

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

MIDTERM STUDY GUIDE

STUDY GUIDE

Module One

- Define politics and why we need government?
- What are the functions of government?
- What are the different types of government?
- Why is trust in government important for a democratic political system? How do Americans overall feel about their government?
- What is political efficacy? Why is it important to a democratic political system?
- What is citizenship? What is the role of a citizen in politics?
- What are the differences between direct and representative democracy?
- How is direct democracy implemented?
- What are the three key benchmarks of a representative democracy?
- What is political culture? What are the fundamental values of American political culture?
- Chapter 1 Flashcards

Module Two

- What is a constitution and what does it accomplish?
- What are the classical liberal philosophical ideas that influenced the American Constitution?
- What were the causes of the American Revolution? Why did the colonists think a new Constitution was needed?
- What is the Declaration of Independence?
- What were the Articles of Confederation? What factors contributed to its failure?
- How did conflict and compromise influence the drafting of the Constitution? What specific issues caused conflict?
- What were the Virginia Plan, New Jersey Plan, and the Connecticut Compromise? What were the main issues of debate? How were they addressed in the Connecticut Compromise?
- What is the process to amend the Constitution? How many amendments are there to the Constitution?
- How did the Constitution seek to limit the power of the national government?
- Why a Bill of Rights?
- What are the “separation of powers” and “checks and balances”? How are these sets of institutional arrangements related? How are they distinct? How are the separation of powers and checks and balances put into effect in the United States Constitution?
- What was the primary issue in the debates between the Federalists and the Antifederalists over the United States Constitution?
- What is tyranny of the majority? Why did the Founders fear it?
- Chapter 2 Flashcards

Module Three

- Explain federalism and discuss how a federal system is different from a confederal and unitary system.
- What are expressed, concurrent and implied powers? How are the different from one another?
- Know reserved powers, supremacy clause and necessary and proper/elastic clause and how they conflict with one another.
- Dual federalism and cooperative federalism and how they relate to the “marble cake” vs. “layer cake” metaphor?

- Explain three ways through which the federal government expanded its power over time?
- Why are the Supreme Court decisions of *Gibbons v Ogden* and *McCulloch v Maryland* significant in terms of federalism?

Module Four

- Define civil liberties and civil rights. Explain how they are different from one another and the role of government with respect to each. What parts of the Constitution support each? Support your answer with examples of each.
- What were Alexander Hamilton’s objections to a Bill of Rights?
- What is selective incorporation?
- What kind of speech is protected?
- What are the different forms of prohibited speech and what are the various areas of speech that can be regulated?
- What is the standard that the Supreme Court applies to the restrictions on free speech?
- What are the establishment and free exercise clauses? How are they in conflict with one another?
- What are the different interpretations of the establishment clause? What is the “wall of separation”? It is clear how high or strong this wall should be?

Module Five

- What is public opinion and why is it important in a democratic society?
- What is political ideology and name and discuss the three main ideologies found in the US?
- What are some of the influences and major forces that shape public opinion?
- What is a population and what is a sample?

Module Six

- Identify and describe three main functions of media in politics?
- What are the different types of media? Where do most Americans get their news?
- How has the Internet transformed media and its function in a democracy?
- What are some of the benefits and

- Know grants-in-aid, block grants and categorical grants.
- How has the government used grants and mandates to expand its powers?
- Chapter 3 Flashcards

- What is *habeus corpus and due process*? What rights are the criminally accused entitled to?
- Do individuals have a right to Privacy? Is it specifically mentioned in the Constitution? How do the cases of *Griswold v Connecticut* & *Roe v Wade* relate to the issue of the right to privacy?
- What is the “Equal Protection” clause? What part of the Constitution does it come from?
- *Plessy v Ferguson* and *Brown v Board of Education* and their impact on “separate but equal”
- De facto v de jure discrimination
- What are the Strict Scrutiny Test and suspect classes? How are they applied?
- Why is the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case important as it relates to civil rights?
- What is affirmative action? What did the Supreme Court say regarding this issue in its 2016 *Fisher v. University of Texas* ruling?
- Chapter 4 Flashcards

- How are these concepts important for understanding public opinion in the US?
- Why is randomization important to making useful inferences about public opinion?
- What are some biases that could skew polls?
- What are the demographic influences on political socialization?
- Chapter 5 Flashcards

- drawbacks of new media?
- How has the convergence and consolidation of media outlets impacted the information provided by the media?
- What are some factors that contribute to media bias?
- Define agenda-setting, framing, priming and

their impact on media in politics. How do they compromise the role of the media in politics?

- What are the Fairness Doctrine and Equal Time Rule?
- Chapter 6 Flashcards