

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

GENERAL INFORMATION

LESSON 01 SESSION 01

1.0 SCOPE

1.0.1 Citizenship training

Training in citizenship is the most vital of all subjects to that nation whose system of government, security of property, and full power to express individual initiative are based upon the intelligence, education, and character of each individual citizen.

1.0.2 Individual initiative

Individual initiative is the product of slow progress in the development of the idea and ideals of self-government. It was cherished in the minds of the early Germanic tribes, transmitted by them in the fifth century to the conquered British Isles, there developed and finally transferred in principle to the shores of America 500 years ago.

From the landing of the first settlers through the slow and perilous years of colonial development, the struggles of the Revolutionary days, the hardships and privations following the adoption of our Constitution, the winning of the Great West, the fight to save our Union, and the tremendous accomplishments in the development of agricultural and industrial resources, individual initiative, coupled with community cooperation, has been a determining factor, a spur to our achievements, and a guaranty to our national security.

The protest of the Colonies against usurpation of the rights of citizens, the Declaration of Independence, the Revolutionary War, the writing and adoption of the Constitution of the United States, and the ever-increasing development in population, industry, wealth, and security, denoting the achievements of the United States, would not have been possible lacking the spirit of individual initiative and the talent for self-government. The United States worked out its own destiny by the simple process of hard labor inspired with the knowledge of full opportunity in the exercise of individual ability, and sure reward and protection in the possession of the fruits of their labor.

1.0.3 Foundation of citizenship

In any instruction in citizenship productive of lasting results, there must be woven into the study the story of the faith, sacrifice, service, and achievements of the pioneers of America from the landing of the Pilgrims to the settlement of the Great West and the development of our vast national resources. This story, pregnant with hope, faith, courage and the will to work, is the rock foundation upon which to build the structure of citizenship in the youth of today that the future may be assured in perpetuity of the institutions, principles, ideals, and traditions the development of which has made the United States great among the nations of the world.

A study of the census reports of the United States, particularly during the past 80 years, reveals a condition that to every thinking man and woman is fraught with grave danger to the continuation and maintenance of our constitutional form of government and the blessings of liberty which we enjoy. We must be prepared to recognize this situation and find the solution of the problem.

1.0.4 Social phase of citizenship

As the result of the changing life stream of America, there has arisen one of the greatest problems of our national life.

Up to 30 years ago approximately 90 per cent of all immigration to America was of Anglo-Saxon origin, that race of people which has been working out the problem of self-government for nearly 2,000 years. Due to the remarkable impetus given to industrial development following 1890, opportunity for employment was offered and every inducement made to secure the immigration of European common labor, resulting in an immediate change in the type of immigration to America, by which central, eastern, and southern Europe increased their totals by over fifty times in the 50 years from 1870 to 1920.

The history of the nations from which this later immigration originated is that of large cultural advantages in art, literature, and science, enjoyed by the ruling and favored minority, while oppression, privation, and suffering were endured by the great majority of their subjects.

This latter class, without knowledge of self-government, denied the opportunity for self-development, eagerly responding to the call of American opportunity, emigrated to our shores, here to enjoy full participation in the rights of American citizenship without a proper understanding of the meaning of liberty or the nature and value of our free institutions, the very foundation of which is laid in intelligent and active participation in government by our individual citizens.

A course of instruction in citizenship to be effective must develop the social phase of citizenship and be particularly directed to the native and foreign-born youth, setting up a clear understanding of this great problem of assimilation and amalgamation of the bloods of all nations into the virile life stream of America.

1.0.5 Economic phase of citizenship

The industrial achievements of America have become the marvel of the world. Therefore the economic phase of citizenship must be developed with careful study and with all the wisdom we possess that we may assure continued progress to the welfare, tranquility, and enrichment of our own citizens and at the same time steer a safe course for our ship of state in the maelstrom of world envy engendered by a knowledge of our wealth and power.

In the accomplishment of our industrial achievements the United States has reinvested its profits in the development of horsepower, automatic machinery, labor-saving devices, transportation, communication, organization, administration, and, since the World War, has given further impetus to its accomplishments by sharing more and more the fruit of her industries with the wage-earning class. In the progress thus made the demand for brains to replace brawn has been an ever-increasing factor in the production of our goods as to quantity and quality in order to maintain our sense of well-being, high standards of living, and to meet the competition of the world at large.

A course of instruction in citizenship must emphasize the necessity of the education of our masses as an economic measure in supplying the great need of modern industry.

1.0.6 Philosophy of American Government

The philosophy of government, as set up under our Constitution, finds its keynote in individualism as opposed to that misguided philosophy of government, collectivism, which makes the State paramount in its demands over the inalienable rights of its individual citizens. Incomprehensible as it may seem, the political problems of America and of the world at large are embodied in this question of individualism as opposed to collectivism as the philosophy of government for the future development and welfare of nations.

Emphasis must be laid upon the benefits and advantages accruing to each individual citizen of our country under the form of government set up as the supreme law of the land in the Constitution of the United States of America.