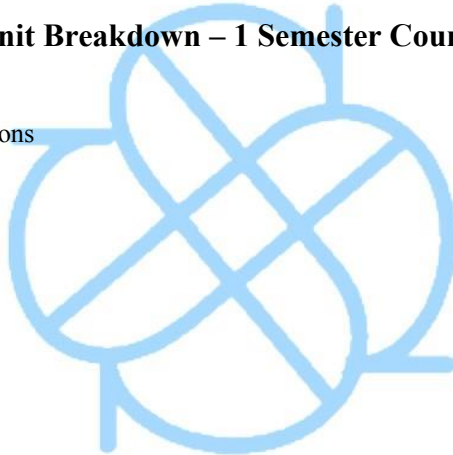


US Government and Civics

Created by Rachael Romero for Use by Simple Studies

Unit Breakdown – 1 Semester Course

- **Unit 1:** The Constitution
- **Unit 2:** Ideology and Elections
- **Unit 3:** Executive Branch
- **Unit 4:** Legislative Branch
- **Unit 5:** Judicial Branch



Unit 1: The Constitution

Foundations of the Constitution

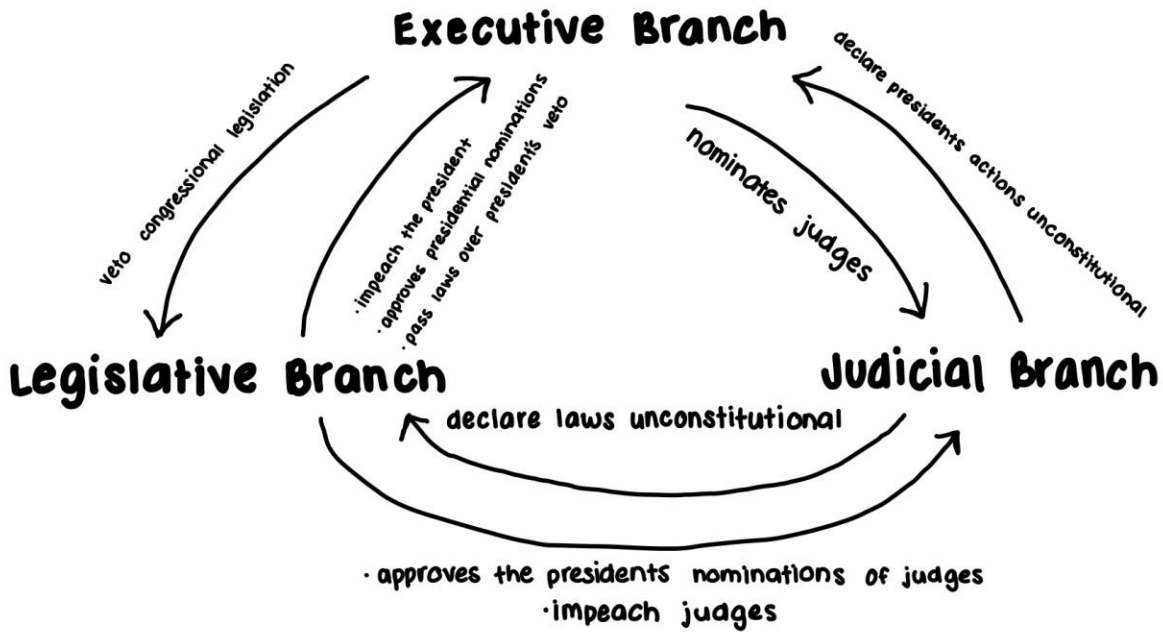
- **Federalism:** The concept of having separate powers for the state and federal government.

<u>National Powers</u>	<u>State Powers</u>
Declare war	Create public schools
Conduct foreign affairs	Create local government
Regulate international trade	Provide public education
Establish a federal court system	Create traffic laws
Support armies	Levy taxes
Coin money	Borrow money
Charter banks	Define crime
Regulate interstate commerce	Punish Crime
Levy taxes	Charter Banks
Borrow money	Issue marriage licenses
Define crime	Issue licenses for practicing law and
Punish crime	

- **Elastic Clause:** Gives Congress the ability to create laws and use extreme methods to govern the nation
- **Supremacy Clause:** The Constitution is the supreme law of the land and it always overrides the powers of the states.
- **Separation of Powers:** Each branch has their own individual powers

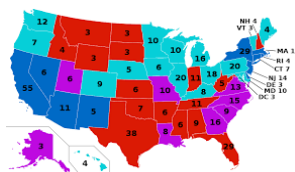


- **Checks and Balances:** Each branch makes sure that the other branches aren't abusing their power.



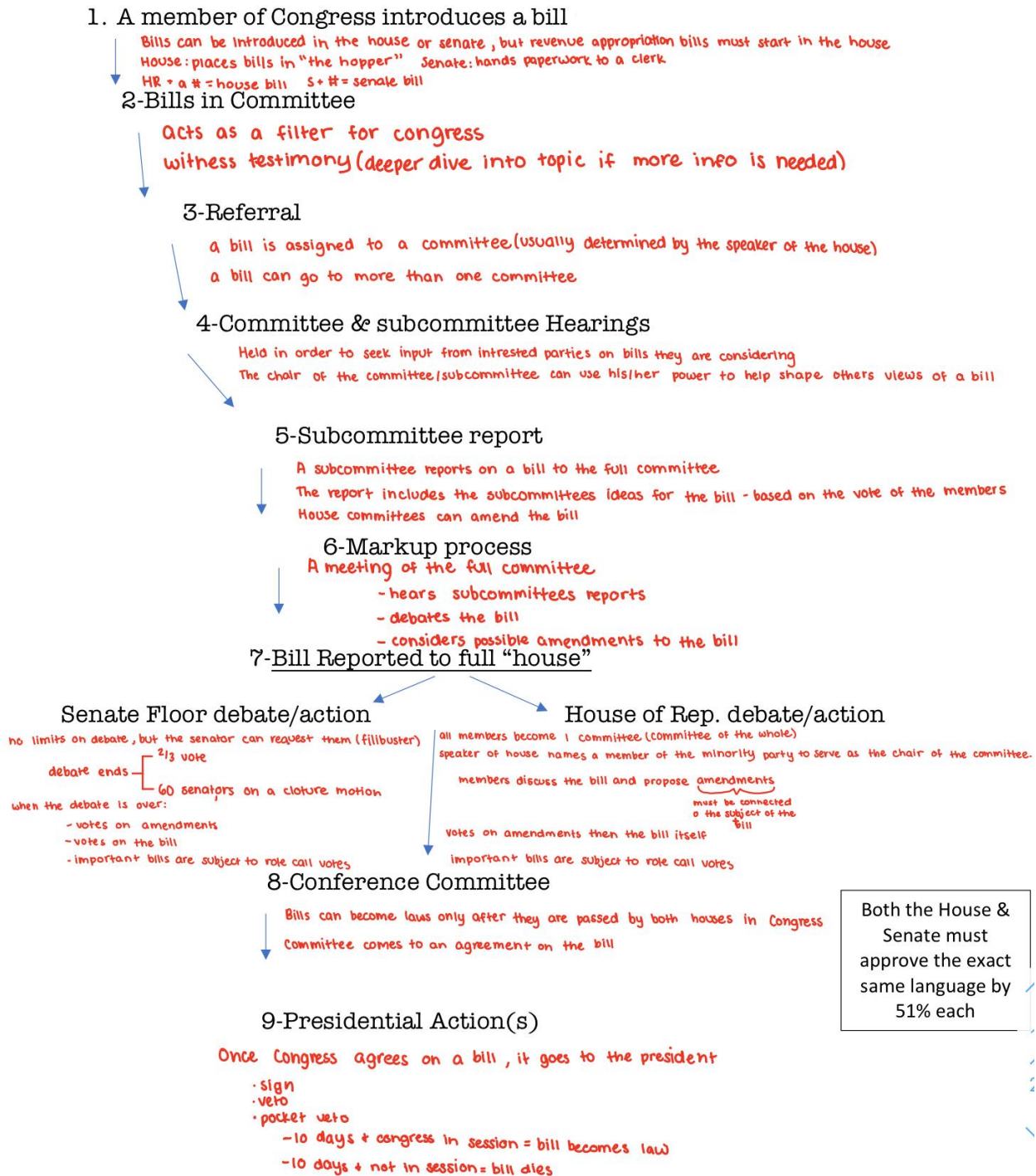
Articles I, II, & III of the Constitution

- **The Branches of Government:** (More details about each branch discussed later in the guide)
 - Executive (enforces laws)
 - Legislative (make laws)
 - Judicial (interpret laws)
- **Bicameral legislature:** A body of lawmakers consisting of 2 separate houses/chambers (ex. House of Representatives and the Senate)
- **The Electoral College:**
 - Method of electing a president
 - The candidate that gets more than half of the electoral votes wins the election
 - Each state gets a certain number of electoral votes (based off of the amount of representatives in congress)
 - Refer to picture below:



How A Bill Becomes a Law

How a Bill Becomes a Law



The Amendments

- **Proposing and Ratifying an Amendment**
 - **Proposal:**
 - Proposed by $\frac{2}{3}$ vote from both houses of Congress
 - OR
 - Proposed by $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of national convention called by Congress
 - **Ratification:**
 - Ratified by the Senate legislatures of 38 of the states
 - OR
 - Ratified by conventions held in 38 of the states

The Bill of Rights

- The **Bill of Rights** are the first 10 amendments of the constitution. They protect individual rights and liberties. These rights are freedoms that the government cannot impede upon.
- **Summary of the First 10 amendments:**
 - **First Amendment:** Freedom of religion, assembly, press, petition, and speech. (remember the RAPPS acronym)
 - **Second Amendment:** Right to bear arms
 - **Third Amendment:** Right to not house soldiers during a war
 - **Fourth Amendment:** Protects individuals from unreasonable searches and seizures
 - **Fifth Amendment:** Rights in criminal cases
 - Due process
 - Don't have to speak against yourself (plead the fifth)
 - **Sixth Amendment:** Right to a speedy trial by an impartial jury, a lawyer, and call upon your own witnesses
 - **Seventh Amendment:** A jury must be provided in civil cases
 - **Eighth Amendment:** Sets limits on bails and punishments
 - **Ninth Amendment:** States have other rights that are not addressed in the Constitution.

- **Tenth Amendment:** Power that is not given to the federal government is reserved for the states.
- **Other Amendments You Should Know About:**
 - **13th amendment:** Prohibits slavery
 - **15th amendment:** Citizens should have the right to vote regardless of race or color.
 - **18th amendment:** Prohibited alcohol
 - **19th amendment:** Gave women the right to vote
 - **21st amendment:** Repealed the 18th amendment
 - **22nd amendment:** Limits a president to 2 terms
 - **26th amendment:** Set the voting age at 18

Flag Code

- **Meaning**
 - 13 stripes represent the 13 colonies
 - 50 stars represent the 50 states
- **Signs Of Respect For The Flag:**
 - When displayed horizontally, the stars should be on top
 - The flag should not be touching anything underneath it
 - The flag should not be worn as clothes (including clothing displaying stars and stripes that resemble the flag)
 - The flag should not be pinned/displayed in a way that increases the chance of causing damage to it
 - The flag shouldn't be used in advertisements
 - The flag should not be used to carry anything
 - If the flag has been damaged one should dispose of it properly (commonly done by burning it)

Unit 2: Ideology and Elections

Political Culture and Ideology

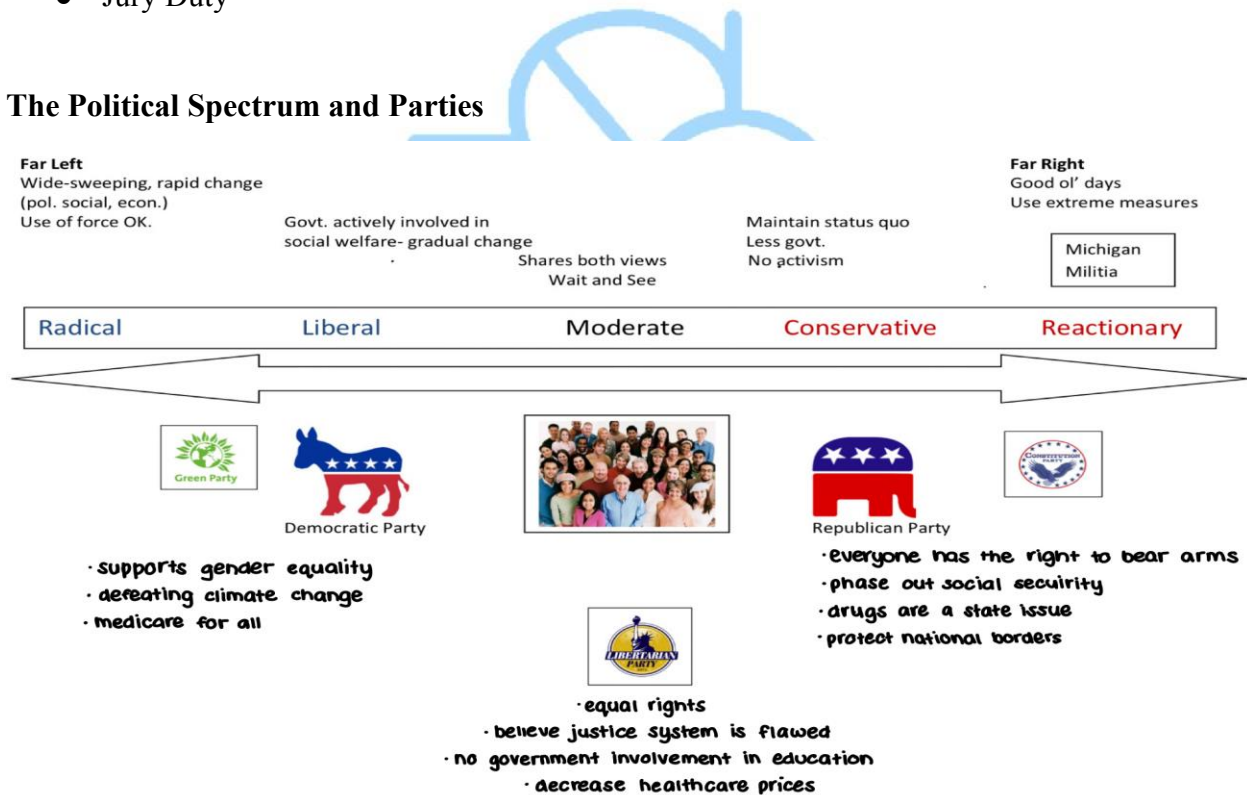
- Key Terms:

- **Political Culture:** A general set of beliefs and values within a large group of people.
- **Political Ideology:** A set of specific ideas or beliefs based upon one's own beliefs/intellect.
- **Political Socialization:** How you came to your ideology (parents, culture, religion, etc)

Examples Of Political Participation:

- Voting
- Canvassing
- Protest
- Jury Duty

The Political Spectrum and Parties



Campaigns and Elections

- **Types of Elections**
 - **Primary:** Choosing between members of the same party to determine who will be the nominee for the party in the general election
 - **General/Presidential:** Choose among candidates of different parties

- **Midterm:** Even numbered years in between the presidential election for $\frac{1}{3}$ of Senators and all Representatives
- **Special:** When a vacancy occurs in the House or Senate
- **Nominating Conventions:**
 - Parties organizations hold them
 - A lot of money is spent
 - Citizens from all states attend
 - Approve Party Platform
 - Nominate President and Vice President
- **The Impact Of Incumbency On Elections:** Current elected officials are typically more likely to get elected than new candidates.
- **Polling**
 - Polls gather information on public opinion
 - Public Opinion = the sum of total individual views, issues and candidates
 - Margin of error is the amount the poll might be off
 - The more people and the more diverse the sample, the more accurate the results
 - Polls can be wrong, but they give us good generalizations about the opinions of individuals.

Interest Groups and the Media

- **Lobbying:** Trying to influence an elected official on certain issues.
- **Political Action Committees:** Privately raise money to influence elected officials at the federal level.
- **Special Interest Groups:** Doesn't raise money to influence elected officials.
- **Media Bias:** The way that a reporter discusses a political candidate and policy issues.


Unit 3: The Executive Branch

The President:

- **Current President:** Donald Trump (2016-2020)
- **Qualifications:**
 - Must be at least 35 years old
 - Must be a natural born citizen
 - Must be a resident of the US for 14 years
- **Terms:**
 - 4 year terms, 2 terms
- **Roles of the President:**
 - **Chief Executive:** enforces the laws and issues **executive orders**
 - **Chief Diplomat:** deals with foreign policy and maintains good relationships with other countries
 - **Chief Citizen:** Represent the citizens and act in their best interests
 - **Party Leader:** Leader of his/her political party
 - **Commander in Chief:** commander of the nations armed forces
 - **Legislative Leader:** Propose new laws/bills, and give the **State of the Union Address**
 - **Judicial Leader:** Grants **pardons and reprieves**
 - **Chief of State:** Serves as the symbolic leader of the country
 - **Chief Administrator(manager of economy):** Plan the federal government budget
- **Vocab**
 - **Executive Order:** A policy established by the president without approval from Congress for 60 days.
 - **State of the Union Address:** An annual speech given by the president, in which solutions to the nations problems are discussed.
 - **Pardon:** To forgive someone for an offense
 - **Reprieve:** To cancel or delay the punishment of someone
- **The President's Cabinet:**
 - **Cabinet:** A group of people chosen by the president to run executive departments



The Executive Departments:

- Vice President: First in the line of succession (will become in charge if the president becomes unfit to perform his duties)
 - Department of State
 - Department of Defense
 - Department of Treasury
 - Department of Justice
 - Department of Agriculture
 - Department of Interior
 - Department of Health and Human Services
 - Department of Labor
 - Department of Commerce
 - Department of Housing and Urban Development
 - Department of Energy
 - Department of Transportation
 - Department of Education
 - Department of Veteran Affairs
 - Department of Homeland Security
- 

***Note: most regular government/civics courses will not go into detail about the president's cabinet, but if you would like to know about the roles of each of these departments, this is a great website: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/the-executive-branch/>

The Impeachment Process

- **Possible Reasons For Impeaching The President:**
 - Treason
 - Bribery

- High crimes
- Misdemeanors

- **The Steps Of Impeachment**

- 1) The House of Representatives hears the allegations
 - a) Simple majority to impeach
 - b) If there is majority vote, the president will stand trial in the Senate
- 2) The Senate acts as a jury and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court acts as a judge
 - a) $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote to convict
- 3) The president is removed from office

- **Line of Succession**

- The **25th amendment** provides the line of succession in case of the removal of a president. The order is as follows:
 - 1) Vice President
 - 2) Speaker of the House
 - 3) President Pro Tempore of the Senate
 - 4) Secretary of State
- ***There are a total of 18 individuals included in the line of succession, but most classes only cover these 4.

Unit 4: The Legislative Branch

Senate

- **Requirements:**
 - At least 30 years old
 - US Citizenship (9 years)
 - Live in the state they represent
- **Terms:**
 - 6 years terms, unlimited terms
- **People in the Senate**
 - 100 senators
 - 2 Senators per state
 - Vice president is the president of the Senate
- **Roles of the Senate:**
 - Approve treaties
 - Put president on trial for impeachment
 - Large influence on foreign affairs
 - Approve nominations
 - Help decide whether a bill should become a law
- **Committees**
 - There is a limit on the amount of committees a senator can be on
 - 16 standing committees
 - 5 non-standing committees
 - 67 subcommittees

House of Representatives

- **Requirements:**
 - At least 25 years old
 - US Citizenship (7 years)
 - Live in the state they represent
- **Terms:**
 - 2 year terms, unlimited terms

- **People in the House**
 - 435 Representatives
 - Representation based off of population
 - Leader is the **Speaker of the House**: Currently Nancy Pelosi
- **Roles of the House:**
 - Pass articles of impeachment
 - Think of bills/help decide whether a bill should become a law
- **Committees**
 - 20 standing committees
 - 97 subcommittees

Committees in Congress

- **Standing committee responsibilities:**
 - Study legislation
 - Gather information about bills
- **Subcommittee responsibilities:**
 - Review proposed legislation
 - Each committee reviews bills having to do with their own topic
 - Makes changes to the bill
 - Bring in specialists on the subject for more info
- **Select or special committee responsibilities (usually temporary)**
 - Make recommendations to congress based off of their findings
- **Joint committee responsibilities:**
 - Helps to propose tax legislation
 - Estimate how much money will be made/lost due to a tax bill
 - Investigate our federal tax system
- **Conference committee responsibilities:**
 - Sort out the differences between the House and Senate's version of the bill
- **Congressional staff responsibilities:**
 - Hand out documents to the committee members containing information relating to the bill; Keeps the committee updated

Unit 5: The Judicial Branch

The Supreme Court

- **Justices**
 - 1 chief, 8 associates
 - Appointed by the President, approved by the Senate
- **Term of the Supreme Court (how decisions to hear cases are made)**
 - First Monday in October- June/July
 - 7000-8000 petitions filed (apply to be heard)
 - 1200 other applications for hearing (narrowed)
 - Rule of 4 → results in a 100-150 cases heard
 - 4 is the largest minority
 - If 4 or more want to hear the case then the case is heard
- **What Happens When A Case Is Chosen (Writ To Decision):**
 - **Legal briefs**
 - Only a review of the case
 - Interest groups, president
 - Both sides
 - **Oral Arguments**
 - **Conference of the Supreme Court**
 - Top secret
 - **Stare Decisis**
 - To stand by things decided
 - **Opinions (5-4 or better)**
 - Majority opinion “winner” +5
 - Dissenting opinion “looser”
 - Concurring opinion “agree” but for a different reason
- **Judicial Review**
 - The Judicial Branch is free from control of the executive branch
 - The judiciary oversees the other branches actions

Dual Court System

