



## **“Origins and Evolution of the U.S. Government”**

### **COURSE FORMAT**

Anticipate approximately 5 hours of work per week for 5 weeks. The format for the first 8 weeks is to read, view, and listen to the assignments then participate in discussion forums. The discussion forums are constructive back-and-forth exchanges of ideas and views, increasing understanding of the topic through a sharing of ideas and posing of questions. At the conclusion of week 8, the knowledge gained and familiarity with the course content will help you write a 1200 to 1500 word assessment paper during week 9.

### **COURSE INTRODUCTION**

At the time the U.S. Constitution was written (1787), it was unique in the world. It became the framework for the new central government, defining the roles of each of the federal branches while also delineating the powers reserved to state and local governments. It described in some detail how it would be ratified and how Congress and the president would be elected. It defined presidential powers and made him the Commander and Chief of the Armed Forces. It established a bicameral legislature that balanced representative concerns for both small and large states. While it was a little vague about the judiciary, it did establish the Supreme Court and provided for lower courts. In its Supremacy Clause, the Constitution also established itself as the supreme law of the land. In something of an afterthought, the Constitution eventually included a Bill of Rights that defines specific limitations on governmental powers in order to protect the natural rights of individual citizens. Today, the U.S. Constitution stands as the oldest written national constitution in the world. Unique at the time it was drafted, almost every country in the world now has a written constitution and many are directly based on the original drafted in Philadelphia 230 years ago.

## COURSE OVERVIEW

- **Lesson 1, Colonial Origins**, covers the British North American colonies from 1607 to 1775. During this time of “benign neglect” from the distant crown, Americans had time to develop their own unique brand of self-government.
- **Lesson 2, Revolution**, was the result of what American colonists believed were fundamental irreconcilable differences between their way of life and British efforts to tax and otherwise control them. “Revolution” was much more than just the successful War of Independence. It marked a new beginning for Americans to form a sovereign country with a government based on Natural Law and the consent of the people.
- **Lesson 3, The Articles of Confederation**, represented the first attempt to form a government uniting the American colonies. It was, however, little more than a “Diplomatic Assemblage” that lacked the power to tax or regulate commerce. The Articles also had no central judicial system and required a unanimous vote for amendments.
- **Lesson 4, The Constitutional Convention**, was perhaps the most important period in American history. Recognizing the weakness of the Articles of Confederation, representatives from every state (except Rhode Island) met in Philadelphia in 1787. Instead of just amending the Articles, they decided to write a new Constitution to form a federal government with broad new powers.
- **Lesson 5, Challenges to the Union**, were common during the Early National Period. The fledgling United States of America had a Constitution that provided the basic framework for the government but it would take time to establish enduring institutions and precedences.
- **Lesson 6, The American Civil War, (1861-1865)** was a real test of “whether that nation (the United States), or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.” The Constitution sought to achieve a balance that would allow the United States to grow into a great nation while maintaining its democratic form of government. Equally important bringing the country back together after the fighting stopped.
- **Lesson 7, Progressivism and Reform** characterized the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Rapid industrialization, urbanization, and mass immigration led to monopolies and corruption.
- **Lesson 8, Challenges of Superpower**, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After World War II, the United States remained engaged in international politics assuming the role of a superpower. This marked a real change from an isolationist foreign policy.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

Learners will be evaluated through two types of assessment activities: , 60 points for discussion contribution, and 40 points for the essay final examination. There are a total of 100 points. A score of 80 points for the entire course is required to pass.

## **FACULTY BIO**

B.A. (History), University of California, Berkeley

M.A. (International Relations), University of San Diego

Ph.D. (History/International Relations), University of Maryland, College Park

Dr. Swanson's scholarly interests focus on US History with emphasis on the Colonial/Revolutionary period and 19th century westward expansion. Much of his current research and teaching centers on 20th century US Marine Corps and Navy history. Although not part of the CSC curriculum, he also maintains a strong interest in the history of military medicine. He teaches an elective on the United States in the Pacific covering the period from 1784 to 1945.

Before joining the CSC faculty in 2001, Dr. Swanson served as a Communications Officer in the Marine Corps. He had assignments with the 1st Marines, 7th Marines, 17th MAU, Marine Corps Base Camp Butler (Okinawa), and the Naval Council of Personnel Boards (Arlington, VA). Academic assignments while on active duty included teaching in the Political Science Department at the US Naval Academy, serving as a Field Historian for the Marine Corps History Division, and as the CSC Curriculum Officer at the College of Continuing Educations (now CDET). He retired from active duty in 2001 at the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Dr. Swanson has published articles in the Oxford Companion to American Military History, Fortitudine, Naval History, and The Journal of America's Military Past. For several years, he lectured on the Pacific War for Annual Congressional World War II Symposiums at the Rayburn House Office Building. He has also given presentations for the World War II Veterans Committee Conference, the Japanese-American Military History Exchange Conference, NDU, and the Joint History Office. He has served as a Visiting Scholar to CDET to Henderson Hall, Norfolk, Cherry Point, Camp Lejeune, Parris Island, Camp Pendleton, Hawaii, and Okinawa. Dr. Swanson has also taught CSC CDET courses while underway for the 22nd, 24th, and 26th MEUs. He actively supports the MCU International Students frequently serving as a guide and escort on their PME and FSP trips to Washington DC, Philadelphia, San Diego, and New York. Additionally, he regularly provides similar support for outside groups like the 82nd Airborne, Wounded Warriors, 8th Communications Battalion, the British Royal Marines, and the Canadian Army.

### **Major Awards and Decorations**

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal (2), Joint Meritorious Unit Commendation, Civilian Performance Awards (4), Elihu Rose Award (2)