

# *Basic American Government and Economics Syllabus*

## *American Government*

- ◆ The first part of this syllabus covers American government which is a half-year course. The syllabus for economics is in the last portion of this syllabus.

## *Objectives*

- ◆ The purpose of this course is as follows:
  - To pique your interest in citizenship responsibilities
  - To relate economics to the law
  - To provide general understanding of various forms of government

## *Reading Assignments*

- ◆ If you choose to use the Maybury books, there are the two following books to order for government and two to order for economics (see page 6). Hewitt does not carry them; they are available from Bluestocking Press at (800) 959-8586:
  - First Quarter
    - ❖ Read *Whatever Happened to Justice?* by Richard Maybury (\$14.95).
    - ❖ Keep a journal of your understanding of what was read in each chapter—write in your own words.
  - Second Quarter
    - ❖ Read *Are You liberal, Conservative, or Confused?* by Richard Maybury (\$9.95).
    - ❖ Keep a journal of your understanding of what was read in each chapter—write in your own words.
- ◆ Instead of these books, you may choose to use an optional government text book published Bob Jones University *American Government for Christian Schools* (Hewitt's #2799, \$30.00), your local library, or community college bookstore. Answer two study questions from each chapter and complete the required number of projects.

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## ***Grading Criteria***

- ◆ Grades are based on the following criteria:

| <b><i>Grade</i></b> | <b><i>Criteria Per Quarter</i></b>  |
|---------------------|---|
| C                   | Complete journal entries or study questions and at least two projects per quarter. Work must be done with average effort, presentation, and organization.         |
| B                   | Complete journal entries or study questions and at least three projects per quarter. Work must be done with above average effort, presentation, and organization. |
| A                   | Complete journal entries or study questions and at least four projects per quarter. Work must be done with superior effort, presentation, and organization.       |

## ***Assignments and Reporting***

- ◆ Complete all assignments. Students should submit the ***Record of Exercises, Activities, and Projects*** labeled with the following information:
  - Student name and number
  - Course name
  - Appropriate quarter
  - Book edition
  - Paper title/Project number
- ◆ Mail to:
  - Hewitt Homeschooling Resources
  - P.O. Box 9
  - Washougal, WA 98671-0009
- ◆ Other ways to contact us include the following:
  - Phone . . . . . (360) 835-8708
  - FAX . . . . . (360) 835-8697
  - E-Mail . . . . . info@hewitthomeschooling.com

## *Projects for American Government*

1. Read and analyze King Saul's reign in the Bible. What were God's warnings to Israel about choosing to have a king instead of prophets? Describe Saul's character. What would God have to say to a modern President of the United States?
2. Complete a concordance study about what God has to say regarding civil government. Write your observations.
3. Write to your representatives in Congress and ask for lists of projects they have sponsored that directly benefitted your district. Draft a written report about your findings.
4. Obtain a copy of the federal budget for the current fiscal year. What do you think is wasteful? Why is it so hard to push such cuts through Congress?
5. Write a bill concerning a topic about which you feel strongly. Chart the process toward getting it passed in Congress.
6. Make a collection of 20 political cartoons and give statements of interpretation.
7. Write about how to organize a protest movement on an issue that concerns you.
8. Read *Yertle the Turtle* by Dr. Suess and parallel this form of government to some that exist in the world or to the Tower of Babel story in the Bible. (*NOTE: This is a project and not part of the suggested booklist.*)
9. Read *Animal Farm* by George Orwell; analyze or draw a parallel to any governmental system of today. (*NOTE: This is a project and not part of the suggested booklist.*)
10. Read *That Hideous Strength* by C. S. Lewis. Report on the role of government in the abolition of man. (*NOTE: This is a project and not part of the suggested booklist.*)
11. Read the Constitution of the United States; make paraphrased notes.
12. Attend a city council meeting or state congress session. Write your observations.
13. Make a comparison chart of how much money winning and losing political candidates spent on running for office. Cover the offices of senator, president (if applicable), state governor, state representative, and city council member.
14. Compare in writing the British parliamentary system with our own.
15. Write to the White House for a copy of the President's schedule for a particular week. Write observations about what you find.
16. Make a list of the cabinet departments and chart their responsibilities. (This is subject to change based on who is in Congress and if they disband or create any departments.) Consult the *United States Government Manual* in the library for answers.
17. List the independent regulatory agencies in the United States government and their responsibilities. Consult the *United States Government Manual* in your local library for answers.

18. Visit a courtroom. Write your observations.
19. Follow a court case from beginning to end through public vehicles such as the newspaper, radio, television, etc. Predict guilt or innocence before the jury reaches its decision. Were the decisions the same? Why or why not?
20. Compare and contrast democratic, socialist, and communistic forms of government both in theory and in practice.
21. Research and report on the political philosophy of James Madison.
22. Compare and contrast a republic and a democracy.
23. Construct a questionnaire concerning past, current, and future policies of American government. Poll 20 to 50 people; then construct a graph showing their responses.
24. Examine the balance between personal liberty and governmental power. How does the growth of big government infringe on personal freedoms? How much power do you think local, state, and federal governments should possess? Why?
25. Study, research, and write an opinion paper on the Social Security Administration. List its strengths and weaknesses, basic philosophies, history, and future prognosis and state your opinion of its feasibility.
26. Make a list of 15 facts and a list of 15 opinions concerning American government.
27. Compare and contrast the Republican and Democratic Parties in 1860s, 1930s, and 1990s.
28. Write a paper on what can be done to protect our constitutional freedoms.
29. Make a list of questions to ask a political candidate. If possible, interview one using your list.
30. Make a chart comparing and contrasting the balance of power in the legislative, executive, and judicial sectors of government.
31. Design your own government. Decide on your basic form and philosophy. Create your own constitution and budget.
32. Select one of the United States presidents and do a biographical paper on his life (public and private) and his role in shaping American history.

33. Read and write about any of the following books and/or articles:

*American Government in the Opposing Viewpoint series.* Greenhouse Press.

Benson, Bruce. *Enterprise of Law: Justice without the State.*\*

*The Bill of Rights and Moral Philosophy .*

De La Boetie, Etienne. *Discourse of Voluntary Servitude.*

Farris, Michael. *Constitutional Law.*

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan.*

Jefferson, Thomas. *Declaration of Independence.*\*

Ketcham, Ralph. *Anti Federalist Papers.*\*

Kirk, Russell. *The Roots of American Order.*

Lane, Rose Wilder. *Discovery of Freedom.*\*

Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government.*\*

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince.*\*

Madison, James. *Federalist Papers.*\*

Marx, Karl. *Communist Manifesto.*\*

More, Sir Thomas. *Utopia.*

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *Social Contract.*

Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense.*\*

Plato. *The Republic.*

*\*Available from Bluestocking Press (800) 959-8586*

## ***Economics***

- ◆ Economics is a half-year course.

## ***Objectives***

- ◆ The purpose of this course is as follows:
  - ☐ To provide a clear understanding of economics.
  - ☐ To provide a general sense of direction in your economic future based on fundamental principles.

## ***Reading Assignments***

- ◆ If you choose to use the Maybury books, there are the two following books to order for economics along with two to order for government (see page 1). Hewitt does not carry them; they are available from Bluestocking Press at (800) 959-8586:
  - ☐ First Quarter
    - ❖ Read *Whatever Happened to Penny Candy?* by Richard Maybury (\$12.95).
    - ❖ Keep a journal of your understanding of what was read in each chapter—write in your own words.
  - ☐ Second Quarter
    - ❖ Read *Ancient Rome and How it Affects You Today* by Richard Maybury (\$8.95).
    - ❖ Keep a journal of your understanding of what was read in each chapter—write in your own words.
- ◆ Instead of these books, you may choose to use an optional government text book published Bob Jones University *Economics for Christian Schools* (Hewitt's #2800, \$20.00), your local library, or community college bookstore. Answer two study questions form each chapter and complete the required number of projects.

## ***Grading Criteria***

- ◆ These are the same as for American Government, page 2 of this syllabus.

## *Economics Projects*

1. Money is absolutely worthless in and of itself. One cannot eat it, wear it, or use it for shelter. Money is worthless unless it can be traded for something of value. In some economies money has actually become worthless. People would rather actually have the product than the worthless money which could not buy it. Suppose there was a disaster where grocery stores could not sell food and people hoarded theirs. Your money would not help you in this difficult time; but if you had something of value to trade for food, it would become quite valuable.
  - ❖ What might be valuable if the value of the dollar goes down? Gold? Gasoline? Food? Why might these be valuable? Why do you think coffee and tobacco have proven to be so valuable in poor economy structures? Discuss these ideas with family members and write your collective thoughts.
2. Economics takes raw materials and transfers them to finished products. The three main divisions of economic resources are as follows:

| <u>LAND</u>   | <u>LABOR</u>                                  | <u>CAPITAL</u>   |
|---|---|--|
| Raw Materials<br>including:<br><i>Natural Resources</i><br>such as: | <i>People</i><br><i>Resource</i><br>(Workers) | (Finished Product)<br><br><i>Manmade Resources</i><br>such as: |
| coal<br>lumber<br>water   |   | factories<br>machines<br>housing                               |
| The <u>ENTREPRENEUR</u> Makes It All Work                           |   |  |

- ❖ Collect 15 articles from the business section of the newspaper. Classify each article or parts of each article as to whether the main subject is about Land, Labor, Capital, or Entrepreneurship.
3. Income is either spent or saved. Without savings and investing the economy would collapse. Japan is a wealthy nation because so many people save, others invest the savings building businesses and factories. These in turn hire laborers and manufacture products for people to buy. High interest rates encourage people to save money because it earns more. Low interest rates encourage people to spend more money, which can temporarily stimulate the economy; without savings, however, investments cannot be made. To help demonstrate the principle of saving do the following

- activity: Start with a penny and double it each day for 30 days. (i. e., 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, etc.). How much money would you have saved? Interview an investment banker to discover (1) Factors that determine who receives a loan and (2) How the money of bank customers is invested.
4. Types of investments include using financial institutions (banks), stocks and bonds, government securities, and collectibles.
    - ❖ Investigate and write about the risk involved with each of these.
    - ❖ Pretend to buy 10 shares of stock. Read the business section of the paper each day to graph the rise and fall of your stock price. Sell after 30 days. Did you make or lose money?
    - ❖ List ten collectibles.
  5. God controls the amount of gold in the earth; man controls how much money is printed.
    - ❖ Research and discuss what happened to the United States' economy when we discontinued the gold standard.
  6. Economic goals are growth, full employment, and freedom (true in a democracy). Taxes lessen economic freedom, but we have to pay a price for law and order and other public goods such as defense, education, welfare, sanitation, highways, parks, and public housing. Thus, taxes are assigned to the people.
    - ❖ Does the government have the right to interfere with economic freedom by regulating goods and services by assigning taxes? If so, how far should government be allowed to go in their regulations? Write your answer and state your reasoning.
  7. Obtain three sets of tax forms from the post office, library, or IRS. Use the tax manual to help you figure three returns. Assign each various income levels such as \$10,000, \$40,000, and \$100,000 and allow no children. Make appropriate investments for each. If you added two children to each what would be the differences? Draft a written report about your findings.
  8. One theory of economics holds that setting a minimum wage which all businesses must pay will cause citizens to have more money and save more. This will then cause more investments to occur and provide more jobs, thus giving more people money to spend and/or save. Another theory is that a minimum wage discourages small business because those owners believe that if they have to raise wages they will have to reduce their number of employees and cut their profit margin. Interview the following people to determine their views and write your conclusions:
    - ❖ A small business owner.
    - ❖ A fast food worker.
    - ❖ A manager of a large corporation.

9. Economics is the study of supply and demand. We are all affected by both of these. We supply income to produce a product and spend income in demand of the same product.
  - ❖ Make a chart of buying and selling activities. Provide columns with the headings of Supplier and Demander. Provide 10 examples of each.
10. Economics involves the service of efficiency—to get the most product out of the least raw material. Most raw materials are limited, and supplies may be diminishing. Therefore, prices go up and people spend more and save less. Less savings means less investments, which means fewer jobs, which means more people stop buying. If people stop buying, factories and businesses must lay off more workers who then spend less money, etc.
  - ❖ Draw a picture of this cycle. Discuss how to limit its severity.
11. Competition makes the economy more efficient. Businesses want people's money so they try to provide competitive prices to attract people to their stores. There are several types of competition: pure competition, monopolistic competition, oligopoly, monopoly.
  - ❖ Define and chart 5 examples of each.
12. The federal government regulates what kinds of competition can exist, safety standards, and price controls for different industries. Government has said that the baseball industry need not live under the same regulations as everyone else.
  - ❖ Why did they say this? How is the baseball standard different from ours? What was the impact of the strike of 1994? Write your answers. Discuss the pros and cons of whether or not the federal government should regulate any business.
13. Have a garage sale. Price some items; leave others unpriced; mark down some items; and have a half-price table. Observe the behavior of the buyers and seller (you). What affects their decision to buy? What was your basis for setting prices? You may also try to sell lemonade or coffee and cookies. Change the price every two hours. Do you sell more when the price is low? Make a chart to show if the volume of sales made up for the lower price. In other words, did your gross sales go up or down based on price?
14. Research the history of labor unions. What provoked their origin? Evaluate their role in today's economy.
15. Examine the deregulation of the telephone monopoly. What have been the results? Determine if competition has really lowered prices. Comparison shop to select the best carrier.
16. Write an opinion paper on government's involvement in national defense, the legal system, transportation, and education. How does its involvement affect the nation's economy? Examine the United States' national budget to determine what percentage of the citizens' tax dollars goes to each area.
17. Watch 20 TV commercials or read 20 ads in magazines. List the means and methods

that the sellers use to convince you to be a buyer. Make two separate lists: one showing “wants” (e.g., a new toy) as opposed to “needs” (e.g., milk). How is advertising for “wants” and “needs” done differently?

18. Compare and contrast low, high, and average salaries for 15 different careers. Include a sports figure, a college professor, and a politician. Assign a rating scale of 1 to 5, with 1 the highest, on the actual benefit to society of each profession. Is there any correlation between benefit and pay?
19. Develop a product. On paper, run through the entire course of production, marketing, and sales.
20. Do the preceding project in reality.
21. Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. Use \$10, \$20, or \$50 in an activity that makes it increase. Report on your action taken. What would have happened if you buried it or bought something that was consumable?
22. For a view of God’s economics read *Magnificent Obsession* by Lloyd C. Douglas and try it yourself. Write a report about your experience.
23. Read a biblically based book on personal finance; e.g., one by Ron Blue or Larry Burkett. Make an imaginary budget for a family of four with an income of \$30,000 per year. Make a real budget for yourself.
24. Make a list of economic principles you plan to follow as a responsible, Christian, productive adult. How will current economic trends affect your future?
25. Explain how scarcity affects each of our resources: material, people, and capital. How does this affect the gross national product? Give specific examples of how this particularly affects the farmers of the United States.
26. Play a game of monopoly. Keep track of what actions lead to the winner’s success and the loser’s failure. Which economic principles affect the game’s outcome? Identify the game’s components as natural resources, people, and capital.
27. Do a biblical study on borrowing, lending, charging interest, and treatment of employees (slaves) and managers (owners). Include how the “Year of Jubilee” would have affected the Jewish economy.
28. Explore the 3 major methods of organization of companies: proprietorship, partnership, and corporation. Test the pros and cons for each.
29. Study the usage of credit cards. Check on the various interest rates available, annual fees, and how interest is calculated. Do you think people tend to spend more using a credit card than using cash? Why? Select three different interest rates and calculate the actual cost of (1) a pair of \$50 shoes paid for over three months, (2) a stove costing \$500 paid for over a year, and (3) a car costing \$10,000 paid for over 5 years. Make a chart to show the comparison.
30. Do a cost comparison of purchasing three different homes which you select from your local paper. Visit or call banking establishments for three different current interest rates. Find out the difference between fixed and variable interest rates and what

*points* are. Decide which is your best choice and state your reasons. Also, for each home calculate how much you can save by prepaying an extra \$100 of principal per month.

31. Write a documented research paper on inflation.
32. Write a documented research paper on farm subsidies.
33. Study and report on the Federal Reserve System.
34. Study and report on the federal deficit. Include your own suggestions for its reduction.
35. Research and report on immigration and how it affects the U.S. economy. Include a biblical basis for your conclusions.
36. Read and write about any of the following books and/or articles:

Amos, Orley M. *Economic Literacy*.

*An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*.

Burkett, Larry. *What Ever Happened to the American Dream?*

*Federalist Papers* by James Madison versus *Brutus' Essay* by Robert Yates.

Franklin, Benjamin. *Way to Wealth*.\*

Galbraith, John Kenneth. *The Good Society*.

Keynes, John Maynard. *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*.

Peters, Thomas J. and Robert H. Waterman. *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies*.

Sinclair, Upton. *The Jungle*.

Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations*.\*

Steven Silbiger. *The 10-Day MBA*.

\*Available from Bluestocking Press (800) 959-8586

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