

**PASSAIC COUNTY TECHNICAL**  
**INSTITUTE**

**AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

**CURRICULUM**

**December 2012**

# **I. Course Description**

## **American Government Grades 10, 11, 12 Half-year elective**

American Government is a half-year elective course that aims to increase the students' knowledge of the most essential political, economic, social and historical aspects of this nation's government. Through the lens of the U.S. Constitution, students will study how the ideals of American democracy – liberty, equality, and self-government – have guided the nation for over 200 years.

Our nation's Founders struggled with how best to prevent government abuse of power. Their answer was to establish a constitutional government that protected individual rights by placing limits on what government can do and how it can exercise power. Therefore, instruction and assessment is based upon student understanding of the essentials of United States Government, beginning with a review of the fundamental principles of the United States Constitution.

The course will be divided into four separate sections: A. Basic Principles of the U.S. Constitution, B. Essentials of U.S. Government, C. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights and D. Active Citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Students will build upon their knowledge of United States history and review foundations and origins of American Government, including federalism, the roles and functions of the three branches of government, the political process and a thorough understanding of American civil rights and civil liberties. Students will examine these foundations through print and digital resources and interactive classroom simulations.

Additionally, students will understand the responsibilities and duties for active citizenship of the United States and how leadership and participation in public affairs may influence government decision-making in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, students will actively participate in cooperative case studies to foster their understanding of elections, Supreme Court decisions, making foreign policy, comparative political and economic systems, and the functions of state and local government.

## II. Course Outline

- A. Basic Principles of the U.S. Constitution
- B. Essentials of United States Government
  - Foundations of Government
  - Origins of American Government
  - The Constitution
  - Federalism
  - Congress: The Legislative Branch
  - The President and Executive Branch
  - The Federal Courts and Judicial Branch
  - The Political Process
- C. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
- D. Active Citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## II. Course Objectives

- A. Basic Principles of the U.S. Constitution

**The student will be able to:**

1. recall that our nation's system of government is based on constitutional law established by the United States Constitution. 6.1.8.A.3.b
2. outline the six fundamental principles of the U.S. Constitution. 6.1.8.A.3.b
3. evaluate the effectiveness of the fundamental principles of the Constitution (i.e., consent of the governed, rule of law, federalism, limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances, and individual rights) in establishing a federal government that allows for growth and change over time. 6.1.12.A.14.a

**Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>  
<http://constitution.org/c5/index.php>  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>  
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>

## B. Essentials of United States Government

### Foundations of Government

#### **The student will be able to:**

- 1.analyze major political ideas and classic forms of government including but not limited to monarchy, constitutional monarchy, dictatorship, and republic/representative democracy. 6.1.8.A.2.b
- 2.compare and contrast how different forms of government are categorized based on who exercises authority and how power is organized. 6.1.8.A.1.a
- 3.recognize how American democracy is characterized by core democratic ideals and principles, as well as by the free enterprise system. 6.1.8.D.3.b  
6.1.12.C.14.b

#### **Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>  
<http://constitution.org/c5/index.php>  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>  
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>

### Origins of American Government

#### **The student will be able to:**

- 1.describe how American democracy was shaped by our English political heritage, colonial experiments in self-government, and a range of intellectual influences. 6.1.12.A.1.a
- 2.analyze why the British imposed new policies on their American colonies, sparking rebellion and in time, the American Revolution. 6.1.12.A.2.a
- 3.examine how the states' first attempt to build a national government, the Articles of Confederation, proved to weak to last. 6.1.8.A.3.d
- 4.discover why delegates at the Constitutional Convention compromised on key issues to create a plan for a strong national government. 6.1.8.A.3.c
- 5.research the ratification debate between those in favor the Constitution and those who opposed it took place in the states. 6.1.12.A.2.c

#### **Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: Magna Carta, Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>  
<http://constitution.org/c5/index.php>  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>  
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>

## The Constitution

### **The student will be able to:**

- 1.interpret why the Framers wrote a constitution that divided, limited, and balanced power among three branches of government. 6.1.8.A.3.b
- 2.demonstrate how the Constitution is both a product of its time and a document for all time and how it can be changed as society's needs change. 6.1.12.A.2.e
- 3.research how the scope and impact of the Constitution have expanded as it has been put into practice, interpreted, and applied to new or changing social and political challenges. 6.1.12.A.2.e

### **Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>  
<http://constitution.org/c5/index.php>  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>  
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>

## Federalism

### **The student will be able to:**

- 1.recognize why the Framers of the Constitution established a federal system that divides powers and responsibility between the national and state governments. 6.1.12.A.14.a
- 2.understand how over the past 200 years, conflicts over the balance of power between the national and state governments have led to changes in American federalism. 6.1.12.A.14.a
- 3.assess the current balance of power between the states and national government as characterized by a system of grants and mandates, as well as by a number of key policy areas. 6.3.12.D.1

### **Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution  
<http://constitution.org/c5/index.php>  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>  
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>  
Congress: The Legislative Branch

### **The student will be able to:**

- 1.recall that voters elect members of Congress to represent them and to enact laws in their name and how Congress plays a vital role in our government's system of checks and balances. 6.1.8.A.3.b
- 2.apply the Constitution to determine both the expressed and implied powers given to Congress as well as the limits it places on powers of Congress. 6.1.12.A.14.h
- 3.identify the reasons the House of Representatives is the more representative

chamber of Congress and how its members carry out much of their work in committees. 6.1.12.A.14.e

4. identify the features that help give the Senate its reputation as a more weighty and careful body than the House. 6.1.12.A.14.d

**Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>  
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>

The President

**The student will be able to:**

1. describe the roles of the president including the formal and informal characteristics of the presidency. 6.1.8.A.3.b
2. examine the powers of the presidency as listed in Article II of the Constitution. 6.1.12.A.3.b 6.1.12.A.3.e
3. analyze the roles of the Executive Branch of government including those of the Vice-President, advisers and the cabinet. 6.1.12.A.14.a

**Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>  
<http://www.270towin.com/>  
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>

The Federal Courts and the Judicial Branch

**The student will be able to:**

1. describe how jurisdiction is determined in the American court system. 6.1.12.A.3.d
2. outline how the federal court system is structured including the district court and court of appeals. 6.1.12.A.16.c
3. research some of the highlights of Supreme Court history including landmark cases. 6.1.12.A.2.e

**Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>  
<http://constitution.org/c5/index.php>  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>

## The Political Process

### **The student will be able to:**

- 1.determine the importance of public opinion. 6.1.12.A.16.a
- 2.examine how public opinion influences the political process and how it affects the actions government takes. 6.1.12.A.16.a
- 3.analyze how the media may affect public opinion. 6.1.12.A.14.f
- 4.identify what role interest groups play in the political process. 6.1.12.A.14.f
- 5.understand how political parties affect the political process. 6.1.12.A.14.d
- 6.determine the effectiveness of the two-party system in America. 6.1.12.A.14.d
- 7.determine the extent to which state and local issues, the press, the rise of interest-group politics, and the rise of party politics impacted the development of democratic institutions and practices. 6.1.12.A.3.g

### **Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/election.aspx>

<http://www.270towin.com/>

<http://www.maps101.com/>

[http://upfront.scholastic.com/issues/09\\_17\\_12/Videos](http://upfront.scholastic.com/issues/09_17_12/Videos)

## C. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

### Civil Liberties

### **The student will be able to:**

- 1.identify what the Bill of Rights is and what it protects. 6.1.8.A.3.g
- 2.describe the limitations on civil liberties and rights. 6.1.8.A.3.e 6.1.12.A.14.h
- 3.outline the five freedoms provided by the First Amendment. 6.1.12.D.14.e
- 4.research the guarantees and limitations of the freedoms of speech and press based on landmark Supreme Court Cases. 6.1.12.D.14.e
- 5.examine what amendments protect individuals from government abuses and actions. 6.1.12.C.14.b

### **Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>

<http://constitution.org/c5/index.php>

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

<http://www.maps101.com/>

## Civil Rights

### **The student will be able to:**

- 1.define what civil rights are and identify how civil rights have changed over time. 6.1.12.D.2.b
- 2.examine the pattern of discrimination and how it has affected the civil rights of some groups in U.S. history. 6.1.12.D.2.b
- 3.identify the meaning of equal protection under the law. 6.1.12.A.4.b
- 4.identify the civil rights laws passed after the Civil War. 6.1.12.A.4.d
- 5.analyze why the civil right laws failed to end segregation. 6.1.12.D.4.d
- 6.describe the civil rights movement and analyze its effects on American society. 6.1.12.D.13.a
- 7.outline the federal laws passed in response to the civil rights movement. 6.1.12.A.13.b
- 8.analyze how civil rights were extended to women, minorities, and people with disabilities. 6.1.12.D.14.d
- 9.interpret how affirmative action policies affected the civil rights movement. 6.1.12.D.14.d
- 10.identify the process for people to receive U.S. citizenship
- 11.research the immigration policies the federal government adopted in its history. 6.1.12.A.14.c
- 12.analyze the challenges the federal government faces with illegal immigration. 6.1.12.A.14.h

### **Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>  
<http://constitution.org/c5/index.php>  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>  
<http://www.maps101.com/>

## D. Active Citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### **The student will be able to:**

- 1.develop a plan for public accountability and transparency in government related to a particular issue(s) and share the plan with appropriate government officials. 6.3.12.A.1
- 2.compare current case studies involving slavery, child labor, or other unfair labor practices in the United States with those of other nations, and evaluate the extent to which such problems are universal. 6.3.12.A.2
- 3.analyze current laws involving individual rights and national security, and evaluate how the laws might be applied to a current case study that cites a violation of an individual's constitutional rights. 6.3.12.D.1
- 4.collaborate with students from other countries to develop possible solutions to an issue of environmental justice, and present those solutions to relevant national and international governmental and/or

- nongovernmental organizations. 6.3.12.B.1
5. participate in a real or simulated hearing about a social issue with a related economic impact (e.g., growing health care costs, immigration), and justify conclusions after weighing evidence from multiple experts and stakeholders. 6.3.12.C.1

**Suggested resources:**

Primary source documents: United States Constitution  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>  
<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/Default.asp>  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>  
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>

### **III. Methods of Student Evaluation**

Students are assessed in accordance to the school policies using the following criteria:

- Tests – objective and essay
- Quizzes
- Oral presentations
- Power point presentations
- Web-based activities and presentations
- Debates & Book Discussions
- Essay assignments
- Class work and Participation
- Homework

In addition, relative case studies will also be conducted within cooperative groups.  
Example assessments and projects include but are not limited to:

- Students will deliberate on a public issue that affected the 2012 Presidential election, consider opposing arguments, and develop a reasoned conclusion.
- Students will participate in a real or simulated hearing to develop a legislative proposal that addresses a public issue, and share it with an appropriate legislative body (e.g., school board, municipal or county government, state legislature).
- Students will engage in simulated democratic processes (e.g., legislative hearings, judicial proceedings, elections) to understand how conflicting points of view are addressed in a democratic society.
- Students will take a position on a current public policy issue and support it with historical evidence, reasoning, and constitutional analysis in a written and/or oral format.

#### **IV. Textbooks, Instructional Materials, Software,**

- *Textbook* – United States Government, Fraga, Luis Ricardo; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, ©2012.
- *Software* – United States Government, Student One Stop; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, © 2012
  - Includes interactive reading study guide, downloadable audio files, student digital resources
- <http://www.historyteacher.net/AmericanHistoryAndGovernment> - Links to websites, interactive practice tests and quizzes

#### **V. Instructional Strategies**

In order to meet the individual needs of our students, differentiated instruction is utilized in every class. This involves the use of a variety of instructional strategies, including but not necessarily limited to: readings and exercises from the approved text(s) and related supplemental materials; cooperative group activities; teacher generated handouts; lecture in conjunction with class discussion and notes; debates; role playing activities; map work; activities involving music and art from relevant historical eras; oral and written reports; simulations; primary resource based analysis and questioning; multimedia documentaries, movies, and power points.

## VI. Scope and Sequence Pacing Chart

I = Introduced      D = Developed in Depth      R = Reinforced

SKILL TO BE LEARNED	10	11	12
Identify the six key principles of the U.S. Constitution.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Identify key ideals and principles that characterize America democracy.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Understand the events that led to the development of American democracy.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Describe how the U.S. Constitution created a strong national government.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Examine how the balance of power between the state and the national government is characterized in contemporary times.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Outline the powers the U.S. Constitution grants to Congress.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Understand the formal and informal roles of the President.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Evaluate the roles and functions of the executive departments and independent agencies.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Refine the student's writing and debating skills.	IDR	DR	DR
Research how the function of the Supreme Court is to serve as the final word on questions of federal law and the Constitution.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Evaluate the roles and contributions of groups, individuals, and events in the state and local governments.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Understand the electoral process established by the Constitution and how citizens can affect it.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Identify ways that Americans can participate in the political process.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Analyze how the Constitution protects the civil rights and civil liberties of Americans.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Identify how the civil rights movement led to new laws protecting the rights of women, African Americans, and other groups.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Explain how the Supreme Court maintains the balance between federal and state power.	IDR	IDR	IDR
Examine reasons why and how the United States engages in foreign policy.	IDR	IDR	IDR

## **VII. Student Handout and Proficiencies**

American Government  
Grades 10, 11, 12  
Half-year elective

American Government is a half-year elective course that aims to increase the students' knowledge of the most essential political, economic, social and historical aspects of this nation's government. Through the lens of the U.S. Constitution, students will study how the ideals of American democracy – liberty, equality, and self-government – have guided the nation for over 200 years.

Our nation's Founders struggled with how best to prevent government abuse of power. Their answer was to establish a constitutional government that protected individual rights by placing limits on what government can do and how it can exercise power. Therefore, instruction and assessment is based upon student understanding of the essentials of United States Government, beginning with a review of the fundamental principles of the United States Constitution.

### **PROFICIENCIES**

1. Formulate a definition of government and explain its importance. 6.1.12.A.2.a, 6.1.12.A.2.b, 6.1.12.A.2.c
2. Examine the functions government performs and analyze how the government promotes the public good. 6.1.12.A.2.a, 6.1.12.A.2.b, 6.1.12.A.2.c, 6.3.12.A.2
3. Understand the organization and function of the American system of representative government. 6.1.12.A.2.a, 6.1.12.A.2.b, 6.1.12.A.2.c, 6.1.12.A.2.e
4. Compare and contrast various forms of government. 6.1.12.A.2.a, 6.1.12.A.2.b, 6.1.12.A.2.c
5. Understand the political influences on American government (political parties, lobbyists). 6.1.12.A.2.d, 6.1.12.A.2.f, 6.1.12.A.3.g
6. Outline the mechanisms used by the U.S. Congress to draw congressional districts. 6.1.12.A.13.c, 6.1.12.D.16.c
7. Analyze the special powers granted to Congress by the Constitution 6.1.12.D.3.c, 6.1.12.A.16.b, 6.1.12.A.16.c
8. Assess the limits of congressional power. 6.1.12.A.3.e, 6.1.12.A.16.c, 6.1.12.A.12.b
9. Outline the mechanisms and steps taken in the U.S. Congress to make laws. 6.1.12.D.3.c, 6.1.12.A.16.b, 6.3.12.D.1
10. Evaluate the impact of interest groups on the democratic system. 6.1.12.A.3.g, 6.1.12.A.15.b, 6.1.12.B.16.a
11. Describe and list the roles and responsibilities of the president. 6.1.12.A.2.c, 6.1.12.A.12.b
12. Examine the executive, foreign, judicial, and legislative powers of the presidency. 6.1.12.A.3.b, 6.1.12.A.12.b, 6.1.12.A.11.d

13. Examine the election processes. 6.1.12.A.14.e, 6.1.12.A.14.g
14. Outline the roles of the lower courts and describe their authority. 6.1.12.A.14.h, 6.1.12.C.14.b, 6.1.12.A.13.a
15. Examine the role and operation of the Supreme Court in the American political system. 6.1.12.A.2.e, 6.1.12.A.3.d, 6.1.12.A.6.c, 6.1.12.A.14.b
16. Evaluate how the U.S. Constitution (including the Bill of Rights other amendments) protects civil liberties. 6.1.12.A.2.c, 6.1.12.D.2.b, 6.1.12.A.4.d, 6.1.12.A.6.c
17. Evaluate governmental actions to protect our national security. 6.1.12.A.15.d, 6.1.12.C.15.a, 6.1.12.D.15.b
18. Examine the concepts of freedom of the press and free speech in the U.S., compare it to other countries around the world, and analyze the utility and trustworthiness of the media. 6.1.12.A.16.a, 6.3.12.B.1, 6.3.12.C.1
19. Compare and contrast the economic and political systems of capitalism, democracy, communism, and socialism. 6.1.12.A.16.c, 6.1.12.C.16.a, 6.1.12.C.16.c
20. Compare and contrast key past and present United States foreign policy actions (e.g., diplomacy, economic aid, humanitarian aid, military aid) and positions (e.g., treaties, sanctions, interventions) and evaluate their consequences. 6.1.12.D.15.b, 6.1.12.D.15.c, 6.1.12.D.15.d
21. Outline how the world is organized politically into nation-states and alliances and how these interact with one another through organizations such as the European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations, the World Court, and the Group of Seven Industrialized Nations. 6.1.12.A.15.c, 6.1.12.A.15.e, 6.1.12.C.16.c