CURRICULUM – **PRINCIPLES OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

Taught by Mr. Ben Gilmore
Last Revised April, 2009

AN OVERVIEW

24 X 75 Minute classes plus three take-home examinations.

GOALS FOR THE STUDENTS:

Many people do not know what they do not know. This course is designed to introduce the student to concepts of "government" and its application that may have escaped his/her attention. Those completing this course should be better equipped to discern Biblical principles of government and apply them in practical ways to every aspect of private and public life.

Texts are: *"Teaching and Learning America's Christian History"* by Rosalie Slater. *"The Christian History of the Constitution of The United States Of America, Vol.1"* by Verna Hall. Both are published by the Foundation for American Christian Education, Chesapeake, VA.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

Principles of government will be introduced in the context of Biblical wisdom. The same material will be covered during three passes. The first pass introduces the context for these principles. The second pass expands an understanding of each principle. The third pass summarizes these principles and illustrates their practical application to current events in individual lives.

Parallel to these lectures will be a course-long reading and writing assignment, keyed to the texts which are brought to every class.

There will be three take-home examinations. The higher two grades will count as one third of the course grade. Class attendance and participation will count as one third of the course grade. The quality and quantity of the homework notebook will account for one third of the course grade.

CURRICULUM:

First pass: (4 classes)

<Insert Date & Time>

#1-- **IN THE BEGINNING – GOD**. A Biblical definition of the "God of Biblical government." All human action rests upon God as first cause.

<Insert Date & Time>

#2-- **NATURAL LAW & REVEALED LAW**. Classic secular and Biblical definitions.

<Insert Date & Time>

#3-- **BIBLICAL CONCEPTS OF GOVERNMENT**. God ordained and has worked through only three human organizations in Scripture. Family, Church, State. Each is a *governmental* organization. The quality of each depends upon the quality of individual self-government. Each is structured by a combination of rule of –one, -few, -many.

<Insert Date & Time>

#4-- **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF ALL GOVERNMENT.** Individuality, Self-Government, Quality Character, Private Property, Biblical Form, Local Authority, Liberty.

FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAMINATION- This examination is due for grading in 7 days.

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Second Pass: (14 classes)
<Insert Date & Time>
#5 & #6-- **INDIVIDUALITY**-- The Godhead- author of individuality. Introduction to "natural theology." The being and personality of God. God's use of Individuality in creation.
<Insert Date & Time>
#7 & #8-- **SELF-GOVERNMENT**-- Christian principle of Self-Government as opposed to God's principle of Individuality. Biblical foundation for Self-Government. Examples in history to support the principle. We will discuss the logic for the success of Christian Self-Government and the universal failure of the alternatives.
<Insert Date & Time>
#9 & #10-- **QUALITY CHARACTER**-- Character, an inscription on a hard surface. God uses Christian heritage to develop individual, family, church and civil character. A "standard" is implicit in "quality" character. Not to use the best, most proven standard would be unwise.
<Insert Date & Time>
#11 & #12-- **PRIVATE PROPERTY**-- Conscience and stewardship in Scripture. Without "private property" the 10th commandment has no meaning. Secular approaches to property. Why Biblical concepts of property work and all others fail.
<Insert Date & Time>
#13 & #14-- **BIBLICAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT**-- Define "Biblical form". Show that Scripture may be used to support all three elements of polity. Discuss secular views of form. Show why ungodliness converts monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy into tyranny, oligarchy, anarchy.
<Insert Date & Time>
#15 & #16-- **LOCAL AUTHORITY**-- Biblical illustrations of the fruit of local self-government. Local government as the foundation for family, church and state. The fruit of centralized government. Contrast democracy and republic.
<Insert Date & Time>
#17 & #18-- **LIBERTY**-- A solution to the dilemma, "Liberty without law is anarchy. Law without liberty is slavery." Broad brush view of how God has revealed concepts of liberty in the development of civilization.

SECOND TAKE-HOME EXAMINATION - This examination is to be turned in for grading in 7 days.

Third Pass (6 classes)

<Insert Date & Time>
#19-- **RECOGNIZING SITUATION ETHICS**. Recognizing and understanding the faults of situation ethics. Biblical methods for the solution to "unsolvable" problems.

<Insert Date & Time>
#20-- **PRACTICS IN APPLYING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE**-- How to present and debate Biblical principle in the market-place of ideas. Learn to listen to your opponent. Learn when to ask him/her for definitions. Draw logical conclusions and make statements with a question as did Christ.

<Insert Date & Time>
#21-- **PRACTICS IN DEBATE-** Instructor becomes "devil's advocate."

<Insert Date & Time>
#22-- **GUEST LECTURE-** Campaigning political candidates are invited to address the class and field questions on government.

THIRD TAKE-HOME EXAMINATION. – This examination is to be "turned in" as directed on its face.

<Insert Date & Time>
#23-- CLASS ANALYSIS OF CURRENT EVENTS—Roll playing. (What would you do if you were in this or that situation?) Class analysis of the response.

<Insert Date & Time>
#24-- CLASS/COURSE RECAPITULATION-- What has been internalized in governmental principles? Has sound historical knowledge become a useful evangelical tool? How does it appear God will use what has been learned and experienced in this course?

<Insert Date & Time>
COMMISSIONING-- If possible, final grades will be awarded at a class pot-luck dinner. A guest Speaker will be honored.

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HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT
FOR THE COURSE

NOTE: This assignment will determine <u>one third</u> of the course grade.
This course has two texts:

- *"Teaching and Learning America's Christian History,"* by Rosalie Slater. (Here in after called "T&L");
- *"The Christian History of the Constitution of The United States Of America Vol. 1"* by Verna Hall. . (Here in after called "CHOC");

On page 63 of T&L you will find a presentation of the seven governmental principles used in structuring the curriculum of this course. Subsequent pages outline reading assignments in both T&L and CHOC which will be the basis for this homework assignment (see below).

Completing all the assignment for all seven principles with the note format specified in this assignment far exceeds the effort justified by this course. It is hoped that some students will accept the challenge and continue the work until it is completed and learned. Thus, the *quality* of what is accomplished by each student will weigh more heavily than the *quantity* of notes. Students are expected to devote at least three hours a week to this effort.

DETAILS OF THE ASSIGNMENT

You will need a three ring binder with 8 dividers.

Devote at least one page to notes on each article. (That is-- Do not combine notes from more than one article on a page.)

You are admonished to be neat. These notes will be useful to you for many years to come. You will want to be able to read them after they have turned cold! **Notes that can not be read by the instructor will not be graded.**

You are encouraged to set yourself a steady pattern of study. This material does not lend itself to "cramming."

Your notes are subject to review, evaluation and comment from time to time without prior notice. **You should bring them with your texts to each class.**

The format for your notes should be similar to those that follow. Review the material at the beginning of each principle. Then do **<u>only</u>** the first reading assignment for each principle.

At the beginning of your notes on each article, you are to identify it with today's date, the title, author and reference book and page #.

After that, pause after reading each paragraph. Write a single sentence of less than two lines regarding that paragraph. [The purpose of this method is to train the student to concentrate. There is no point in reading a page or an article if there was not sufficient concentration to comprehend paragraph by paragraph.] Upon finishing the article, re-read your sentences and write a summary paragraph about the article.

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CAUTION-- Do not make the assignment hard on yourself by trying to incorporate everything the author said into your sentences. What you can easily write on one or two lines is very likely what has "internalized" in your comprehension. If you cannot compose a sentence it is an indication you need to re-read the paragraph. You have saved the effort of reading the entire article without "listening" to anything you read!

When you have reached the end of the first reading assignment under the first principle (Individuality, CHOC: Pages I-XIV) STOP! Do not continue further under Individuality. File your notes under the first divider labeled "INDIVIDUALITY".

Now, turn to T&L page 65 and perform the same procedure for Self-Government. When you have a full set of notes on the first reading assignment. "CHRISTIAN EDUCATION GUIDE" (Miss Slater's term for T&L) Pages 184-186, go to T&L Page 73 and so on. The eighth divider is for personal notes on items that do not seem to fit elsewhere.

When you have completed the first reading assignment in each of the seven principles, then you are to begin the second assignments. And so on.

You will be graded more upon the quality than the quantity of your work. If you choose to continue this project you will discover this notebook to be a valuable resource for years to come. I hope you enjoy this study as you learn and pass along the concepts of Christian liberty to others.

Ben Gilmore, Instructor