



## American Government Course Syllabus

### Course Description:

American Government is a semester-long course in which students will:

- Deepen their understanding of the institutions of American government,
- Compare different systems of government in the world today,
- Analyze the history and changing interpretations of the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches of government.

An emphasis is placed on analyzing the relationship among federal, state and local governments. The course is based on the 12th grade state standards in the area of social studies, with an emphasis on the use of technology and projects to demonstrate understanding. The course is aimed at helping students develop critical thinking skills and an understanding of the principles of American government.

5 credit hours

### Course Outline

#### Unit 1. Foundations of American Government

- 1.1 Introduction to Government
- 1.2 Origins of American Government
- 1.3 The Articles of Confederation
- 1.4 The Constitution
- 1.5 Federalism
- 1.6 The Federalist Papers

#### Unit 2. The Legislative Branch

- 2.1 The U.S. Congress
- 2.2 The Powers of Congress
- 2.3 Congress in Action
- 2.4 Financing Government

### California Standards

#### In Unit 1 students will learn:

A knowledge base that will enable them to fully understand what government is and how it works.

About several types of governments that are found throughout the world including democracy, monarchy and totalitarian governments.

About the various documents that influenced the United States in forming and framing a government based on basic civil liberties and a written constitution.

About the Articles of Confederation.

The meaning of the Preamble and the Bill of Rights.

[12.1.1, 12.1.3, 12.1.4, 12.1.5, 12.1.6, 12.2.1, 12.2.2, 12.2.3, 12.4.2, 12.7.3, 12.7.4, 12.8.2]

#### In Unit 2 students will learn:

About the Legislative Branch of government.

About Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution which outlines the duties and responsibilities of Congress.

The various powers that Congress has been given, whether granted or implied powers. How Congress works in forming laws and other important functions including financing the government.  
[12.4.1, 12.4.2, 12.4.3]

### Unit 3. The Executive Branch

- 3.1 The Presidency
- 3.2 Formal Powers of the President
- 3.3 The Presidency in Action
- 3.4 The Bureaucracy
- 3.5 Foreign Policy and National Defense

#### **In Unit 3 students will learn:**

The role of U.S. President and the Executive Branch.  
About Article II of the U.S. Constitution, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Branch.  
The election process including a look at the Electoral College and the formal powers that the president is granted by the U.S. Constitution.  
[12.4.4, 12.7.5, 12.7.8]

### Unit 4. The Judicial Branch

- 4.1 The Federal Court System
- 4.2 Constitutional Interpretation and The Supreme Court
- 4.3 Landmark Supreme Court Cases

#### **In Unit 4 students will learn:**

The role of the Judicial Branch.  
About Article III of the U.S. Constitution, which outlines the role and responsibilities of the Federal Court System.  
The role of the Supreme Court as the highest court of the nation, along with its role of interpreting the U.S. Constitution as it pertains to laws.  
About landmark court decisions including *Mayberry v. Madison*, *McCulloch v. Maryland*, *Gibbons v. Ogden* and *Dred Scott v. Sanford*.  
[12.4.5, 12.4.6, 12.5.1, 12.5.2, 12.5.3, 12.5.4]

### Unit 5. Political Behavior: Government By The People

- 5.1 The Evolution of America's Major Political Parties
- 5.2 Voters and Voter Behavior
- 5.3 The Electoral Process
- 5.4 Mass Media and Public Opinion
- 5.5 Interest Groups

#### **In Unit 5 students will learn:**

About political behavior and the role of citizens in government.  
How political parties came into existence and their role in government.  
The rights of citizens in voting and how the electoral process works.  
The role of mass media and public opinion, which will include a look at media campaigns, debate and polling.

[12.6.1, 12.6.2, 12.6.3, 12.6.5, 12.6.6, 12.7.6, 12.8.2, 12.8.3]

## Unit 6. Participating in State and Local Government

- 6.1 State and Local Government
- 6.2 The Role of State Governor
- 6.3 The Court System
- 6.4 Local Governments and Citizen Participation

### **In Unit 6 students will learn:**

About the workings of state and local governments, how they are formed and their roles within each individual state.

The role of the governor as leader of each individual state and will compare the powers vested in the governor as those also vested in the president.

What powers have been given to states by the U.S. Constitution and how states handles laws and regulations within state constitutions alongside federal laws and regulations.

The state court system.

[12.2.3, 12.2.4, 12.2.5, 12.2.6, 12.7.1, 12.7.2, 12.7.7]

## Unit 7. Comparative Political Systems

- 7.1 Introduction to Comparative Government
- 7.2 Great Britain's Political System
- 7.3 French Political System
- 7.4 Japanese Political System
- 7.5 Russian Political System

### **In Unit 7 students will learn:**

About comparative government as a way to better understand the American Government system.

How each country forms their governments, the roles of the executive, legislative and judicial branches and their national constitutions.

[12.3.2, 12.3.4, 12.9.1, 12.9.2, 12.9.3, 12.9.5, 12.9.6, 12.9.7, 12.9.8]

