

## TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

### **Lesson Title –**

What are the Philosophical and Historical Foundations of the American Political System?

**Grade - 10**

**Length of class period – 58 minutes – (3 class periods)**

**Inquiry –** (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

- Why do we need a government?
- What should it do?
- What makes it legitimate?

**Objectives** (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

1. Explain how government and laws can protect natural rights.
2. Explain why the Founders thought republican government was the best type of government, including the importance of the concepts of the common welfare and civic virtue in a republican government.
3. Differentiate between constitutional governments and autocratic or dictatorial governments.

**Materials** (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson? – (please attach)

1. 1." Blue- Back Speller"- Use excerpts from a popular reading text of the late 1700s.- Students will be able to see how republican values were expressed in American society in our nation's early days.  
<http://victorian.fortunecity.com/vangogh/555/Spell/webster.html>
2. Mayflower Compact- Why can the Mayflower Compact be identified as an example of a social compact?

"In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, e&. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini, 1620."

3. An article about John Locke's natural rights philosophy- Students should be able to explain the problems inherent with a state of nature and compare their ideas with those of John Locke.  
<http://www.google.com/search?q=text+of+john+locke&start=0&ie=ut>

**Activities** (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)  
Students will:

1. Identify examples of behavior in the school and community that illustrate the problems of a state of nature and the advantages of government and rules for protecting individual rights.
2. Write about a right they have, the advantages and disadvantages of the right, and how life would be different if that right were not protected.
3. Bring to class excerpts from newspapers that raise issues of whether actions of a government serve the common welfare or are serving special interest groups. At least 4 articles.
4. Research an assigned country that has an autocratic government and include a journal entry illustrating life under an autocratic government.

***How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?***

I will issue a rubric to determine if students understand the major concepts between their government and an autocratic government.

I will also use a rubric regarding newspaper articles- At least one paragraph with specific information must be given for each article.

***Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –***

evaluate whether or when their obligations as citizens require that their personal desires, beliefs and interests be subordinated to the public good

- describe how constitutions may limit government in order to protect individual rights and promote the common good

compare two or more constitutions and how they promote the principles of their respective political systems and provide the basis for government