American Institutions and Civic Learning Attribute

Learning Outcomes and Interpretative Notes

Drafted by the Civic Education Faculty Task Force, Spring 2023

Note (10/1/25): The materials below, generated by a faculty task force in 2022-23, will support the framing of different potential ways for courses to implement the new civic curricular features.

(I) how the history of the United States continues to shape the present;

Identify key events, processes, and periods in United States history, examine conflicting perspectives on those topics, and analyze how those parts of United States history continue to shape the present.

<u>Interpretative Note</u>

Courses meeting outcome #1 are expected to provide a substantial historical treatment of significant themes, events, processes, or periods in U.S. history, along with multiple interpretive perspectives, and how they have shaped the present. Ways of presenting U.S. history might include focusing on a particular historical period, such as the founding era, the creation of the industrial economy in the nineteenth century, or social movements and political reform in the twentieth century; or it might include long-term thematic approaches emphasizing important issues throughout U.S. history. Examples of such themes, but by no means the only possibilities, include:

- Nationhood, Authority, and Sovereignty
- Protest and Civil Discourse
- Work, Property, and Economy
- Religious and Cultural Traditions
- Citizenship, Rights, Freedoms, and Responsibilities

(II) the basic principles of American constitutional democracy and how they are applied under a republican form of government;

Identify and assess different perspectives on the basic principles of United States constitutional democracy, including its structure, rights, and fundamental protections, and analyze how these principles have been applied under a republican form of government as it evolved over time.

Interpretative Notes:

We recognize that the concept of republicanism has changed over time. It is important to recognize how Americans have disagreed about the structure and rights of U.S. government and how best to secure political and civil liberties for its people. This outcome asks students to explore the legal, political, and philosophical controversies about the U.S. government–its structure and rights. These controversies often reflect conflicting opinions about underlying values and priorities. In addition, it is important that students are exposed to how the principles have been applied with different degrees of success.

Hence, these classes would be required to identify two or more basic principles, examine those principles from different perspectives, and consider how those principles preserve civil and political freedoms and rights. Basic principles can be understood in a variety of ways including the values, philosophical ideals, the justifications thereof, and the formal and informal norms that underlie the legitimacy and efficacy of US political institutions.

The following is a list of possible, but not exclusive, topics that could form a basis of republican forms of governance.

- Representative democracy
- Separation of powers
- Popular sovereignty
- Rule of law
- Equal protection
- Social, civil, legal, and political rights
- Political virtues and the common good

(III) the United States Constitution and major American constitutional debates and developments;

Examine the United States Constitution, including one or more amendments, major constitutional debates, and theories of constitutional interpretation, and analyze their impact on subsequent historical developments.

Interpretative Notes:

We understand there are different views on the interpretation and amendment of the Constitution. Students should learn about the basic provisions and structure of the Constitution, debates about those provisions and structure, and their impact on federal, state, or tribal legislation, international agreements, or treaties.

Students should examine at least one constitutional debate that raises questions on the meaning and interpretation of the Constitution. This could include considering how laws, treaties, and other constitutions, including tribal or state constitutions, impact or conflict with the Constitution.

(IV) the essential founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of American Institutions of self-governance;

Analyze primary philosophical, historical, and political documents that influenced the founding of the U.S. government and its structure, and evaluate the role these documents played in shaping U.S. institutions.

Interpretative Notes

This learning outcome examines the influence of a wide range of documents on the founding era as well as the development of U.S. Institutions, including the system of government as well as civil society institutions. The notion of founding could include the possibility of a second founding moment, such as during or after the Civil War. It can also include influences from non-European cultures such as Native Nations. This learning outcome can also consider how certain views challenged and drew on these documents to make political claims with varying degrees of success.

Examples of such documents include but are not limited to the following:

- Articles of Confederation
- Federalist Papers and Anti-Federalists writings
- Abolitionist and Women's Suffrage writings
- Indigenous Constitutions and Treatises
- Thomas Paine's Common Sense
- Declaration of Independence
- Political and Philosophical texts

(V) landmark Supreme Court cases that have shaped law and society;

Evaluate landmark Supreme Court cases and assess the court's role in shaping law and society.

Interpretative Note: While there is no uniform agreement about which cases should be included in a list of landmark cases, we understand landmark cases as those having a significant impact on society, law, economics, or politics. What constitutes a landmark case will vary with the substantive content of the course.

Some possible ways to understand the court's role in shaping law could focus on how the Supreme Court has impacted society by resolving disputes in the U.S. through judicial review and the role of precedent. In addition, classes could cover the court's impact on federalism, economic relationships, voting rights, religious freedoms, social and family relationships, individual and civil liberties, due process, and property and contract rights.

(VI) the civic actions necessary for effective citizenship and civic participation in a self-governing society – for example, civil dialog and civil disagreement;

Demonstrate and apply the skills necessary for effective citizenship, including civil dialogue and civic participation, shaped by effective problem-solving and information literacy, by employing active learning opportunities, community-engaged learning, service learning, or experiential learning.

Interpretative Note: The following offers suggestions for how individual classes or practicums could allow students to satisfy the above learning outcome.

1. Articulate the views and counter-views orally and/or using other forms of communication on the social, political, and ethical issues arising in a field of study.
2. Demonstrate problem-solving skills and information literacy needed to engage critically and constructively with those who possess opposing opinions.
3. Analyze and assess different types of information and their sources from various formal and informal institutions.
4. Identify and apply effective rhetorical and communication skills, including effective listening, synthesizing, and considering alternate perspectives.
5. Illustrate effective citizenship and civic participation through active learning opportunities, service learning, and experiential learning. Some of the types of activities that could be used to develop students' skills as effective citizens are the following: public policy debates, policy memos, role-playing, internships, op-eds, field trips beyond the campus, apprenticeships, and community and campus outreach.

(VII) basic economic knowledge to critically assess public policy options and to inform professional and personal decisions.

Explain and assess how economic data, tools, and theories are applied to compare and evaluate current or historical public policies, as well as professional and personal decisions.

Interpretative Notes

To produce economic knowledge relevant for policy debates, economists typically focus on widely applicable questions and analytical frameworks, such as: how prices and incentives affect the allocation of resources and how markets and government policies interact to determine gains from exchange, losses from externalities and other market failures, and the distribution of wealth.

Specific concepts, models, and issues, which enter current or historical public policy debates from varying perspectives, may include but are not limited to:

- the formal supply and demand model;
- concepts of economic efficiency;
- evaluation of alternative policies that redistribute income and wealth or otherwise reduce inequality;
- the theory of public goods and common pool resources;
- different regimes of property rights;
- labor markets, including the minimum wage, the union movement, and health and safety regulations;
- the historical institution of slavery;
- the informal economy (e.g. black markets, household production);
- sustainability and environmental regulation;
- information failures and their consequences;
- market power and antitrust;
- trade policy;
- technological change;
- interest rates, inflation, and the business cycle;
- financial crises and regulation, including the Federal Reserve;
- comparative economic systems; and
- the history of economic thought.

Many of the concepts and models used to assess policy can also aid personal, professional, and business, or organizational decisions. These may include but are not limited to:

- opportunity costs and sunk costs;
- cost/benefit analysis;
- marginal analysis;
- market entry barriers;
- present value;
- the real interest rate;
- debt, loans, and compound interest;
- productivity rate;
- piece work;
- pay equity;
- asset bubbles; and
- the business cycle.

The collection and analysis of data are critical for policy, professional, and business decisions, alongside qualitative evidence such as laws, regulations, and court cases. In courses addressing this outcome, relevant empirical data to develop, confirm, and refine economic models, arguments, and concepts may come from private and governmental surveys, tax and compliance filings, business and regulatory records, newspapers and other media, historical documents generally, lab and field experiments, and other sources. Where available, courses may use cross-sectional, time series, and panel data sets, and they may analyze empirical evidence in many ways, including descriptive statistics, charts, and plots, regression, and the more sophisticated tools of statistical inference known collectively as econometrics.