

US Government CP

Course Description:

This course will enable students to pursue a deeper understanding of the institutions of American Government. They will do an-in-depth study of the system of government in the world today and analyze the life and changing interpretations of the Constitutions, the Bill of Rights, and the current state of the legislative, executive and judiciary branches of government. An emphasis is placed on analyzing the relationship among federal, state, and local governments. This course seeks to create civic literacy as students prepare to vote, participate in community activities and assume the responsibilities of citizenship.

Course Goals/Major Outcomes:

Students will work towards mastering the California State US Government Content Standards. Student understanding of the standards will be measured by teachers, working collaboratively, to consider a multifaceted view of what constitutes a mature understanding of concepts. Students will demonstrate understanding by being able to:

- *Explain; with supporting facts and data
- *Interpret; by providing personal dimensions to ideas and events
- *Apply; by effectively using and adopting what is known in diverse contexts
- *Demonstrate perspective; by describing points of view of the big picture
- *Empathize; by finding value in the odd, alien, or implausible
- *Indicate self knowledge; by being aware of personal style and habit of mind

Course Objectives:

Students will meet the state standards for US Government:

1. Students explain the fundamental principles and moral values of American democracy as expressed in the US Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy.
2. Students evaluate and take and defend position on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationship among them, and how they are secured.
3. Students evaluate, take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of civil society are, their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.
4. Students analyze the unique roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government as established by the US Constitution.
5. Students summarize landmark US Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments.
6. Students evaluate issues regarding campaigns for national, state, and local elective offices.
7. Students analyze and compare the powers and procedures of the national, state, tribal, and local governments.
8. Students analyze the origins, characteristics, and development of different political systems across time, with emphasis on the quest for political democracy, its advances, and its obstacles.

9. Students formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within our constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the following concepts: majority rule and individual rights; liberty and equality; state and national authority in a federal system; civil disobedience and the rule of law; freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial; the relationship of religion and government.

Course Outline:

- I. Foundations of American Government
 - A. Principles of Government
 - 1. Origins of government
 - 2. Character of American democracy
 - 3. Political systems
 - 4. Who governs? To what ends?
 - B. Origins of American Government
 - 1. Political traditions from England
 - 2. Development of colonial government
 - 3. A new nation is established
 - a. Debate over independence
 - b. Articles of Confederation period
 - c. Constitutional convention and ratification
 - C. The US Constitution
 - 1. Constitution's basic principles
 - 2. Amendments – changes in the Constitution
 - 3. Constitution as a living document
 - D. Federalism
 - 1. Federal system
 - 2. State and Federal government's responsibilities
 - 3. Relations among the states
 - 4. Growth of Federalism
- II. Institutions of Government
 - A. Congress
 - B. The Presidency
 - C. The Bureaucracy
 - D. The Judiciary
- III. Opinions, Interests, and Organization
 - A. Public opinion
 - B. Political Participation
 - C. Political parties
 - D. Elections and campaigns
 - E. Interest groups
 - F. The media
- IV. The Politics of Public Policy
 - A. Taxing, spending, and economic policies
 - B. Foreign policy and National defense

- C. Policies toward business, labor, and agriculture
- D. Policies for energy and environment
- E. Social policies and programs
- V. Rights and Responsibilities
 - A. Fundamental Freedoms
 - B. Individual Rights
 - C. Civil Rights
- VI. State and Local Government
- VII. Comparative Government

Key Assignments:

In addition to chapter readings, assignments, quizzes, and tests, students will complete four of the following major assignments.

Directions:

- All written assignments are to be typed or legibly written in ink.
 - Essays or projects, together with all drafts, will be submitted to the Independent Study Teacher. The teacher or a colleague of the teacher will complete the final assessment. The evaluator will consider spelling, grammar, vocabulary, depth of understanding, insight, and other qualities of good writing and or/whether the project reflects the intent of the assignment. School approved guidelines for grading, commonly called rubrics, will be followed by the teachers in the grading of student writing assignments.
1. The way in which laws are made is one of the most important elements in the U.S. constitution. Passing a law is one way the government can go about solving problems. Students will determine a need (problem) and write a proposal for a bill. There are four components to this assignment: 1) write a proposal for the bill 2) write a persuasive essay arguing the merits of the bill 3) give an oral presentation of the bill and the arguments in favor of the bill allowing for a question and answer period, and 4) create a flow chart that the bill would follow to become law.
 2. Current Events Project: Every president depends on advisors to provide educated recommendations in the form of position papers. A position paper is a policy report that usually explains and recommends a particular course of action. Students will select, read, and analyze in writing at least three articles related to a current issue confronting the U.S. presidency. It could be a domestic problem or a foreign policy issue. Based on the findings, students will write a policy paper to the president recommending a course of action. The paper student should support their opinion with factual information collected from the readings and be at least 600-800 words in length.
 3. Campaign project: Students will role-play a campaign for office. Students will develop a platform for running, i.e.; why they should be elected, what they will do and how they will do it, they will support their platform by developing an advertising

campaign (make posters, banners, videotaped commercial, or design a web page), and write a speech persuading the electorate that he/she is the best candidate.

4. Students will attend a local governmental meeting and write minutes of the meeting. In addition a short essay will be written regarding one item on the agenda describing what it was, if it was voted upon, what was the outcome, and whether the student agrees or disagrees with the decision and why or why not. If the item was not voted upon the student will present his/her opinion on how the issue should be resolved. Depending on the information presented at the meeting, students will be required to do additional research in order to support their opinion. Examples are to attend a Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, Board of Education, or City Council meeting.

5. Students will select and research a major Supreme Court decision and write a report that describes both sides of the issue, the outcome of the ruling, and the effects of the ruling on subsequent court cases and why the ruling was important to society. The report should be 700-1000 words in length.

Suggested materials include:

American Government, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2001

United States Government: Democracy in Action, Glencoe/McGraw Hill

Magruder's American Government, Prentice-Hall, 1999

Instructional Methods and/or Strategies:

Students will be expected to develop and present work samples described under the key assignments section as well as those required in the textbook/curriculum used. Students will work independently through the text as a primary resource. In order to support this process teachers will provide each student:

- *Opportunities to discuss and define complex issues orally or via email
- *Modeling of activities and expected outcomes
- *A variety of print and non-print resources
- *Modeling of study strategies appropriate for different learning styles
- *Discussions around points of view
- *Opportunities to summarize, analyze, compare/contrast, describe, classify, and persuade
- *Opportunities for practice in preparation for presentations

Assessment Methods and/or Tools:

A variety of assessment tools will be used. Written work, as described above, will be corrected in collaboration between the student, teacher, and parent. Assessment tools include but are not limited to:

- *Standardized tests, including STAR
- *Criterion based tests
- *Portfolio assessments
- *Student Journals
- *Teacher observation

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*Performance assessments using cameras and recorders

*Student self-evaluation

*Surveys and questionnaires

*Written work, quizzes, and final exams must be completed at 75% accuracy rate to receive credit