



# Exploring Government

Ray Notgrass

*Exploring Government*  
Ray Notgrass

Fourth Edition. 2023 Printing.

ISBN 978-1-60999-178-4

Copyright © 2023 Notgrass History.  
All rights reserved.

No part of this material may be reproduced without permission from the publisher.

Cover Image and Previous Page: U.S. Capitol by iofoto / Shutterstock.com

Back Cover: Author photo by Mary Evelyn McCurdy

All product names, brands, and other trademarks mentioned or pictured  
in this book are used for educational purposes only.

No association with or endorsement by the owners of the trademarks is intended.

Each trademark remains the property of its respective owner.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible,  
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995  
by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Cover and interior design by John Notgrass  
Project Management by Charlene Notgrass

Printed in the United States of America

Notgrass History  
275 Old Gainesboro Hwy.  
Cookeville, TN 38501  
1-800-211-8793  
notgrass.com



*U.S. Capitol Rotunda, Washington, D.C.*

# Table of Contents

**Introduction..... vi**

**How to Use This Curriculum..... ix**

## **Part 1: Backgrounds to American Government**

### **1 The Biblical Basis of Government..... 1**

- 1 - God Is the Author of Government ..... 3
- 2 - Biblical Principles of Government ..... 9
- 3 - The Influence of the Law of Moses ..... 13
- 4 - The Bible on Leadership..... 17
- 5 - Government in the Bible..... 23

### **2 The Idea and Forms of Government..... 29**

- 6 - Ways of Governing..... 31
- 7 - Ancient and Medieval Monarchies ..... 38
- 8 - Athenian Democracy and the Roman Republic..... 42
- 9 - Our English Roots ..... 48
- 10 - The Birth of Enlightenment Philosophy.. 53

### **3 The United States: An Exercise in Building a Government .....57**

- 11 - Assuming a “Separate and Equal Station” ..... 59
- 12 - America as a Confederation..... 64
- 13 - A Rising and Not a Setting Sun..... 68
- 14 - America’s Foundation of Faith ..... 76
- 15 - We the People of the United States..... 82

## **Part 2: The United States Constitution**

### **4 Article I: Congress (Part 1)..... 87**

- 16 - To Serve in the House ..... 89
- 17 - Choosing the Senate..... 96
- 18 - The Congress Shall Assemble..... 101
- 19 - Who They Are and What They Do.... 108
- 20 - Committee and Political Party Organization ..... 113

## 5 Article I: Congress (Part 2)..... 119

- 21 - How a Bill Becomes Law (Part 1) ..... 121
- 22 - How a Bill Becomes Law (Part 2) ..... 127
- 23 - The Powers of Congress..... 133
- 24 - Limitations on Congress  
and the States ..... 138
- 25 - When Powers Collide:  
The Process of Impeachment ..... 142

## 6 Article II: The Executive.. 149

- 26 - Electing a President ..... 151
- 27 - Becoming the President..... 159
- 28 - Commander in Chief  
and Head of State..... 166
- 29 - The President as Chief Executive ..... 172
- 30 - Executive Meets Legislative ..... 179

## 7 The Modern Federal Bureaucracy ..... 185

- 31 - State, Treasury, and Defense ..... 187
- 32 - Justice, Interior, and Agriculture..... 192
- 33 - Commerce, Labor, HUD,  
and Transportation ..... 197
- 34 - HHS, Energy, Education, Veterans  
Affairs, and Homeland Security..... 203
- 35 - Agencies Beyond the Cabinet ..... 208

## 8 Article III: The Judiciary ..215

- 36 - A Federal Case..... 217
- 37 - Order in the Court..... 223
- 38 - The Exercise of Justice ..... 229
- 39 - The Supreme Court..... 234
- 40 - How Five People Can  
Change Your Life ..... 241



*President Dwight D. Eisenhower delivers his first State of the Union address to Congress in 1953.*

## 9 Other Articles and Amendments ..... 247

- 41 - Articles IV through VII ..... 249
- 42 - The First Amendment ..... 257
- 43 - The Second Amendment ..... 265
- 44 - Third Through Tenth Amendments... 272
- 45 - 11th Through 27th Amendments..... 277

## Part 3: State and Local Government, Taxes and Budgets

## 10 State Government.....283

- 46 - State Constitutions..... 285
- 47 - State Legislatures ..... 289
- 48 - State Governors..... 296
- 49 - State Bureaucracies and State Courts.. 301
- 50 - Marketing a State ..... 308

**11 Local Government ..... 313**

- 51 - Counties, Townships, and Special Districts..... 315
- 52 - Governing a City..... 320
- 53 - Using Urban Spaces..... 325
- 54 - Governing a Growing Community.... 332
- 55 - Three Levels Working Together ..... 338

**12 Taxing and Spending.....343**

- 56 - Budgets and Priorities..... 345
- 57 - What Washington Gets and Spends... 352
- 58 - What States Get and Spend..... 359
- 59 - What Local Governments Get and Spend ..... 365
- 60 - Taxes and Borrowing (and Debt, Oh My!) ..... 369

**Part 4: Issues Facing American Government Today**

**13 International Relations... 375**

- 61 - Diplomats and Diplomacy ..... 377
- 62 - The U.S. and International Organizations..... 383
- 63 - War and Peace..... 388
- 64 - Trade..... 396
- 65 - Human Rights..... 403

**14 Contemporary Issues I... 409**

- 66 - Election Integrity: Voters and Ballots ..... 411
- 67 - Election Integrity: Voting and Counting the Votes ..... 418
- 68 - Immigration..... 425
- 69 - Health Care..... 434
- 70 - Abortion ..... 442

**15 Contemporary Issues II ...449**

- 71 - Government and the Economy ..... 451
- 72 - Energy..... 457
- 73 - Education..... 462
- 74 - What Government Does Right..... 470
- 75 - Christians in the Public Square..... 474

**Image Credits ..... 479**

**Select Bibliography ..... 484**

**Index ..... 487**

*San Buenaventura City Hall, Ventura, California*





*Historic Osceola County Courthouse, Kissimmee, Florida*

# Introduction

*We must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill,  
the eyes of all people are upon us.*

*—John Winthrop,  
from his sermon “A Model of Christian Charity,” given in 1630  
to those who were about to establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony*

**W**hen Governor John Winthrop led his small band of settlers to the shores of America, he understood that the entire world would be watching the outcome of this experiment in the wilderness.

As it has turned out, it was not just the people of that generation who watched. For almost 400 years, the world has studied the American experiment in governing. In many ways, the experiment has been a source of inspiration for learning how humans can live together in a civil society in peace and harmony. At times our country has also been an example of how peace and harmony have been difficult to find.

America has a high calling to be a city upon a hill before the eyes of all people. Unfortunately, many Americans do not take that calling very seriously. Numerous surveys that have been conducted over several years have yielded results similar to these:

- About half of Americans don't know that each state has two senators.
- About three-fourths of Americans don't know the length of a U.S. senator's term.
- Over half of Americans cannot name their congressman.
- About 40 percent cannot name either of their two U.S. senators.
- Almost a third of Americans don't know which party controls the U.S. House of Representatives, and about 40 percent don't know which party controls the U.S. Senate.

Our hope is that those who study this curriculum will know these facts and much more about our American system of government.

The purpose of *Exploring Government* is to educate and inspire you concerning the government of the United States as well as the governments of the individual states and our local communities. We place special emphasis on the Biblical basis for government and on helping you understand the U.S. Constitution. We hope that you will come to appreciate the background, purpose, and operation of American government on all levels. We also hope that you will remain prayerful, thoughtful, informed, and involved with regard to government throughout your life. We pray that you will be a better Christian and a better citizen as a result of studying this material.

You will explore historical information about government before the founding of the United States in 1776 and the formulation of the Constitution in 1787. We cover this to help you understand not only what government does but why our government came to be the way it is and why it does what it does. Ideas and events have causes.

The American system did not just appear, nor was it inevitable. We have to understand the why in order to understand what and how. When you understand why things happen (1) you learn something about how events and ideas influence each other; (2) you are better able to discuss the subject with others, some of whom may not share your opinions; and (3) you will be better able to bring about changes that need to take place.

## What Is and What Should Be

---

We need to understand the difference between what is and what should be. The Bible sets forth what government should be. The U.S. Constitution, state constitutions, and local laws have established how governments should operate in our country. However, centuries of history show us that people in government do not always do what they should.

For example, for many years African Americans did not have the equal protection under the law that the Constitution guarantees. What existed

was not what should have existed. Also, the federal government has in recent decades taken oversight of areas that were originally reserved to the states. It is not what should be, but nonetheless it is what is happening.

Our governments (local, state, and national) have not always been the bright and shining city upon a hill that they should have been. Sometimes the people involved in government have done things that were embarrassing and wrong.

When we describe what government does today, we do not mean to say that everything it does is right and what it should be doing. We try to point out the differences we see between what the founding documents say and what government actually does today. We should help our country to be an example of truth, justice, love, righteousness, and compassion.

## Government Is Not the Same as Politics

---

Politics (the word is usually a singular noun) involves power, specifically getting and maintaining power in government. This includes the election process. Politics forms governments, and people in government can be and often are political (concerned about power) in their actions. Government officials often make decisions based on how popular those decisions will be with voters, which can affect their power. In other words, they often make political decisions. Government officials do not always make decisions by simply determining what is the best thing to do.

Governing, on the other hand, involves defending the nation, building roads, operating schools, collecting taxes, and other practical activities. Even these decisions can involve political factors. Since politics and government are two different functions, this explains why sometimes politicians who win elections and acquire power aren't good at actually governing and why the best government workers are not necessarily concerned about politics.

In this curriculum, we discuss elections and voting because that is how we form governments in the United States; but you should not think that this is the same as governing. Elections make news; paving roads usually does not, but paving roads and other services are important parts of the job of governing.

## Appreciation

---

I express thanks to my family members who have assisted with this project: my wife, Charlene; our daughter Mary Evelyn; our daughter Bethany; our son, John; and our son-in-law Nate. I also thank Notgrass History team members Dena Russell and Ella Boureston, for their research, proofreading, and editorial suggestions; and Bonnie Henthorn, Donna Ellenburg, Phil Ellenburg, and Titus Anderson for proofreading assistance. My name is on the cover, but I could not have completed this updated edition without the help of many people.

God, the Creator of government, has given us a wonderful system of government in our country. The American system of government has provided the most personal freedom and the greatest economic opportunity for the most people of any government in history. Our government deserves our respect, our involvement, and our prayers.

Those of us who follow the Lord are citizens of the kingdom of God even as we live as citizens of the country in which He has placed us. God has already assured us that His kingdom will win in the end, regardless of the form that human governments take. May God bless us in doing good for His glory.

## Dedication

---

I dedicate this curriculum to my sweet wife and life companion, Charlene.

God brought us together when we were both work-study students in the Political Science Department at college.

Your study and work in Urban Planning gave us both a sense of what government is and what it should be.

Your heart for God has helped us both see what people should be able to expect from leaders in government and from governmental policies.

We have seen people and events in government that have inspired us and that have discouraged us. We have learned not to put our trust in princes.

You have selflessly served our family and others as we have worked on this curriculum. I could not have done this without you. This is a much better publication because of your involvement. You are as much a part of it as I am.

“Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all” (Proverbs 31:29).

*Ray Notgrass  
Gainesboro, Tennessee  
October 2023  
ray@notgrass.com*

---

*Ray and Charlene Notgrass Visiting the  
Mississippi State Capitol*







*FBI Guard at the Department of Justice (1937)*

# How to Use This Curriculum

This one-semester course provides a half-year of high school credit in government. With 75 lessons, you can complete the material in one semester even with field trips and other activities. This book includes all of the lessons and assignments to complete the government credit. *We Hold These Truths* is a collection of historic documents, essays, and speeches that you read in conjunction with the lessons.

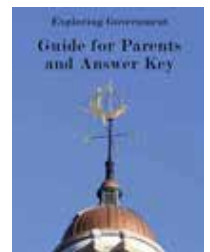
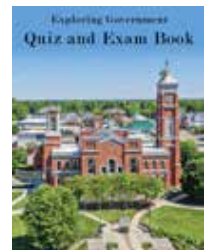


**English credit.** The curriculum offers an optional half-year credit in English as well. This involves reading the assigned books and the literary analysis in the *Student Review*, completing the assignments in the *Student Review* for each book, and completing a project assignment for each unit. The curriculum will tell you when to begin a book and when you should finish it. It will also give you a choice of projects for each unit.

**Assignments.** The curriculum clearly outlines what you are to do for each unit and for each daily lesson. We have put each day's assignments at the end of each lesson. If you are only seeking to earn

the government credit, you only need to complete half of the unit projects.

**Student Review Pack.** The optional Student Review Pack includes the *Student Review*, the *Quiz and Exam Book*, and the *Guide for Parents and Answer Key*. The *Student Review* has ten review questions for each lesson, review questions on the *We Hold These Truths* assignments, and literary analysis and review questions for each assigned book. The *Quiz and Exam Book* has one quiz for each unit and three exams covering five units each. *The Guide for Parents and Answer Key* includes answers for all review questions, quizzes, and exams, plus notes for the parent on the recommended literature and additional guidance on how to use the curriculum.



**Time.** You should allow one hour per day to read a lesson and any relevant documents and answer the review questions. You will need more time to complete the unit projects, read the literature, and take the unit quizzes and the three exams.



*President Calvin Coolidge with Representatives of Native Nations Outside the White House (1927)*

## Assigned Literature

<b>Units 1-4</b>	<i>Mornings on Horseback</i>	<b>David McCullough</b>
<b>Units 5-6</b>	<i>The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge</i>	<b>Calvin Coolidge</b>
<b>Units 7-11</b>	<i>Born Again</i>	<b>Charles Colson</b>
<b>Units 12-15</b>	<i>God and Ronald Reagan</i>	<b>Paul Kengor</b>



*President Richard Nixon (center) with Political Pollster Louis Harris (left) and Director of the Office of Public Liaison Charles Colson (right) in the Oval Office (1971)*