Massachusetts History and Social Science

Eighth Grade - United States and Massachusetts Government and Civic Life

Topic 1: The philosophical foundations of the United States political system 8.T1

1. **Explain why the Founders of the United States considered the government of ancient Athens to be the beginning of democracy and explain how the democratic political concepts developed in ancient Greece influenced modern democracy (e.g., civic participation, voting rights, trial by jury, legislative bodies, constitution writing, rule of law).** 8.T1.1
2. **Describe the government of the Roman Republic and the aspects of republican principles that are evident in modern democratic governments (e.g., separation of powers, rule of law, representative government, and the notion of civic duty/common good).** 8.T1.2
3. **Explain the influence of Enlightenment thinkers on the American Revolution and framework of the American government (e.g., John Locke, Charles de Montesquieu).** 8.T1.3
4. **Explain how British ideas about and practices of government (e.g., the Magna Carta, the concept of habeas corpus, the Mayflower Compact, self-government, town meetings, the importance of education and literacy, the House of Burgesses, colonial legislatures, the Albany Plan of Union) influenced American colonists and the political institutions that developed in colonial America.** 8.T1.4
5. **Analyze the evidence for arguments that the principles of government of the United States were influence by the governments of Native Peoples (e.g. the Iroquois Confederacy).** 8.T1.5

Topic 2: The development of the United States government 8.T2

1. **Apply knowledge of the history of the American Revolutionary period to determine the experiences and events that led the colonists to declare independence; explain the key ideas about equality, representative government, limited government, rule of law, natural rights, common good, and the purpose of government in the Declaration of Independence.** 8.T2.1
2. **Analyze the weaknesses of the national government under the Articles of Confederation; and describe the crucial events (e.g., Shays' Rebellion) leading to he Constitutional Convention.** 8.T2.2

Skip to main content

	3 **Identify the various leaders of the Constitutional Convention and analyze the major issues (e.g., distribution of political power, rights of individuals, representation and rights of states, slavery) they debated and how the issues were resolved.** 8.T2.3
	4 **Compare and contrast key ideas debated between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists over ratification of the Constitution (e.g., federalism, factions, checks and balances, independent judiciary, republicanism, limited government).44 Note: Important topics of individual Federalist Papers: Federalist 10-factions; Federalist 9- strong union; Federalist 39-republican government; Federalist 51-three branches of government independent of each other to ensure liberty; Federalist 78 -importance of an independent judicial branch and judicial review.** 8.T2.4
	5 **Summarize the Preamble and each article in the Constitution, and the rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights; explain the reasons for the addition of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution in 1791.** 8.T2.5
Topic 3: The institutions of United States government 8.T3	1 **Distinguish the three branches of government (separation of powers): the Supreme Court and other federal inferior courts as the judicial branch** 8.T3.1 a Congress as the legislative branch 8.T3.1A b the Presidency and the executive agencies as the executive branch 8.T3.1B c the Supreme Court and other federal inferior courts as the judicial branch 8.T3.1C
	2 **Examine the interrelationship of the three branches (the checks and balance system). ▯ Congress: enumerated powers, general powers, limits on power, checks on other two branches; roles of political parties in the organization of Congress; roles within the legislative branch, such as the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, minority party leaders; the system for accomplishing legislation, including committees, hearings and legislative procedures 44 Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for History and Social Science 107 ▯ the Presidency: roles, powers and limits, checks on other two branches, role of the Cabinet, such as the Vice President, Attorney General and Secretaries of State, Defense, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security; executive departments and agencies (such as the Department of Education, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or the Food and Drug Administration), and branches of the military ▯ the Supreme Court: role and powers, checks on other two branches, lower courts** 8.T3.2
	3 **Describe the respective roles of each of the branches of government.** 8.T3.3
	4 **Explain the process of elections in the legislative and executive branches and the process of nomination/confirmation of individuals in the judicial and executive branches. ▯ Elections: running for legislative office (U.S. Representative – unlimited two-year terms, U.S. Senator – unlimited six-year terms), or executive office (President – two four-year terms and Vice President –unlimited four-year terms) and the function of the Electoral College in Presidential elections ▯**

Skip to main content

	Nomination by the President and confirmation by Congress: Supreme Court Justices and Secretaries/agency heads in the executive branch) 8.T3.4
	5 Describe the role of political parties in elections at the state and national levels. 8.T3.5
Topic 4: Rights and responsibilities of citizens 8.T4	1 Explain the different ways one becomes a citizen of the United States. 8.T4.1
	2 Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens (e.g., voting, serving as a juror, paying taxes, serving in the military, running for and holding elected office) as compared to non-citizens. 8.T4.2
	3 Distinguish among civic, political, and private life. 8.T4.3
	4 Define and provide examples of fundamental principles and values of American political and civic life (e.g., liberty, the common good, justice, equality, tolerance, law and order, due process, rights of individuals, diversity, civic unity, patriotism, constitutionalism, popular sovereignty, and representative democracy). 8.T4.4
	5 Describe how a democracy provides opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process through elections, political parties, and interest groups. 8.T4.5
	6 Evaluate information related to elections (e.g., policy positions and debates among candidates, campaign financing, campaign advertising, influence of news media and social media, and data relating to voter turnout in elections). 8.T4.6
	7 Apply knowledge of the meaning of leadership and the qualities of good leaders to evaluate political leaders at the community, the state and national levels. 8.T4.7
	8 Explain the importance of individuals working cooperatively with their elected leaders. 8.T4.8
	9 Explain the importance of public service, and identify career and other opportunities in public service at the local, state, and national levels 8.T4.9
	10 Analyze issues involving liberty in conflict with equality or authority, individual rights in conflict with the common good, or majority rule in conflict with minority rights. 8.T4.10
	11 Examine the varied understandings of the role of elected representatives and discuss those who have demonstrated political courage or those whose actions have failed to live up to the ideals of the Constitution. 8.T4.11
	12 Examine the role of political protest in a democracy. 8.T4.12
	13 Examine the influence of public and private interest groups in a democracy, including policy research organizations (e.g. Pew Research Center, Brookings Institute, Heritage Foundation) in shaping debate about public policy. 8.T4.13

Skip to main content

Topic 5: The Constitution, Amendments, and Supreme Court decisions 8.T5

1. **Explain why the "necessary and proper" clause46 and why it is often referred to as the "elastic clause."** 8.T5.1

2. **Explain the historical context and significance of changes in the Constitution, including key amendments. Examples of amendments include the:** 8.T5.2
   - a 14th Amendment (1868): citizenship rights, equal protection of laws 8.T5.2A
   - b 19th Amendment (1920): women's right to vote in federal and state elections 8.T5.2B
   - c 26th Amendment (1971): lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 in federal elections 8.T5.2C

3. **Analyze the Constitutional issues that caused the Civil War and led to the eventual expansion of the power of the Federal government and individual civil rights.** 8.T5.3

4. **Explain the historical context and significance of laws enacted by Congress that have expanded the civil rights and equal protection for race, gender, disability (e.g., the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Voting Rights Act, 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), and explain how the evolving understanding of human rights has affected the movement for civil rights for all** 8.T5.4

5. **Explain the principle of judicial review established in Marbury v. Madison (1803) and explain how cases come before the Supreme Court, how cases are argued, and how the Court issues decisions and dissents.** 8.T5.5

6. **Research, analyze, and report orally or in writing on one area (a, b, or c, below) in which Supreme Court decisions have made significant changes over time in citizens' lives.** 8.T5.6
   - a Interpretations of freedoms of religion, assembly, press, petition, and speech under the First Amendment; for example, Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969) The Court held, 7-2, that students' right to protest is protected in schools. Bethel School District v. Fraser (1986) The Court held, 7-2, that students' right to use vulgar language is not protected in schools. Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier (1988) The Court ruled, 5-3, that students' right to school-sponsored student speech in a school newspaper may be restricted with educational justification. Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission (2010) The Court ruled, 5-4, that contributions by corporations and organizations such as unions to political campaigns are protected as free speech. 8.T5.6A

Skip to main content

b Interpretations of the due process clause and the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, for example, Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857) The Court dismissed the case brought by Dred Scott, an African American, to obtain his freedom from slavery, 7-2, on the grounds that African Americans were not citizens, that the Congress could not ban slavery in federal territories, and that the due process clause prohibited the government from freeing slaves brought into territories. Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) The Court upheld, 7-1, the ruling that racial segregation was constitutional under the "separate but equal" doctrine. Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)47 The Court unanimously overturned the "separate but equal" doctrine, ruling that state laws establishing separate schools for white and black students were unconstitutional. Mapp v. Ohio (1961) The Court, redefined, 6-3, the implementation of the exclusionary rule (evidence collected in violation of an individual's Fourth Amendment rights is inadmissible for a criminal prosecution in a court of law) to apply to states. Loving v. Virginia (1967) The Court unanimously recognized the right to interracial marriage and declared race-based restrictions on marriage unconstitutional. Romer v. Evans (1996) The Court determined, 6-3, that the Equal Protection Clause prevents states from denying civil rights protections to sexual minorities, including lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. Obergefell v. Hodges (2015) The Court held, 5-4, that same sex marriage is protected under the 14th Amendment. 8.T5.6B

c Interpretations in cases where individual rights and perceived community or national interests were in conflict, for example, The United States Flag and the Pledge of Allegiance Minersville School District v. Gobitis (1940) The Court held, 8-1, that the state's interest in national unity allowed school boards to require students to salute the flag. West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette (1943) Court held, 6-3, that students are protected from having to salute the flag or recite the Pledge of Allegiance through the free exercise clause of the First Amendment. Texas v. Johnson (1989) The Court held, 5-4, that an individual has a right to burn the flag under the First Amendment free expression clause. School Prayer Engel v. Vitale (1962) The Court held, 6-2, that requiring school prayer in public schools was a violation of the First Amendment establishment clause. National Security Korematsu v. United States (1944) The Court held, 6-3, that a government order during World War II sending Japanese-Americans to internment camps, rather than allowing them to remain in their homes, was constitutional. Clapper v. Amnesty International (2012) The Court, 5-4, dismissed a challenge to the government's power to conduct surveillance on international phone calls and emails under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Courts. Gun Control District of Columbia v. Heller (2008) The Court, 5-4, upheld the right of individuals to own guns under the Second Amendment and found the District of Columbia's ban on owning handguns to be unconstitutional. 8.T5.6C

Topic 6: The structure of Massachusetts state and local government 8.T6

1 **Compare and contrast the functions of state government and national government.** 8.T6.1

2 **Describe provisions of the United States Constitution and the Massachusetts Constitution that define and distribute powers and authority of the federal or state government.** 8.T6.2

Skip to main content

3 **Distinguish among the enumerated and implied powers in the United States Constitution and the Massachusetts Constitution.** 8.T6.3

4 **Compare core documents associated with the protection of individual rights, including the Bill of Rights, the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution, and Article I of the Massachusetts Constitution.** 8.T6.4

5 **Explain why the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution is important to state government and identify the powers granted to states by the Tenth Amendment and the limits to state government outlined in it** 8.T6.5

6 **Identify additional protections provided by the Massachusetts Constitution that are not provided by the U.S. Constitution.** 8.T6.6

7 **Contrast the responsibilities of government at the federal, state, and local levels (e.g., protection of individual rights and the provision of services such as law enforcement, welfare payments, and the building and funding of schools).** 8.T6.7

8 **Explain the leadership structure of the government of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the function of each branch** 8.T6.8

- a the executive branch (governor and agencies) 8.T6.8A
- b the legislative branch (state representatives and state senators) 8.T6.8B
- c courts of law (Supreme Judicial Court, lower court system) 8.T6.8C

9 **Give examples of tax-supported facilities and services provided by the Massachusetts state government and by local governments.** 8.T6.9

10 **Explain the major components of local government in Massachusetts, including the roles and functions of mayors, city councils, and school committees in cities; town managers, select boards, representative and open town meetings and school committees, in towns, and courts and sheriff's departments in counties. (Key Primary Source in Appendix D: The Massachusetts Constitution (1780))** 8.T6.10

Topic 7: Freedom of the Press and News/Media Literacy 8.T7

1 **Explain why freedom of the press was included as a right in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and in Article 16 of the Massachusetts Constitution; explain that freedom of the press means the right to express and publish views on politics and other topics without government sponsorship, oversight, control, or censorship.** 8.T7.1

2 **Give examples of how a free press can provide competing information and views about government and politics.** 8.T7.2

3 **Explain the different functions of news articles, editorials, editorial cartoons, and "op-ed" commentaries.** 8.T7.3

Skip to main content

4 **Evaluate the benefits and challenges of digital news and social media to a democratic society.** 8.T7.4

5 **Explain methods for evaluating information and opinion in print and online media (e.g., determining the credibility of news articles; analyzing the messages of editorials and op-ed commentaries; assessing the validity of claims and sufficiency of evidence).** 8.T7.5

6 **Analyze the point of view and evaluate the claims of an editorial, editorial cartoon, or op-ed commentary on a public policy issue at the local, state, or national level (e.g., a mayoral or school committee decision, an action by a state legislature or Governor, a vote in Congress or an action by the President).** 8.T7.6