

U.S. Government & Citizenship

Course Description

The goal of this course is to foster informed, responsible participation in public life. Knowing how to be a good citizen is essential to the preservation and improvement of United States democracy. Upon completion of this course the student will understand the major ideas, protections, privileges, structures, and economic systems that affect the life of a citizen in the United States political system. This course is recommended for seniors due to their proximity to voting and draft age.

“I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but in inform their discretion.

Thomas Jefferson (1820)

Core Standards of the Course

Standard 1 Students will understand the significance and impact of the Constitution on everyday life.
Objective 1 Investigate the ideas and events that significantly influenced the creation of the United States Constitution. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and summarize the philosophies that contributed to the Constitution; e.g., Machiavelli, Locke, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton.• Identify and investigate the events that led to the creation of the Constitution.• Analyze how the idea of compromise affected the Constitution.
Objective 2 Assess the essential ideas of United States constitutional government. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine the purpose and role of government.• Investigate the major ideas of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other writings; e.g., Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, Mayflower Compact, Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Iroquois Confederation.• Compare the Articles of Confederation to the United States Constitution.
Objective 3 Determine the importance of popular sovereignty and limited government in a democratic society. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain how the separation of powers is maintained through checks and balances.• Describe how the federal system of government creates a division of power.• Determine how judicial review makes the Constitution a living document.• Examine how the rule of law affects everyday life.• Investigate the necessity for civic virtue.
Objective 4 Investigate the organization and functions of the United States government. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain how legislative, executive, and judicial powers are distributed and shared among the three branches of national government.• Describe how the United States Congress makes laws.• Examine the ways in which the executive branch carries out laws.• Investigate how laws are interpreted by courts through an adversarial process; i.e., plaintiff, defendant.

Standard 2 Students will understand the protections and privileges of individuals and groups in the United States.
<p>Objective 1 Assess the freedoms and rights guaranteed in the United States Constitution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the rights and liberties outlined in the Bill of Rights. • Examine how the Bill of Rights promotes civil rights and protects diversity. • Assess the significance of the First and Fourteenth Amendments.
<p>Objective 2 Analyze how civil rights and liberties have been changed through court decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine how the Bill of Rights promotes a just legal system. • Summarize the differing interpretations of the strict versus loose constructionists. • Identify landmark cases and their impact on civil rights and individual liberties; e.g., Dred Scott, Plessey, Brown, Miranda, Gideon, Bakke.
Standard 3 Students will understand the distribution of power in the national, state and local government in the United States federal system.
<p>Objective 1 Determine the relationship between the national government and the states.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and explain the concept of federalism, • Examine the debate between federal supremacy and states' rights. • Assess the unique relationship between the sovereign American Indian nations and the United States government.
<p>Objective 2 Analyze the role of local government in the United States federal system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the powers given to local governments. • Investigate the structure and function of local government. • Assess how federal monies influence local policy and decision making. • Explore current issues affecting local governments; e.g., spending, state v. local control, land use. • Examine how public education is a function of state and local government.
Standard 4 Students will understand the responsibilities of citizens in the United States.
<p>Objective 1 Investigate the responsibilities and obligations of a citizen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the need to obey laws. • Examine the election and voting process. • Examine the United States tax system. • Recognize the need for selective service in maintaining a military. • Investigate the major political parties and their ideas.
<p>Objective 2 Investigate ways in which responsible citizen take part in civic life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the need for civic dialogue in maintaining a democratic society; e.g., public meetings, mass meetings. • Participate in activities that promote the public good; e.g., the voting process, jury duty, community service.
<p>Objective 3 Assess methods for respectfully dealing with differences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and evaluate conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation. • Develop an understanding of the role of civility in dealing with individual and group differences.

Standard 5 Students will understand basic economic principles and how they influence everyday life.

- Objective 1** Explore major economic systems.
- Explain how the scarcity and abundance of productive resources contribute to economic systems.
 - Develop an understanding of capitalism, communism, socialism, and mixed economic systems.
 - Examine the problems of newly developing economies in today's world.

- Objective 2** Determine how supply and demand affect the availability of goods and services.
- Analyze the role that prices, incentives, and profits play in determining what is produced and distributed in a competitive market system.
 - Determine how scarcity and choice influence governmental economic decision making.
 - Examine how the private and public sectors contribute to an economic system.
 - Analyze the role of specialization and exchange in the economic process.

Standard 6 Students will understand the relationship between the United States and the international system.

- Objective 1** Examine major government structures and functions outside the United States.
- Explain the purpose of government and analyze how government powers are acquired, used, and justified.
 - Compare different political systems with that of the United States; e.g., dictatorship, democracy, theocracy, monarchy, totalitarianism.
 - Analyze and evaluate conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations.

- Objective 2** Evaluate how United States foreign policy affects the world.
- Explain the powers that the Constitution gives to the President and Congress in foreign affairs, and how these powers have been used.
 - Describe the process by which United States foreign policy is made; e.g., federal agencies, domestic interest groups, the public, the media.
 - Analyze the various ways that United States foreign policy is carried out; e.g., diplomatic, economic, military, humanitarian.
 - Explain how United States domestic politics affect United States foreign policy.

- Objective 3** Explore how the United States influences other nations, and how other nations influence the United States.
- Describe the impact of the United States' concepts of democracy and individual rights on the world.
 - Explain how developments in other nations affect United States society and life.
 - Describe the role of the United States in international organizations.