

Civics Education: Sequencing

The study of Civics encompasses many topics united under a common theme of social and human interaction. None of these ideas can be taught or understood in a vacuum and are mutually dependent upon one another. Because of the inter-dependence of the topics the curriculum sequence must provide the learner with a solid foundation of knowledge.

The course will begin with an in-depth look at the United States National Government beginning with the Constitution. Everything that we are as a nation flows from the Constitution. All decisions made by our leaders must have some Constitutional basis. The study of the Constitution will consist of multiple parts. First we will examine the historical creation of the Constitution as well as the broader historical times in which it was created. The unit will then begin to dissect the Constitution into different parts beginning with the Preamble.

After examining the historical antecedents to the documents the course will move to an extensive look at the different components of the document beginning with the Amendment process and Amendments themselves. The course will break down the Amendments into the Bill of Rights, Civil War Amendments and Twentieth Century Amendments. Studying the Amendments first will provide the students with a framework of our democracy which they will need to fall back upon during the course of the class.

The next phase of the course will consist of examining the three different branches of the government itself. As the framers choose to write the most about, and provide the most power to the Congress they will be studied first. This is the branch that has the most direct impact on our daily lives. The President and Courts will follow in order of their direct impact on the average American.

After the students have developed a solid foundation of the nuts and bolts of the Federal Government the course will branch out and begin a study of basic economics and the government's role in our economic system. This part of the course will begin with a basic study of supply and demand and a survey of economic ideas and concepts. After the students have a basic understanding of economics the role of government in the economy will be discussed. This discussion will focus on both the current role of the government and if this role is necessary or justified by the Constitution. The study of economics is critical to any understanding of a citizens' role in a given society. So much of our lives are based on economics and pursuit of money that in order to fully understand our role in society we must understand how economies work and how the government is involved.

The study of economics will dovetail nicely into an analysis of our legal system. For most people experiences with our legal system are the encounters that they associate most frequently with government. We will focus on both civil and criminal laws and attempt to illustrate the differences between the two. Hopefully by coming to a better understanding of the different types of laws the students will understand the paradoxes of the legal system; for example how can a defendant be not guilty in a criminal case, O.J. Simpson, but yet still held responsible for the deaths of two people in a civil case.

At the conclusion of the course the course will provide a framework for understanding how differently our government system works by studying first our political party system and then contrasting our system with other democratic systems. These two units have been paired together because only by looking at them side by side does the uniqueness of our system stand out.