

American Institutions

Salt Lake Community College | General Education

American Institutions (AI) at SLCC

One of These:

- POLS 1100: U.S. Government & Politics
- HIST 1700: American Civilization
- ECON 1740: Economic History of the U.S.

Or Both of These:

- HIST 2700: U.S. History to 1877
- HIST 2710: U.S. History since 1877

Why is AI Required?

Utah state law (Utah State Code 53B-16-103b) and Utah State Board of Regents Policy R470 say that prior to receiving a bachelor's degree from a Utah college or university, all students "shall demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States." The fundamental objective of this requirement is to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for informed and responsible citizenship.



David Hubert—U. S. Capitol, Washington, D. C.

American Institutions Courses

While General Education is foundational to any student's further education and career success, we should not forget its role in providing people with the knowledge and skills that are required to be informed and responsible citizens in a democratic republic.

The long-term success of a republic based on the will of the people depends on its citizens knowing fact from fiction, discerning reasonable and fallacious arguments, understanding their own history, reading and analyzing contemporary and historical documents, and being active participants in their political and economic systems. We might even say that a generally educated populous is the **necessary precondition** for the founding and thriving of a democratic republic.

American Institutions (AI) courses contribute to **civic literacy**, or the knowledge and skills to effectively understand and participate in self-governance at the local, state and national levels. Civic literacy concerns understanding processes, public policies, and historical trajectories of how we got to the present day.

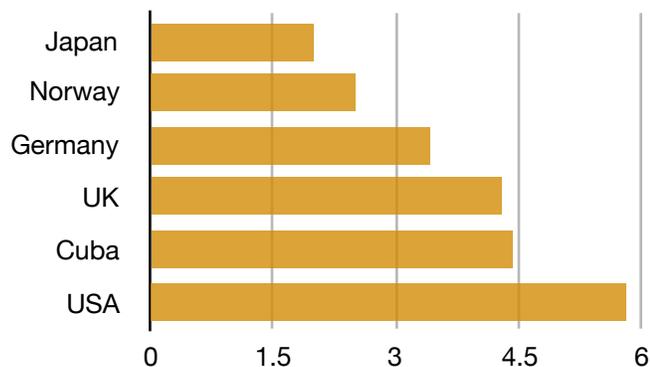
What Do You Think?

1. What historical, political, and economic factors played the most important role in the outcome of the most recent national election?
2. Why does the USA's infant mortality rate compare unfavorably to that of many other countries? What political, economic, or historical causes may be coming into play?
3. How can a discipline like History be represented in both the humanities and social sciences? What is it about the subject matter and/or methods that allows history to defy easy categorization?
4. Can people draw different conclusions from the same set of artifacts or observations? Why or why not? Can you provide an example of artifacts or observations that either can or cannot be subject to multiple interpretations?
5. Imagine that you host a foreign exchange student in your house. How might study in American Institutions help you better explain to them what they are seeing in their year in the United States?

Reflecting the statute that mandates the AI requirement in general education, courses in this distribution come from the disciplines of History, Political Science, and Economics. These are disciplines grounded in **empiricism**, which is a way of knowing about the world that is based on careful observation as opposed to abstract reasoning, intuition, or revelation. **Political Science and Economics are prominent examples of Social Sciences**, whereas **History straddles the line demarcating the Social Sciences from the Humanities**, and is a discipline that can live comfortably in both worlds. Political scientists, economists, and historians share a set of methods: They **collect data** relevant to hypotheses—and that data could be voting results, unemployment figures, infant mortality rates, or population trends. They **carefully analyze** and **interpret** artifacts that include official documents, speeches, letters, books, and oral histories.

Professors who teach AI courses at SLCC share a common belief that the **among the greatest sins** that can be committed by citizens in a democracy are not understanding what is happening in our society, polity, and economy and not understanding how our current circumstances are products of political, economic, and social choices that we and our forebears made in the past. Think about what you want to know more about the United States, and sign up for an American Institutions course.

Infant Mortality Rates



David Hubert—Data from the CIA World Factbook