



Foundations of the U.S. Government Flashcards

Part of the AP U.S. Government collection

Overview

This resource contains a collection of 27 flashcards that will help students master key Foundations of U.S. Government concepts that may be covered on the AP U.S. Government exam.

These are not actual test questions, nor do they involve much “application” of knowledge. Instead, they focus on the basic factual and conceptual knowledge that students must first internalize if they are to successfully formulate logical responses to multiple-choice or essay questions on the eventual exam.

Brainscape has created this content in partnership with several AP U.S. Government teachers and tutors, as well as ex-executives from test prep publishers such as Kaplan and The Princeton Review. The material is as comprehensive as possible, while still being broken down into small bite-sized chunks that make it easy to study. We have included a variety of question formats to help students’ minds encode the knowledge as deeply as possible.

How to Use This Resource

Teachers and students can use these flashcards in a variety of creative ways. Below are a few common use cases:

1. Post this PDF on your class website, so students can download it on their own, and potentially print their own copy as a study aid (and even *cut out* individual flashcards)
2. Use these questions as inspiration for your own quiz questions
3. Use these flashcards as a “game”, where one student (or group of students) asks another student (or group) a random question, and keeps score of how well the questions are being answered
4. Encourage students to use the digital version of the flashcards (see below)

Online and Mobile Version

All of these flashcards are available to study on the Brainscape website (brainscape.com) and in our mobile app(s). Brainscape’s “smart flashcards” study system uses our unique “Confidence-Based Repetition” method, which repeats questions in a progressive pattern based on students’ personalized path of mastery. Teachers can track students’ progress and identify students who need more guidance.

Students can study a portion of Brainscape’s premium flashcards for FREE and can gain unlimited access for a small fee. Students can also use Brainscape to create & share their own supplementary flashcards (which is ALWAYS FREE).

If you are interested in a bulk class license for Brainscape’s web & mobile study system, please contact info@brainscape.com, and we can set up some time for a call.

#	Question	Answer
1	Define: anarchy	Anarchy is the absence of any governmental authority.
2	What is an autocracy?	An autocracy is rule by a single individual.
3	An autocratic government in which power is held by a leader, who is unrestricted by constitutional limits or social or political powers within a state, is known as a _____.	dictatorship The term "dictator" stems from Roman law and refers to the creation of a special office by the Roman Republic. A Roman dictator was usually given absolute power in times of national emergency to carry out a specific task and then expected to return his power to the state.
4	What is the difference between an absolute monarchy and a constitutional monarchy?	Whereas absolute monarchies (e.g. Saudi Arabia) place no limits on a monarch's power, constitutional monarchies (e.g. Great Britain) place substantial constitutional limits on a monarch's power.
5	Define: oligarchy	An oligarchy is a type of government in which power is concentrated in the hands of only a few people. Aristocracy (rule by the elite) is a type of oligarchy.
6	What is a democracy?	A democracy is a form of government under which the people govern themselves. For much of its history, Athens was a democracy. The term stems from the Greek word "demos," meaning "people" or "population."
7	What is the difference between a direct democracy and representative democracy?	In a direct democracy all citizens meet together and make decisions via a vote. In a representative democracy citizens elect leaders who make decisions on their behalf. A republic (meaning rule by elected officials) is a form of democracy. Thus, all republics are democracies, but not all democracies are republics, because in a direct democracy there are no elected officials.

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8	What is the traditional theory regarding how democracy derives its authority?	<p>Traditional political theory holds that governments of all types, including democracies, derive their power from the consent of the governed.</p> <p>The U.N. General Assembly's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights put it succinctly by stating, "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of the government."</p>
9	In political science, what is elite theory?	<p>Elite theory describes power relationships in modern states and contends that the economic elite holds the most power, exercises this power through policy planning, and does so independently of the state's electoral process.</p>
10	According to political scientist Max Weber's theories, who holds power in the modern state?	<p>In Weber's view, most political power is ceded to unelected bureaucrats, who handle much of the daily function of government.</p> <p>Although Weber was concerned that bureaucracy was a threat to individual freedom, he also contended that it was the most efficient form of societal organization.</p>
11	In political science, what is pluralism?	<p>As a political theory, pluralism holds that when different interests compete, they conflict and are forced to negotiate and compromise.</p> <p>In Federalist No.10, James Madison suggested that factionalism could be offset by pluralism; the many competing factions would prevent any single faction from dominating the new country.</p>
12	How does hyperpluralism differ from pluralism?	<p>Pluralism posits that competing factions negotiate and compromise, eventually reaching agreement.</p> <p>Hyperpluralism contends that competing factions pull the government in different directions, resulting in gridlock and a lack of progress on substantive issues.</p>
13	What influence did the Greeks and Romans have on the eventual development of American democracy?	<p>Many Greek city-states and the Roman Republic were seen as models for the Founding Fathers, especially those societies' use of democratic government and representative democracy.</p>

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14	What was the Magna Carta?	<p>Signed in 1215, the Magna Carta forced King John of England to recognize limits on his arbitrary authority. The Magna Carta granted certain rights to the English nobility, such as a right to trial by jury and due process before the taking of life, liberty, or property.</p> <p>In 1628, the Petition of Rights extended the Magna Carta to commoners as well as the nobility.</p>
15	In political theory, what is the social contract?	<p>The social contract contends that individuals consent to the transfer of some of their freedoms to the government. In exchange, the government protects their remaining rights.</p> <p>John Locke, who wrote about the social contract, argued that it was acceptable to overthrow a government that infringed on these remaining rights, which included life, liberty, and property.</p>
16	What was the Mayflower Compact?	<p>The Mayflower Compact established Plymouth Bay's colonial government and was based upon the consent of the governed and limitations on governmental authority.</p> <p>The compact was an early example of local democracy in the colonies and was used as a model for several subsequent colonial governing documents.</p>
17	British charters granted a large amount of discretion and representative institutions, such as Virginia's House of Burgesses, to the individual North American colonies. Why did the British government grant these freedoms?	<p>The colonies were given local autonomy primarily because the distance between North America and Great Britain made communications slow and direct control nearly impossible.</p> <p>Further, local representative institutions could raise funds through taxes for local needs, reducing the cost of governing the colonies.</p>

#	Question	Answer
18	Despite their relative autonomy, the North American colonies relied heavily on Great Britain for what two purposes?	<p>The North American colonies relied heavily on Great Britain for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a market for their raw materials 2. defense from the French and Spanish empires <p>The defeat of the French in the French and Indian War (and the decline of Spanish power) lessened colonial reliance on the British government.</p>
19	What was the Stamp Act (1765)?	<p>The Stamp Act was passed by the British Parliament and required the colonists to purchase a stamp for any official document and for newspapers, with the purpose of raising funds to pay off debts incurred by the French and Indian War.</p> <p>Colonists did not object to the Stamp Act, per se, but believed that they should have been consulted and have had the right to approve any taxes. In response to colonial outcry, Parliament repealed the act.</p>
20	What is widely considered the first organized and coordinated political action of the American Revolution?	<p>The Stamp Act Congress is regarded as the first coordinated political action leading to the colonies' breach with Great Britain. Called in response to a letter from Massachusetts, the Stamp Act Congress petitioned Parliament, contending that only elected representatives of the colonists could levy taxes.</p>
21	What were the Intolerable Acts?	<p>The Intolerable Acts (1774) (known in Britain as the "Coercive Acts") were a series of British laws that provoked outcry from the American colonists. The acts led to the call for the First Continental Congress, which met in Philadelphia in 1774 and petitioned the king for a redress of grievances. In the event the king did not act, the colonists agreed to form a Second Continental Congress.</p> <p>The Intolerable Acts included laws punishing Boston for the Boston Tea Party.</p>

#	Question	Answer
22	Having failed to receive redress from the king, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia and declared independence on July 4, 1776. What document did they draft to govern the new nation?	<p>The Articles of Confederation</p> <p>The Second Continental Congress drafted the Articles of Confederation, which would govern the American colonies from 1776 to 1787.</p>
23	The Articles of Confederation created a document evidencing little more than a league of friendship, and it left most power in the hands of the individual states. Why?	In drafting the articles, the Second Continental Congress was mindful of its experience with the British government, which had imposed control from a distance and had a strong central government. Thus, the Congress created a central government that was deliberately weak.
24	The Articles of Confederation provided two primary benefits to the new American nation. What were they?	<p>Though the Articles of Confederation established a weak central government, they provided two important benefits for the new nation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. supported direction of the Continental Army to win the Revolutionary War 2. established bonds between the 13 states, providing the blueprint for national organization in the U.S. Constitution
25	What were some of the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation?	<p>The Articles of Confederation had several weaknesses, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no judiciary to resolve interstate concerns • no executive branch • no taxing authority for the central government, which was reliant upon the states for revenue • amendments requiring unanimous consent; basic legislation requiring approval of nine states • inability of states to make their own foreign trade agreements or levy taxes on interstate commerce

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26	How did Shay's Rebellion, a tax revolt in western Massachusetts, highlight the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation government?	<p>The Massachusetts government proved unable to stop the rebellion, and the confederation government lacked both troops and the money to hire them. The confederation government was exposed as powerless, and delegates to the Confederation Congress became convinced that serious revisions were needed.</p> <p>The rebellion was suppressed after private funds were raised to pay troops.</p>
27	In 1786, delegates from five states gathered at Annapolis, Maryland, to discuss revising the Articles of Confederation in the wake of Shay's Rebellion. What was the result of the Annapolis Convention?	<p>The delegates petitioned the Confederation Congress to call a Constitutional Convention of all the states for May 1787 in Philadelphia. This convention would be the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, which drafted the U.S. Constitution.</p>