



## The Catholic High School of Baltimore Summer Reading List

**Teacher's Name:** Humanities Teacher

**School Year:** 2024-2025

**Grade Level:** 11

**Course No.:** 230

**Course Name:** U.S. Government & Politics

**Academic Level (AP/Honors/CP/AA):** AP

### REQUIRED READING:

Students are required to read the following texts that explore the philosophical and political roots of American government.

[Excerpt from \*Second Treatise of Civil Government\*, John Locke](#)

[Excerpt from \*The Spirit of the Laws\*, Baron de Montesquieu](#)

[Excerpt from \*Social Contract\*, Jean Jacques Rousseau](#)

[\*Common Sense\*, Thomas Paine](#)

[\*The Virginia Declaration of Rights\*](#)

[\*The Declaration of Independence\*](#)

### ASSIGNMENT:

The following guided reading questions for the required texts must be typed in a document and handed in by the first day of class.

While some questions require students to conduct research for context, it is expected that students' responses reflect their own words and analysis. Any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in a zero on the assignment and a referral to the Dean of Students for possible disciplinary action.

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Your insights and understanding are what is valued most in this assignment. Let your own voice shine through, and demonstrate your understanding and critical thinking skills.

Excerpt from *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, John Locke

1. Before reading Locke, do some research and discuss the historical context of the *Second Treatise*. When did he write this and why? What was his purpose? What was happening at the time that can provide insight into the motivations and perspective of the author?
2. In what many ways and in what contexts does Locke continuously refer to the laws of nature? How does Locke differentiate between the laws of nature and the laws of man? Provide specific support from the reading.
3. When, according to Locke, is it necessary for man to give up certain liberties under the laws of nature?
4. According to Locke, what is the role of the legislative power and how does it get that power?
5. Under what circumstances, to Locke, might it be necessary for the people to dissolve their government and start anew?

Excerpt from *The Spirit of the Laws*, Baron de Montesquieu

1. Before reading Montesquieu, do some research and discuss the historical context of *The Spirit of the Laws*. When did he write this and why? What was his purpose? What was happening at the time that can provide insight into the motivations and perspective of the author?
2. Immediately in the first five paragraphs Montesquieu lays out an idea that directly influenced the shaping of American government. What is it and why does he state it is so important?

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3. According to Montesquieu, who should exercise executive power? Who should exercise legislative power? Why?
4. What does Montesquieu say about the idea of the executive limiting the legislative power? How about the legislative limiting the executive power?
5. Who, according to Montesquieu, should comprise the army, and what role does he say the army should play?
6. To Montesquieu, what will ultimately cause the state to perish?

Excerpt from *The Social Contract*, Jean Jacques Rousseau

1. Before reading Rousseau, do some research and discuss the historical context of *The Social Contract*. When did he write this and why? What was his purpose? What was happening at the time that can provide insight into the motivations and perspective of the author?
2. To Rousseau, what is the fundamental question that he seeks to address in *The Social Contract*?
3. According to Rousseau, what is the social contract and what are the social contract's benefits to society?
4. What does Rousseau think of the concept of individualism, and how does the social contract affect individual will?
5. What is Rousseau's overall thinking on the concept of representative democracy vs. direct democracy? Explain in detail.
6. In what ways are Rousseau's theories and Locke's theories of the role of government similar? Cite specific examples.

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### *Common Sense*, Thomas Paine

1. Before reading Paine, read the introduction in the book and discuss the historical context of *Common Sense*. When did he write this and why? What was his purpose? What was happening at the time that can provide insight into the motivations and perspective of the author?
2. How does Paine view the role and importance of government in general? Be specific.
3. What are Paine's views on the monarchy, both in general and that of England? Use supporting details from *Common Sense*.
4. What arguments does Paine use to support the notion that the American colonies would be better off as an independent nation?
5. A number of Paine's appeals and ideas exhibit the influence of people like Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. Discuss some areas where you see these influences.

### *The Virginia Declaration of Rights & The Declaration of Independence*

1. What specific things do the *Virginia Declaration of Rights* and *Declaration of Independence* have in common?
2. What specific ideas expressed in both documents can be traced to those of Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Paine? Make direct connections.