

AP Government Study Guide

Unit One: Constitutional Underpinnings

Fundamental Principles of Democracy

- **Direct Democracy** – citizens meet and vote directly on government decisions
- **Representative Democracy (Republic)** – citizens choose officials who make decisions on government policy
- **Magna Carta (1215)** – the first ever attempt to limit the power of the British King, guaranteed all people certain rights
- **Enlightenment Philosophers –Locke and Rousseau**

○ **Social Contract Theory** – principle that people enter into a social contract with the government and allow to be ruled

○ **Consent of the Governed** – principle that there are no supreme rulers, all rulers depend on the approval of the people; when governments fail to protect rights the people have the right to change the government

○ **Natural Rights** – principle that all people are born with certain rights: life, liberty, and property (Jefferson changes property into pursuit of happiness)

- **Declaration of Independence** – Thomas Jefferson's document built on principles of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" consent of the governed, and social contract theory. It also justified American revolution against England
- **Common Good** – Belief in doing what's best for the nation overall
- **Popular Sovereignty** – Belief that the ultimate authority rests with the people
- **Majority Rule** – Belief that government is run based on the will of the majority

The First Government – **Articles of Confederation**

- Weak association of states (states very independent)
- No central executive power
- No federal power to tax citizens directly
- Federal government could raise an army, (but not pay for it), print money, declare war, and run the post office

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Table of Contents Ap Government Study Guide

1. Understanding the eBook Ap Government Study Guide
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Ap Government Study Guide
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Ap Government Study Guide
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Ap Government Study Guide
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Ap Government Study Guide
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Ap Government Study Guide User Reviews and Ratings
 - Ap Government Study Guide and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Ap Government Study Guide Free and Paid eBooks

- Ap Government Study Guide Public Domain eBooks
 - Ap Government Study Guide eBook Subscription Services
 - Ap Government Study Guide Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating Ap Government Study Guide eBook Formats
 - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Ap Government Study Guide Compatibility with Devices
 - Ap Government Study Guide Enhanced eBook Features
 7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Ap Government Study Guide
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Ap Government Study Guide
 - Interactive Elements Ap Government Study Guide
 8. Staying Engaged with Ap Government Study Guide
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Ap Government Study Guide
 9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Ap Government Study Guide
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Ap Government Study Guide
 10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
 11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Ap Government Study Guide
 - Setting Reading Goals Ap Government Study Guide
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
 12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Ap Government Study Guide
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Ap Government Study Guide
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
 13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development

- Exploring Educational eBooks

14. Embracing eBook Trends

- Integration of Multimedia Elements
- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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