



HAMPSTEAD SCHOOL

Learning together Achieving together

Y12 – Y13

Summer Bridging Tasks

2023

A Level Politics

Name: _____

- You should spend some time during the summer holidays working on the activities in this booklet.
- You will be required to hand in this booklet in your first lesson at the start of Year 12 and the content will be used to form the basis of your first assessments.
- You should try your best and show commitment to your studies.



Hampstead School

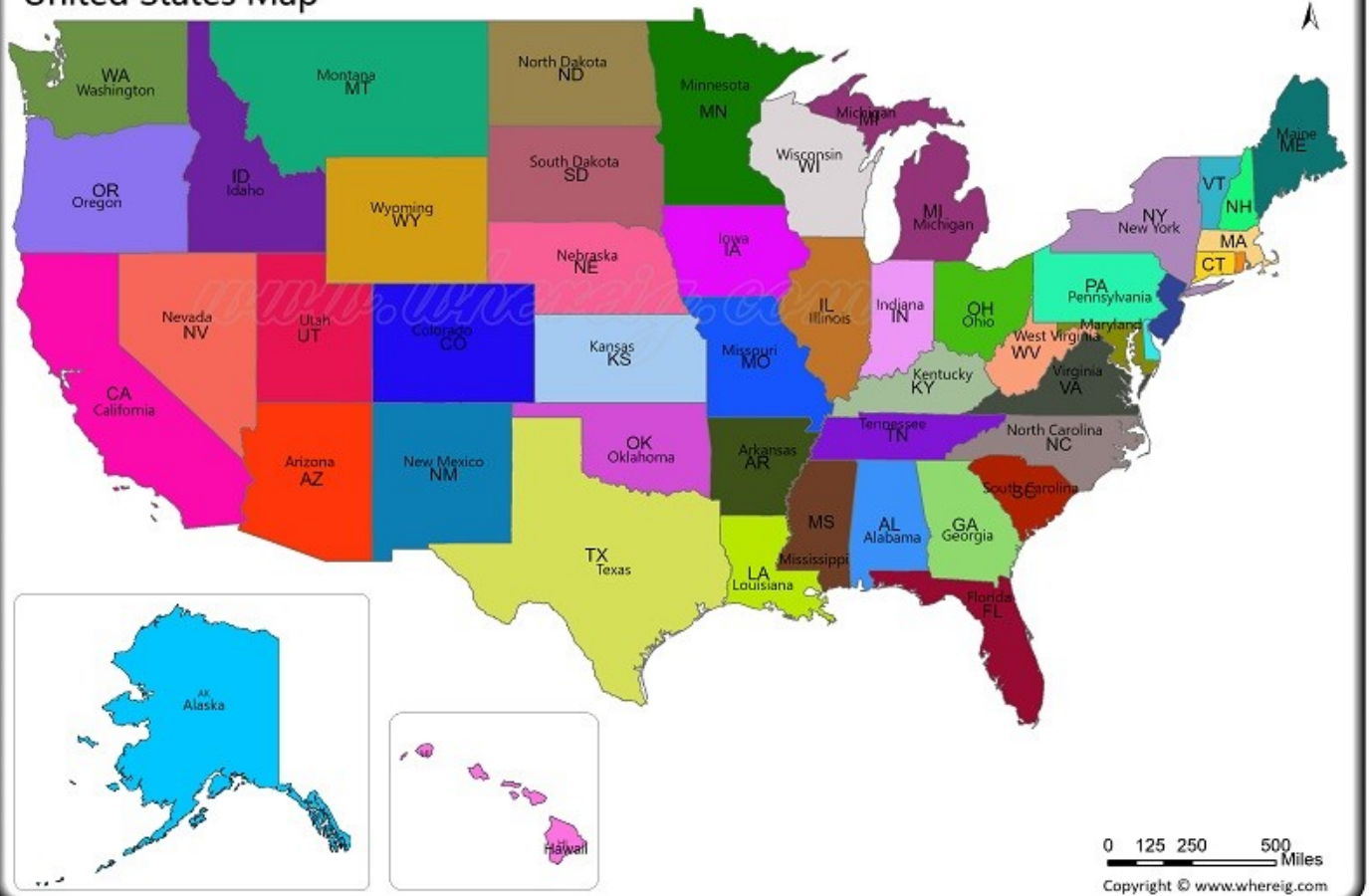
Year 12 into Year 13 Politics

Summer Transition Work

An introduction to US Government and Politics



United States Map



Pledge of Allegiance



“I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, One Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.”

NATIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEE

What does the study of US Government and Politics involve?

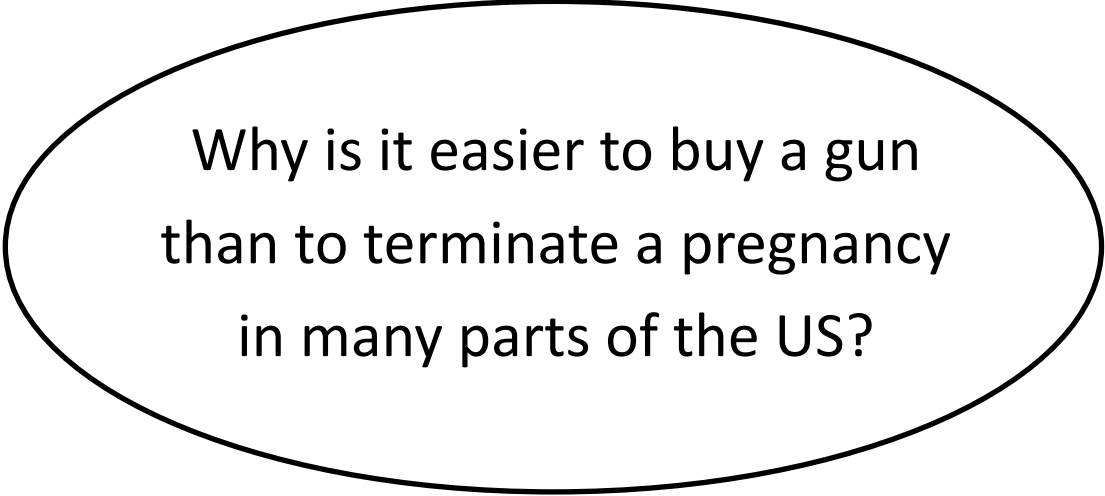
US Government:

- ◇ The foundations and contemporary issues within the US Constitution
- ◇ The power of Congress
- ◇ The role of the US President
- ◇ The responsibilities of the US Supreme Court
- ◇ Systems of checks and balances
- ◇ The nature of federalism in the USA today

US Politics:

- ◇ Democracy and elections in the USA
- ◇ The political parties in the USA
- ◇ The role of interest groups
- ◇ The nature of campaign financing and the role of the media
- ◇ Civil rights and minority issues in contemporary USA





Why is it easier to buy a gun
than to terminate a pregnancy
in many parts of the US?

What features and concepts are involved in understanding this issue?

What is 'federalism'?

Using the textbook or another source of information, define the term 'federalism' in relation to US government:

Create a diagram or drawing to explain the concept of 'federalism':

The US Constitution:

Visit YouTube and watch at least 5 different videos on the development of the US Constitution.

Write down any questions or points that you do not understand from these videos:

Using p. 386-388 of the textbook, summarise the creation and initial development of the US Constitution in the late 18th century:

The US Constitution:

The Constitution is guided by some key principles of political philosophy, some of which come from *liberalism* - can you identify any from your own learning so far?

Using p. 388-389 of the textbook, summarise the principles of the US Constitution in no more than 12 words and in a small drawing:

principle	12 word summary	drawing
limited government		
separation of powers		
checks and balances		
bipartisanship		
federalism		

The US Constitution - an adaptable document, or an inflexible one?

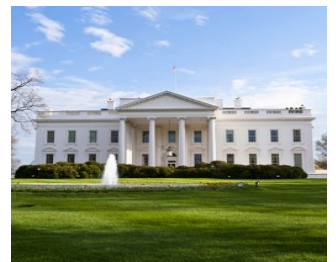
Using the textbook and other sources of information, draw a flowchart to explain the constitutional amendment process:

Summarise the Bill of Rights, and three other significant constitutional amendments:

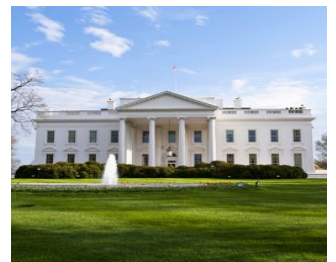
The branches of the Federal Government - what do they do?

Article 1 - Congress	Article 2 - Presidency	Article 3 - The Judiciary

Research the ways in which the personnel within each branch are either elected or appointed:



The branches of the Federal Government - how do they check and balance each other?



Congress - summarise some key information on the two chambers of Congress :



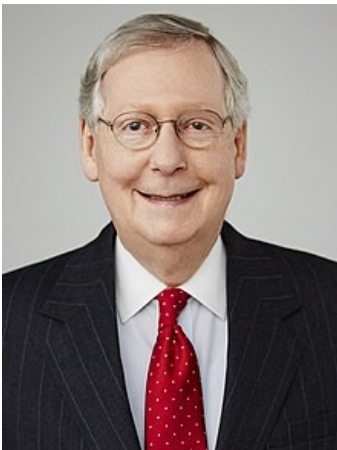
Congress - what is the state of the parties in Congress as of Aug. 2022?



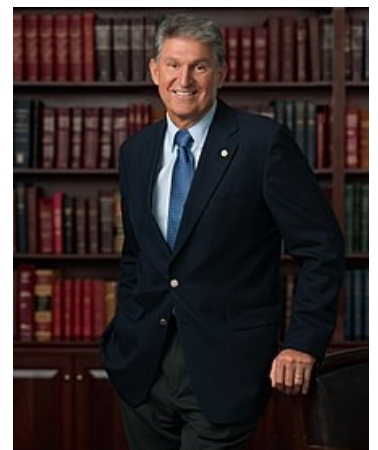
Research two similarities and three differences between these three prominent members of the US Congress:



Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Dem., New York



Senator Mitch McConnell, Rep. Kentucky



Senator Joe Manchin, Dem. , West Virginia

Summarise each paragraph here:

What is the incumbency advantage?

An incumbent is a current officeholder who is seeking to be re-elected to that office.

Incumbent congressmen have excellent odds of being re-elected. This is especially true of Representatives. As the Centre for Responsive Politics put it, "Few things in life are more predictable than the chances of an incumbent member of the U.S. House of Representatives winning re-election."

In the past twenty years, the lowest re-election rate for the House of Representatives was 85 percent. Re-election rates in the U.S. Senate are a bit lower, but still impressive. In the past twenty years, the re-election rate for Senators is 86 percent.

It is difficult to square these high re-election rates with Americans' overall low opinion of Congress. Gallup tracking polls of Americans' opinions of Congress over the past twenty years reveal that rarely do more than 25 percent of Americans approve of Congress. In one recent Gallup survey, as few as 9 percent of people approved of the way Congress was handling its job.

The high re-election rate for members of Congress may be due to several advantages that incumbents have over their challengers. You should be familiar with these advantages.

Incumbents often have a significant financial advantage over their challengers. Political Action Committees and wealthy individuals have numerous incentives to donate to incumbents. This has enormous implications for how a challenger might mount a campaign.

Incumbents usually enjoy a name recognition advantage over their challengers. When this is the case, the challenger has to spend considerable money trying to build up name recognition in the state or district.

Write down any questions or misunderstandings you have here:

Summarise each paragraph here:

What does it mean to be partisan?

Partisanship is the term used to describe the support that an party gets from its supporters in opposition to the parties political opponents. It is most frequently used when referring to elected members of a party in Congress who are unlikely to compromise with the opposing party on legislation or investigations. The term in modern political history has taken on a new definition which can also refer to the psychological connection to a party that individual voters may have.

The phrase partisan is used frequently when referring to the US Congress, and its inability to conduct business. Congress is most often described as such when the parties are said to be polarized. This occurs through the widening gap between the political ideologies of the two major ideological groups in Congress. When this occurs, the term partisanship is regularly heard being slung at political opponents, especially if they are perceived to be legislating for political gain. This insult has been used recently in reference to the Benghazi Committee hearings and the attempts by House Republicans to defund Planned Parenthood as an organisation.

Partisanship can also apply to the psychological connection that a voter has to a party. This is becoming increasingly common in the US, as polls have indicated. In 1994 only 10 percent of the US population stated that they were consistently conservative or consistently liberal. This figure is now at 21%. Whilst this does leave a majority of the population out, it should be remembered that it is this 21% who are likely to be the most vocal in their views and thus the most active.

Write down any questions or misunderstandings you have here:

What does it mean to be partisan?

Type this link into a browser:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/12/17/in-a-politically-polarized-era-sharp-divides-in-both-partisan-coalitions/>

This is an academic report for the Pew Research Center.

Skim and scan through the report, creating a list of 5 points on the state of partisanship in US government and politics:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Who has been President since 1992?

What were some key events and issues during their presidency?



Why is the Supreme Court so politically significant?

Summarise the nature of the US Constitution in no more than twenty five words:

The Supreme Court's role is to interpret the US Constitution - what does this mean?

Research an example of a significant Supreme Court case, such as Roe v Wade or DC Heller - in what way did the Supreme Court interpret the constitution? Why was the decision in this case so politically significant?

Is the President the most powerful person in the world?

Using ch. 19 of the textbook, summarise the powers that the US President holds:

From what you've learned about checks and balances in the US system, why could you argue that the President is, or is not, the most powerful figure in the US?