation and Elections
  The graduate analyzes the role of individuals, interest groups, and the media in the U.S. electoral system.
- Competency 123.1.7: Interest Groups
  The graduate analyzes the composition and functions of interest groups in U.S. politics.
- Competency 123.1.8: The Media
  The graduate analyzes the relationships among and effect of media on U.S. politics.
Course Instructor Assistance
As you prepare to successfully demonstrate competency in this subject, remember that course instructors stand ready to help you reach your educational goals. As subject matter experts, mentors enjoy and take pride in helping students become reflective learners, problem solvers, and critical thinkers. Course instructors are excited to hear from you and eager to work with you.

Successful students report that working with a course instructor is the key to their success. Course instructors are able to share tips on approaches, tools, and skills that can help you apply the content you're studying. They also provide guidance in assessment preparation strategies and troubleshoot areas of deficiency. Even if things don't work out on your first try, course instructors act as a support system to guide you through the revision process. You should expect to work with course instructors for the duration of your coursework, so you are welcome to contact them as soon as you begin. Course instructors are fully committed to your success!

Preparing for Success

The information in this section is provided to detail the resources available for you to use as you complete this course.

Learning Resources
The learning resources listed in this section are required to complete the activities in this course. For many resources, WGU has provided automatic access through the course. However, you may need to manually enroll in or independently acquire other resources. Read the full instructions provided to ensure that you have access to all of your resources in a timely manner.

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 Learning Environment
The following learning environment will be utilized as the primary learning resource for completion of this course:

- Central Ideas in American Government

Additional Preparation

Several tools are available for you to use as you work through the course. You should take every opportunity to take advantage of these resources.

- Webinars, live help, and cohorts are available to support you: CNC1 LIVE HELP Session Schedule

Whiteboards
As of January 1, 2014, paper and pencil may not be used during an OLP internal objective assessment. Students may use a whiteboard. Students will be asked to clear the whiteboard after each testing session. Please view the following video for more information on using a
whiteboard during your assessment.

Paper and pencil may be used during all internal WGU objective assessments taken at a proctored site.

Note: To download this video, right-click the following link and choose "Save as...": download video.

Pacing Guide
The pacing guide suggests a weekly structure to pace your completion of learning activities. It is provided as a suggestion and does not represent a mandatory schedule. Follow the pacing guide carefully to complete the course in the suggested timeframe.


Note: This pacing guide does not replace the course. Please continue to refer to the course for a comprehensive list of the resources and activities.

You may also want to download the student pacing and success guide. This guide will help you successfully complete this study plan. It will help you learn the material and prepare for the assessment.

U. S. Government and Constitution

In the United States, the structure and functions of government are consistent yet ever changing. The foundation of government is the Constitution, a stable document that is changeable by the voice of the people. The primary feature that made the U.S. unique at its founding was that the citizens have significant input into the way they are governed. Maintaining this freedom requires a knowledgeable and politically active citizenry.

This course will provide students with a general overview of the major features of the United States government at the federal level, as well as a solid understanding of Constitutional principles such as Civil Rights, limited government, and voting. Students will come away from this course conversant in the structure of government, in their role in the government, and in the ways in which government and the Constitution have changed over time.

Founding Principles of the Constitution
The United States Constitution was the first written document in history to establish a Federal Government and its powers in relation to the individual states. Although many principles had been tried and refined in other nations, this document brought together 13 independent states and described how they would work together collectively. The Constitution describes the organization and duties of the Federal Government as well as the process to make amendments or changes to the document.

This topic addresses the following competencies:
- Competency 123.1.1: Founding Principles of the Constitution
  The graduate analyzes the founding principles that shape the U.S. government and Constitution.

**Development of the Constitution**

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes in sections 1 and 2 for the chapter below:

- 1 – The Founding and the Constitution

**Structure of the Constitution**

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes in sections 3 and 4 for the chapter below:

- 1 – The Founding and the Constitution

**The Role of Federalism**

Federalism is the organizational structure for how government is set up in the United States. It means constitutional power is divided between two main levels of government -- the Federal Government and 50 different State Governments. These two levels have specific constitutional powers. Now 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, school districts, etc. All of these levels of government have some kind of constitutional authority and pass laws you must obey. Knowing the powers in each level of government and how these levels interact with each other will build your understanding of Federalism and how it has changed over time.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- Competency 123.1.2: The Role of Federalism
  The graduate analyzes the principle of division of power between national and state governments.

**Federalism**

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 2 - Federalism

**Civil Liberties and Civil Rights**

Civil Liberties and Civil Rights are different things in our Bill of Rights, the first 10 Amendments in the Constitution. Civil Liberties are the political freedoms that protect individuals from abuses of power by the government. These liberties restrain government from taking away our intrinsic, unalienable rights. Civil Rights are different. Civil Rights are specific processes and rights that government must provide to ensure 'equal protection under the law.' In these next Chapters you'll learn how the Supreme Court has interpreted the Bill of Rights, Civil Liberties, and the history of Civil Rights in our Country.
This topic addresses the following competencies:

- Competency 123.1.3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
  The graduate analyzes the development and protection of individual civil liberties and civil rights.

**Civil Liberties**

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 3 – Civil Liberties

**Civil Rights**

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 4 – Civil Rights

**Branches of Government**

The U.S. Federal Government consists of three separate Branches: the *Legislative* Branch comprised of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate; the *Executive* Branch comprised of the President and federal bureaucracies; and the *Judicial* Branch comprised of the Supreme Court and lower federal courts.

Each Branch has certain constitutional powers but their actions are reviewed by the other Branches. This is the principle of 'Checks & Balances' between the Branches. In this section of the course, you'll learn about each Branch, their powers and responsibilities, how they function and interact with each other and especially how their actions influence your life.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- Competency 123.1.4: Branches of Government
  The graduate analyzes the primary roles and limitations of each branch of government and the relationships among them.

**Congress**

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 5 - Congress

**Presidency**

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 6 - Presidency
Bureaucracy

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 7 – Bureaucracy

Judiciary

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 8 – Judiciary

Public Opinion and Political Parties

 Freedoms in the U.S. are dependent upon knowledgeable and politically active citizens. This section of the course will examine ways that citizens gain that knowledge and put it into action. Knowledge can be gained from many sources whose validity, consistency and agreement with each other may vary widely. Each citizen combines the knowledge with their values, experience, opinions, and meaningful groups to form opinions about issues. Public opinion pollsters solicit and report on these opinions as yet more data to influence and refine public views. Political parties consist of a number of people who hold similar opinions and values and choose to work together toward specific goals.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- Competency 123.1.5: Public Opinion and Political Parties
  The graduate analyzes the formation of personal and collective political opinions.

Public Opinion

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 9 – Public Opinion

Political Parties

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 11 – Political Parties

Political Participation and Elections

"If you have ever voted in an election, signed a petition, participated in an interest-group activity, or sent an email to a government official, then you have engaged in political participation. Political participation simply refers to any kind of action that is aimed at changing or supporting government policy or actors." (Evan & Michaud, 2011, "Political Participation.")

Our representative form of government means we vote for our elected leaders. They legislate
and execute the laws supposedly doing what the voters want. At the same time citizens can influence elected leaders thru other types of political participation. When elections happen voters can choose to keep their previously elected leaders or choose someone new to do the job. This is a continual process of 'checks and balances' between citizens and our elected government officials. In these chapters you’ll learn about more types of political participation.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- Competency 123.1.6: Political Participation and Elections
  The graduate analyzes the role of individuals, interest groups, and the media in the U.S. electoral system.

Voting and Political Participation

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 10 – Voting and Political Participation

Elections and Campaigns

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 12 – Elections and Campaigns

Interest Groups

This section of the course examines a less institutionalized part of US political process. Interest groups provide an important mechanism by which the peoples' concerns are conveyed to the government. These groups can range from simply voicing a concern so that it becomes to the attention of government officials, to formal organizations with specialized knowledge to help influence laws and policies.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- Competency 123.1.7: Interest Groups
  The graduate analyzes the composition and functions of interest groups in U.S. politics.

Interest Groups

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- 13 – Interest Groups

The Media

How can we gain the knowledge needed to be productive participants in the political process? “The media” is a collective term that describes the many ways that information is transmitted between people. Americans generally group the media into print media, broadcast media, and new media. However, these distinctions as methods of communication blend and blur between...
the edges and continue to evolve. Informed citizens must be involved with some form of media to access information, and simultaneously evaluate the validity and reliability of the medium and the message.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- Competency 123.1.8: The Media
  The graduate analyzes the relationships among and effect of media on U.S. politics.

**The Media**

Access the learning environment for this course at the link below and complete the readings, activities, and quizzes for the following section:

- **14 – The Media**

**Final Steps**

Congratulations on completing the activities in this course! This course has prepared you to complete the assessments associated with this course. If you have not already been directed to complete the assessments, schedule and complete your assessments now.