



# A Non-Partisan Introduction to Civics: The Rights & Responsibilities of US Citizenship

**Syllabus**

*Patterdox*

Mr. Reusch

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## Basic Course Information

Online Live course that meets twice a week with all lessons being recorded. Activities and assignments are to be facilitated by the home/classroom instructor as well as grading.

## Class Rules & Expectations

**Classroom Policies/ behavior expectations:** All classroom policies are additions to or clarifications of standing school policies. When holding class, expectations are that every student be respectful and attentive. Any disruptions will result in being removed from the lesson of that day.

**Contact information & office hours:** The best way to reach me is by email. I check it regularly during the workweek until 6:00pm PST. The best way to contact me would be via email: [patterdox@gmail.com](mailto:patterdox@gmail.com) .

## Course Description

This is a course in American Civics, which will cover the foundations, philosophy, and events leading to the formation of the American system of government, including the evolutionary biology and psychology of humans as a species. Special attention will be given to the Constitution, its creation and its interpretation and application within the modern day. Moreover, this course will focus on the branches of government, democratic participation, individual



societal behavior, media's influence on voting and governance, the party system, and how to best contribute to the betterment of the nation as a whole.

## Course Outline

### **UNIT 1: The Fundamental Principles of American Democracy**

Students will examine the contributions of ancient Greek philosophers and evaluate the influence of the enlightenment on the early conceptions of the American government, John Locke's social contract, Montesquieu's separation of powers, the promotion of the public good vs. the protection of individual rights.

### **UNIT 2: Government Structure**

Students will identify the roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government as well as their checks, balances, and separation of powers. Also, students will examine the dual purpose of the constitution of enumerating power and how to limit its abuse. Next, students will contrast the powers and responsibilities of the Legislative, Judicial and Executive branches of government. Students will identify current legislative leaders at both the federal and state level as well as explain how a bill becomes law and the mechanics of legislation creation and ratification. Finally, students will examine the role of lobbying, the influence of the media, public approval ratings, as well as supreme court cases and how to interpret the Constitution.

### **UNIT 3: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens in a Democracy**

Students will evaluate the principle of public good vs. individual liberties, and explain how individual liberties are outlined and protected within the Bill of Rights. Also, students will trace the origins of individual freedom as well as analyze the protection or restriction of individual liberties, and enumerated societal freedoms. Next, students will explain the path to become a citizen of the United States and as well as give examples of civic engagement. Lastly, students will evaluate the concept of majority rule vs. individual freedom, and determine the historic relationship between religion and government, and connect freedom of religion with the fostering of religious diversity with the United States.

### **UNIT 4: Political Ideology**

This unit will also focus on civic perspective in terms of how various experiences and even psychological temperament can lead you towards a very specific perspective on various topics. In this unit the students consider the evolution of liberalism from the early days of the republic to the current day. Concepts such as equality vs equity will be studied, analyzed and debated.

### **UNIT 5: Media, Political Divide, and Perspective**

Students will explore and analyze differing media/press outlets and evaluate the role of the media/press as a political faction. Also students will examine the role of the press and the use of the



press by political figures. students will evaluate the engagement of the individual citizen as it relates to the press media, social media, fake news, fact checking, political bias in the media, and the court of public opinion.

## **UNIT 6: Moving Forward: Making The Future Better Than the Present**

The concept of Unintended Consequences will be a major focus of this unit. Based on the previous units of study, students will now apply this to the future by using a skeptical eye on proposed solutions. Historical events with severely negative unintended consequences will be reviewed as a foundation of how to best foresee holes in commonly held solutions. This will include issues with economic actions (regulation/deregulation), Policy trends (War on Drugs, Cold war containment in Vietnam), and even safety/medical solutions (thalidomide, asbestos).

## **Course Materials**

### Optional Prep Reading:

- **Sebastian Junger**, "Tribe"
- **Arthur Brooks**, "Love your Enemies"
- **Jonathan Haidt**, "The Righteous Mind"

### Assignments

Every unit will have an online resources folder that aligns with the lessons being covered. These may be chosen by the student or home/ classroom facilitator.

### (Incomplete) List of Potential Texts to be Provided

- **Jonathan Haidt**, "The Righteous Mind", "Coddling of the American Mind", "The Anxious Generation"
- **Sebastian Junger**, "Tribe"
- **Arthur Brooks** "Love Your Enemies" & "The Conservative Heart"
- **Jordan Peterson** "12 Rules for Life" & "Beyond Order"
- **Peter Boghossian & James Lindsay** "How to Have Impossible Conversations"
- **William Von Hippel**, "The Social Leap: The New Evolutionary Science of Who We Are, Where We Come from, and What Makes Us Happy"
- **Yuval Noah Harari**, "Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind"
- **Bret Weinstein & Heather Heying**, "A Hunter-Gatherer's Guide to the 21st Century"
- **Aristotle**, *Politics*
- **Thucydides**, "Pericles' Funeral Oration" and "Account of the Plague" in *History of the Peloponnesian War*
- **Socrates**, "Crito" and "Phaedo" in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*
- **Plato**, "The Republic of Plato"

- Socrates, "Apology" in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*
- Socrates, "Euthyphro" in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*
- John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
- Thomas Jefferson, "Declaration of Independence"
- Thomas Paine, "Common Sense"
- Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay, "Federalist Papers"
- Jane Addams, "If Men Were Seeking the Franchise"
- John Stuart Mill, "All Minus One"
- John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty"
- Alex de Tocqueville, "Democracy in America"
- Seneca Falls Conference, "The Declaration of Sentiments"
- Saum Song Bo, "A Chinese View of the Statue of Liberty"
- W.E.B. Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk*, "Forethought" v-vi, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," (pp. 1-7)
- **Frederick Douglass**, "Narrative of the Life of an American Slave" "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro"
- **Abraham Lincoln**, "House Divided Speech at Springfield, Illinois" "Second Inaugural" "Address at Gettysburg" "Fragment on Slavery"
- **Franklin Delano Roosevelt**, "Excerpt from "Four Freedoms Speech."
- John Dewey, "The Meaning and Office of Liberalism," (pp. 449-455)
- **How to Have Impossible Conversations: A very Practical Guide**, Peter Boghossian, James Lindsay
- **Milton Friedman**, "Capitalism and Freedom," Chapter 1
- John McWhorter, "Losing the Race"
- Thomas Sowell, "Black Rednecks & White Liberals"
- **Randolph Bourne**, "Trans-national America"
- **Jonathon Moses**, "International Migration: The Moral Argument" (pp. 59-72, 76-77)
- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" and "Beyond Vietnam"
- **Ella Baker**, "Bigger than a Hamburger"
- **Matt Taibbi**, Hate Inc.
- **James Baldwin**, "A Talk to Teachers"
- **John McWhorter**, "Woke Racism"
- **Douglas Murray**, "The Madness of Crowds"
- **The Obstacle is the Way**, Ryan Holiday
- **Viktor Frankl**, "Man's Search for Meaning"