

TASC Preparation - Social Studies Part 2

Course Overview

The TASC Preparation Courses were developed by aligning Plato Courseware with the strands and topics that are assessed on the 2014 TASC Test. Each unit aligns to one or more strands within the 2014 TASC Test and the modules within each unit target the essential concepts on the 2014 TASC Test for Social Studies. This course focuses on functions of US democracy, and key concepts of civics, geography and economics. In this course, you will find a variety of lessons and activities to improve your knowledge and skills in these areas.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, you will:

- Examine the role of the US Constitution.
- Analyze the structure, functions, powers and representatives of the legislative, executive and judicial branch of the government.
- Explore the functions of political parties and analyze the two-party system in the US.
- Analyze the evolution, structure and workings of state, local, territorial, and tribal governments.
- Understand citizenship in the United States.
- Examine key concepts of physical and human geography with a focus on the United States and Canada.
- Examine the fundamental concepts of economics such as, economic systems, productivity, finance and banking, market structures, government policies, business cycles and entrepreneurship.

General Skills

To participate in this course, you should be able to do the following:

- Complete basic operations with word processing software, such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs.
- Complete basic operations with presentation software, such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Docs presentation.
- Perform online research using various search engines and library databases.
- Communicate through email.

For a complete list of general skills that are required for participation in online courses, refer to the Prerequisites section of the Plato Student Orientation document, found at the beginning of this course.

Course Materials

- notebook
- pencils or ink pens
- computer with Internet connection and speakers or headphones
- Microsoft Word or equivalent
- Microsoft PowerPoint or equivalent

Course Structure

Unit 1 & 2: Civics and Government

Summary

Unit 1 begins by examining the basic principles and role of the US Constitution. Students will learn about the constitutional provisions that provide for checks and balances among the three branches of the government, and the steps officials can take to amend the document. This unit provides an understanding on the organization and responsibilities of the legislative branch of the government including the bicameral structure of the Congress. This unit also discusses the powers and limits of the national and state governments. The unit then moves on to examine the organization and responsibilities of the executive and judicial branches of the government. This unit covers the powers and responsibilities of the president and the cabinet. The unit ends with analyzing the structure and jurisdiction of the federal court system including the workings of the Supreme Court. Students will explore various legal terms and landmark Supreme Court cases.

Unit 2 discusses the functions of political parties. This unit evaluates the two-party system and the role of third parties in the United States. This unit examines the formation, organization and workings of the state, local, territorial, and tribal governments including the relationship among these governments. Students will learn about the revenue sources of state and local governments. This unit also explores the advantages of the federal system in solving local problems through increased innovation and public service programs. This unit concludes with students exploring citizenship in the US. Students will analyze civic responsibilities, factors that influence political attitudes and the importance of participation in community service, civic improvement, and political activities.

Unit 3: Geography

Summary

Unit 3 focuses on the key concepts of physical and human geography. Students will learn about natural processes that shape the physical world and examine how these processes vary around the globe. This unit also analyzes the patterns of human settlement. Students will explore the relationship among human cultures, population patterns, and economic development. At the end of this unit, students will explore the culture, history, politics, economics, and physical geography of the United States and Canada.

Unit 4 & 5: Economics

Summary

Unit 4 introduces students to the traditional, command, and market economic systems. In this unit, students will study the basic principles and benefits of the US free-enterprise system, and compare it to other types of economic systems. Students will also examine how societal values and technological innovations influence market economies. This unit also analyzes economic rights and responsibilities, and concepts of absolute and comparative advantages. Students will also evaluate government rules and regulations in the US free-enterprise system. This unit also explores the determinants that create changes in supply, demand, and price. Towards the end of the unit students explore the functions of financial institutions and their influence on households and businesses. This unit also examines factors such as credit, interest, and insurance, investment in the stock and bond markets, structure of the Federal Reserve System, and the US monetary policy.

Unit 5 explores the economic rights and responsibilities of businesses. Students also explore the consequences of an economic decision, and rules and regulations designed to protect workers and businesses. This unit also examines the characteristics of sole proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations. Students will also analyze the history of the labor movement and economic effects of developments in technology, transportation and communication in the United States. The unit then moves on to investigate how economic growth, stability, and full employment are measured. Students will explore the contributions of entrepreneurs, past and present, such as Mary Kay Ash, Andrew Carnegie, and Bill Gates. Towards the end of the unit students will evaluate the role of the government in the US free-enterprise system including the goals of the US economic policy.