



Course Outcome Summary

American Government/Survey of Government

Course Information:

Instruction Level: 12th grade
Total Credits: 1 (1 semester course)

Description: This course is an introduction to the basic concepts of American government, the American political process and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It is a one semester course offered primarily to senior students. The course is designed to meet the state standards in social studies in the area of government, is a required course for graduation from high school and will help prepare students for a college level government course. Additionally, this course also serves to create more informed citizens who are prepared to experience the challenges and joys that come from being an actively involved citizen.

Course Standards:

- C.12.1 Identify the sources, evaluate the justification, and analyze the implications of certain rights and responsibilities of citizens
- C.12.2 Describe how different political systems define and protect individual human rights
- C.12.3 Trace how legal interpretations of liberty, equality, justice, and power, as identified in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and other Constitutional Amendments, have changed and evolved over time
- C.12.4 Explain the multiple purposes of democratic government, analyze historical and contemporary examples of the tensions between those purposes, and illustrate how governmental powers can be acquired, used, abused, or legitimized
- C.12.5 Analyze different theories of how governmental powers might be used to help promote or hinder liberty, equality, and justice, and develop a reasoned conclusion
- C.12.6 Identify and analyze significant political benefits, problems, and solutions to problems related to federalism and the separation of powers
- C.12.7 Describe how past and present American political parties and interest groups have gained or lost influence on political decision-making and voting behavior
- C.12.8 Locate, organize, analyze, and use information from various sources to understand an issue of public concern, take a position, and communicate the position
- C.12.9 Identify and evaluate the means through which advocates influence public policy
- C.12.10 Identify ways people may participate effectively in community affairs and the political

- process
- C.12.11 Evaluate the ways in which public opinion can be used to influence and shape public policy
- C.12.13 Describe and evaluate ideas of how society should be organized and political power should be exercised, including the ideas of monarchism, anarchism, socialism, fascism, and communism; compare these ideas to those of representative democracy; and assess how such ideas have worked in practice
- C.12.14 Explain and analyze how different political and social movements have sought to mobilize public opinion and obtain governmental support in order to achieve their goals

Prerequisites: (none)

Textbooks: (to be determined this summer)

Units

- **Citizenship in Practice: Definition, Rights and Responsibilities**
- **Forms of government; the role and structure of government**
- **Roots of democracy: precedents, Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation**
- **Provisions of the U.S. Constitution, Amendments and Bill of Rights**
- **Legislative Branch: local, state, and federal practices and powers**
- **Executive Branch: local, state and federal practices and powers**
- **Judicial Branch: local, state and federal practices and powers**

Unit Outlines

1. Introduction to Active Citizenship

This brief unit will specifically set a tone of active citizenship which is infused throughout the rest of the course. Students will explore widely held political ideologies and how they shape policy and choices in American politics. This includes exploring the difference between liberal and conservative ideals, voting, selective service, interest groups, our rights as citizens, and participation in politics. We will introduce the electoral college, the popular vote, third parties and special interest groups as well. These topics will be explored in-depth in later units.

Standards:

- C.12.1 Identify the sources, evaluate the justification, and analyze the implications of certain rights and responsibilities of citizens.

- C.12.2 Describe how different political systems define and protect individual human rights.
- C.12.5 Analyze different theories of how governmental powers might be used to help promote or hinder liberty, equality, and justice, and develop a reasoned conclusion.
- C.12.13 Describe and evaluate ideas of how society should be organized and political power should be exercised, including the ideas of monarchism, anarchism, socialism, fascism, and communism; compare these ideas to those of representative democracy; and assess how such ideas have worked in practice.

Essential Questions:

- What can the government expect from its citizens?
What can citizens expect from their government?
How can citizens participate in their government?

Essential Knowledge:

Students will explore the promotion and change over time of social order, the protection of personal liberties, political parties, and the combined influence on these core values on policy making.

Key Terms: liberal, conservative, special interest party, voting, election, selective service, democrat, republican, personal liberty, rights, popular vote, third parties, electoral college

2. Forms, Structure and Role of Governments

In this unit, the student will survey different forms of government across the world, the form of government America chose initially, and the present government. Students will also examine what government does for the citizens (people, places and policies) as well as an analysis of the effectiveness of the present government.

Standards:

- C.12.1 Identify the sources, evaluate the justification, and analyze the implications of certain rights and responsibilities of citizens.
- C.12.2 Describe how different political systems define and protect individual human rights.
- C.12.5 Analyze different theories of how governmental powers might be used to help promote or hinder liberty, equality, and justice, and develop a reasoned conclusion.

C.12.13 Describe and evaluate ideas of how society should be organized and political power should be exercised, including the ideas of monarchism, anarchism, socialism, fascism, and communism; compare these ideas to those of representative democracy; and assess how such ideas have worked in practice.

Essential Questions:

What are the structures and attributes of the most common forms of government?
Why do the people of a country choose the present forms of government to govern them?
How does a government protect individual liberty while promoting public order and safety.

Essential Knowledge:

Students will explore the promotion and change over time of social order, the protection of personal liberties, political parties, and the combined influence on these core values on policy making.

Key Terms: democracy, autocracy, representative democracy, monarchy, fascism, totalitarian, oligarchy, republic, parliamentary system, presidential system.

3. Roots of Democracy, Antecedents, Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation

Building on Unit 1, students will explore the first informal and formal governments in the New World, as well as the precedents that established the fundamental basis of our government, such as popular sovereignty and limited government. Students will explore foundational documents and the development over time of political ideas that comprise our Constitution.

Standards:

C.12.4 Explain the multiple purposes of democratic government, analyze historical and contemporary examples of the tensions between those purposes, and illustrate how governmental powers can be acquired, used, abused, or legitimized.

C.12.7 Describe how past and present American political parties and interest groups have gained or lost influence on political decision-making and voting behavior.

C.12.8 Locate, organize, analyze, and use information from various sources to understand an issue of public concern, take a position, and communicate the position.

Essential Questions:

How did the failure of Parliament result in the failure of government and ultimately, the Revolutionary War?

Why were the Articles of Confederation written to define a very limited government?

How did the United States move from limited government to a Democratic Republic?

Essential Knowledge:

- key documents that preceded the Articles of Confederation: Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, Mayflower Compact, Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (Connecticut), Declaration of Independence, and the Federalist Papers
- declining relationship between the Colonies and Britain 1763-1776
- structure of the Articles of Confederation; strengths and weaknesses thereof
- powers of government as defined in the Articles of Confederation

Key Terms: Magna Carta, Articles of Confederation, Declaration of Independence, Federalist Papers, English Bill of Rights, Mayflower Compact, Parliamentary System, Presidential System

4. Provisions of the U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights & Amendments

Students will explore the Constitution and amendments, to familiarize themselves with the powers of and limitations on government. They will analyze the rights of citizens as defined and protected by the Constitution. They will examine the ramifications of these rights in their daily lives.

Standards:

C.12.3 Trace how legal interpretations of liberty, equality, justice, and power, as identified in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and other Constitutional Amendments, have changed and evolved over time.

C.12.6 Identify and analyze significant political benefits, problems, and solutions to problems related to federalism and the separation of powers.

Essential Questions:

What are the key elements of our national government?

What are the basic rights held by all citizens?

How do the 3 branches of government interact and what the the checks and balances on them.

Essential Knowledge:

- structure of the Constitution
- federalism
- powers and limitations of government; checks & balances
- significance of the Bill of Rights
- process of amending the Constitution
- key protected rights of citizens

Key Terms: federalism, checks and balances, amendment, separation of power, supreme law, framework, popular sovereignty, limited government, Virginia Plan, New Jersey Plan, Great Compromise, Three-Fifths Clause, Federalists, Anti-Federalists, Federalist Papers, ratification,

5. Legislative Branch- federal, state and local

Students will explore federalism, the structure of our federal and state governments, and the legislative process. Students will discover who their representatives are at the local, state and federal levels, and explore the various means of communicating with them on a relevant issue. During an election cycle, we will engage in citizenship by exercising our rights to vote. In a non-election cycle, all students who are 18 will have an opportunity to register to vote and males will register for selective service.

Standards:

- C.12.9 Identify and evaluate the means through which advocates influence public policy.
- C.12.10 Identify ways people may participate effectively in community affairs and the political process.
- C.12.11 Evaluate the ways in which public opinion can be used to influence and shape public policy.
- C.12.14 Explain and analyze how different political and social movements have sought to mobilize public opinion and obtain governmental support in order to achieve their goals.

Essential Question:

How are legislators elected into office?

How do political parties affect the passage of laws?

What do our representatives do as members of a legislative body?

How do institutions help us to understand when new laws are passed and (just as importantly) when they are not?

What institutions besides legislatures affect the policymaking process?

Essential Knowledge:

Students will understand the basic structure of Congress and how their local and state representatives represent them.

Students will explore the controversy regarding the Elastic Clause, presidential vetoes, and Congressional overrides.

Key Terms: elastic clause, veto, override, political parties, reapportioned, bicameral, Senate, House of Representatives, constituents, impeachment, Franking privilege, immunity, gerrymandering, census, committee, chambers, bill, law.

6. Executive Branch- federal, state and local

Students will explore the makeup and powers of the Presidency and the executive branch.

They will survey the role and purpose of the executive departments and federal agencies.

They will also explore key developments in the expansion of presidential power in relation to the legislative and executive branches over the course of American history.

Standards:

C.12.1 Identify the sources, evaluate the justification, and analyze the implications of certain rights and responsibilities of citizens

C.12.4 Explain the multiple purposes of democratic government, analyze historical and contemporary examples of the tensions between those purposes, and illustrate how governmental powers can be acquired, used, abused, or legitimized

C.12.5 Analyze different theories of how governmental powers might be used to help promote or hinder liberty, equality, and justice, and develop a reasoned conclusion

Essential Questions:

What role does the President play in the federal government?

What are the powers of the Executive Branch?

How have that role and those powers expanded and changed over time?

How are bureaucracies funded?

What is the role of the Cabinet?

Essential Knowledge:

- basic powers of the Presidency
- the expansion of those powers over time
- vetoes, executive orders.
- basic understanding of federal agencies.

Key Terms- veto, override, executive order, cabinet positions, elector, pardon, mandate, de facto, treaty, covert, amnesty, reprieve.

7. Judicial Branch- federal, state and local

Students will explore the workings of our courts and especially the Supreme Court by examining the legal precedents and political values of our legal system. Students will further explore federalism and key court decisions involving controversial topics, such as gay marriage and the legalization of marijuana. Students will explore the historic rise of judicial review and future implications.

Standards:

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Essential Questions:

- How is Judicial Review used to check the powers of state and federal governments?
- How does Judicial Review lead to the debate about the legitimacy of the Supreme Court's power?
- How do court cases set a precedent for future legislation?

Essential Knowledge:

Students will see the historic outcomes of court cases and infer the outcomes of future legislation based on precedents set. Students will explore the causes and impact of the Supreme Court's restriction of the civil rights of minorities, and the protection of their rights at other times throughout history.

Key Terms: judicial review, antecedents, civil rights, litmus test, Chief Justice, Justices, appellate, circuit, writ of certiorari, brief, oral argument, opinion, judicial restraint, Judiciary Act of 1789, federal crime, felony, misdemeanor, impeachment, plaintiff, defendant, jury, litigants.