

# United States Government

Social Studies  
NCAA Approved

Grade(s) 12th, Duration 1 Semester, 1 Credit  
Required Course

## Description

In this course, students will learn about the purposes, types, and functions of government. We will focus specifically on the American forms of government, studying those aspects which any informed, educated American citizen should know: The Bill of Rights and the basic frameworks of our government, as found in the U.S. Constitution are the foundation for this course.

Timeframe	Unit	Scope And Sequence	
		Instructional Topics	
15 Day(s)	Foundations and Principles of Government and the Constitution	1. Government and the State 2. Forms of government 3. Basic Concepts of Democracy 4. Origins of American Government 5. The Constitution	
15 Day(s)	Politics and Political Behavior	1. Political Parties 2. Voting Rights 3. Voter Behavior 4. Mass Media and Public Opinion 5. Interest Groups	
10 Day(s)	The Legislative Branch	1. The powers of Congress 2. The organizational structure of Congress 3. The Legislative Process	
10 Day(s)	The Executive Branch	1. The Presidency 2. Executive Powers 3. The Federal Bureaucracy 4. The Cabinet Departments	
7 Day(s)	The Judicial Branch	1. The Federal Court System 2. Civil Liberties: Freedoms and Protecting Individual Rights 3. Civil Rights: Equal Justice Under the Law.	
5 Day(s)	State, Local and Tribal Governments	1. Alaska State Government 2. Alaska Municipal Government 3. Tribal Government	
10 Day(s)	Alaska Issues	1. Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act 2. Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA) 3. The Alaska Permanent Fund	
5 Day(s)	Community Project		

## Materials and Resources

Magruder's American Government textbook by William A. McClenaghan

## Prerequisite (What do you need to take before this)

United States History

## Course Details

**Unit:** Foundations and Principles of Government and the Constitution

Duration: 15 Day(s)

## Description

In this unit, students will explore the principles on which our nation was founded by reading the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. Students will answer questions regarding the basic structures set up by the Constitution and will complete projects on the amendments to the Constitution.

## Essential Questions

Is government necessary? What should be the goals of government? How does the Constitution reflect the times in which it was written? What were the fundamental principles the Founders covered in the Declaration of Independence? What are the rights protected in the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment, in particular? How is the U.S. Constitution organized and how does it structure our government? What amendments have been ratified over the years; what aspects of the government were changed? Is the federal system the best way to govern the United States?

## Assessments

Projects Tests Journal entries Class discussions Oral presentations

**Resources**

Annotated copies of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

**Vocabulary**

Vocabulary for this unit includes but is not limited to: constitution, amendment, conservative, liberal, clause, precedent, preside, ratify,

**Topic:** Government and the State Duration: 1 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will explore the theories on the origin of the state and the purposes of government.

**Knowledge/Skills**

The student will: Analyze the roots of American government. Define the purposes of government.

**Topic:** Forms of government Duration: 1 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will analyze systems of government based on who can participate, geographic distribution of governmental power within the state and the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of the government.

**Knowledge/Skills**

The student will: Describe differences among structures of governments (confederation, federal, unitary, etc.). Identify and describe various political systems.

**Topic:** Basic Concepts of Democracy Duration: 1 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will explore the basic foundations of democracy.

**Knowledge/Skills**

The student will: Identify and describe in writing the elements of democracy.

Assessment:

The student will read, reflect and write in their journal on the five elements of democracy (equality, individual worth, majority rule/minority rights, compromise and individual freedom).Log or Journal

**Topic:** Origins of American Government Duration: 2 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will review the historical events of drafting the Declaration of Independence and the Constitutional Convention from United States History. The influence of enlightenment ideas on the authors of these documents will be emphasized.

**Knowledge/Skills**

The student will: Review the Enlightenment ideas contained in the Declaration of Independence. Identify and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation. Summarize and evaluate Constitutional Convention compromises.

Assessment: Students will participate in a discussion/socratic seminar review of this historical period.

**Topic:** The Constitution Duration: 10 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will analyze the United States Constitution in detail and determine the six basic principles of this document. In addition, students will learn the formal ratification process and examine each amendment as a class. Students will also explore the other ways the Constitution can be changed.

**Knowledge/Skills**

Students will: Analyze each article of the Constitution for meaning. Evaluate Constitutional protection of individual rights and promotion of the common good. Assess the responsibilities of a US citizen and consequences of failure to accept this responsibility. Identify and debate Constitutional issues in current news events.

Assessment:

Constitution scavenger hunt.Research

**Unit:** Politics and Political Behavior Duration: 15 Day(s)

**Description**

The student will: •Analyze the primary purpose of the two major political parties, as well as multi-party and one-party systems. •Describe party membership patterns in the United States. •Summarize the history of voting rights in the United States, and voting behavior. •Describe the laws and various sources of funding for campaign spending. •Recognize the impact of public opinion in a democracy. •Describe the role of interest groups on public policy.

**Essential Questions**

In what ways should people participate in public affairs? Does the two party system help or harm democracy? How fair and effective is the electoral process? What is the place of the media and public opinion in a democracy? To what extent do lobbyists and interest groups advance or harm democracy?

**Vocabulary**

Vocabulary for this unit includes but is not limited to:

**Topic:** Political Parties Duration: 2 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will explore the function of political parties and how they affect the functioning of a political system.

**Knowledge/Skills**

The student will: •Analyze the primary purpose of the two major political parties, as well as multi-party and one-party systems. •Describe party membership patterns in the United States.

**Topic:** Voting Rights Duration: 2 Day(s)

**Knowledge/Skills**

•Summarize the history of voting rights in the United States, and voting behavior.

**Topic:** Voter Behavior Duration: 2 Day(s)

**Knowledge/Skills**

•Describe the laws and various sources of funding for campaign spending. •Recognize the impact of public opinion in a democracy. •Describe the role of interest groups on public policy.

**Topic:** Mass Media and Public Opinion Duration: 3 Day(s)

**Knowledge/Skills**

Students Will: •Recognize the impact of public opinion in a democracy

**Topic:** Interest Groups Duration: 3 Day(s)

**Unit:** The Legislative Branch Duration: 10 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will explore topics related to the legislative branch, including: congressional reapportionment, campaign finance, the bill process, congressional committees in the lawmaking process, special interest groups, and revenue. The student will: •Analyze the reasons for establishing a bicameral Congress. •Compare and contrast the roles, functions, and organization of the House and Senate. •Analyze the impact of congressional reapportionment and redistricting. •Compare and contrast the congressional powers under the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution. •Explain the sequential steps in the lawmaking process. •Examine factors that influence how Congress makes decisions. •Analyze the current lawmaking process. •Evaluate the separation of powers, checks and balances, and judicial review making and enforcing laws.

**Essential Questions**

What makes a successful Congress? Whose views should members of Congress represent when voting? What should be the limits on the powers of Congress? Can and should the lawmaking process be improved?

**Vocabulary**

Vocabulary for this unit includes but is not limited to:

**Topic:** The powers of Congress Duration: 2 Day(s)

**Topic:** The organizational structure of Congress Duration: 3 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will identify the major leadership positions for both majority and minority parties in each house of Congress and the committee structure each house utilizes to accomplish its duties.

**Topic:** The Legislative Process Duration: 2 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will explore the process a bill must go through to become law.

**Unit:** The Executive Branch Duration: 10 Day(s)

**Description**

The student will: •Analyze the reasons for creating the Presidency. •Explain the qualifications needed to assume the Presidency. •Describe the organization and responsibilities of the executive office. •Explain the organization of the Electoral College and its role in electing the President. •Analyze the various suggested reforms for changing the Electoral College. •Describe the various roles, powers and duties of the President. •Analyze limitations on Presidential powers. •Describe the origin and duties of the Cabinet. •Compare and contrast regulatory commissions, independent and executive agencies.

**Essential Questions**

What makes a good President? Does the current electoral process result in the best candidates for president? How much power should the president have? Is the bureaucracy essential to good government? How should the federal budget reflect Americas' priorities? How should the United States interact with other countries?

<b>Topic:</b> The Presidency	Duration: 3 Day(s)
<b>Topic:</b> Executive Powers	Duration: 2 Day(s)
<b>Topic:</b> The Federal Bureaucracy	Duration: 1 Day(s)
<b>Topic:</b> The Cabinet Departments	Duration: 2 Day(s)

**Unit: The Judicial Branch** Duration: 7 Day(s)

**Description**

In this unit, students will be able to explain the various courts in the Federal Court System, particularly the functioning of the U.S. Supreme Court. Also, they will be able to explain how the judicial process works in both criminal and civil trials. The student will: •Analyze the reasons for establishing the judicial branch. •Compare and contrast the organization, roles and responsibilities of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, and the District Court. •Explain and analyze the reasons for the existence of law and the difference in types of laws. •Explain the judicial decision-making process. •Explain the process used by the Supreme Court in accepting or rejecting cases. •Analyze Supreme Court cases that involve the protection of individual rights. •Assess how the Supreme Court has used judicial review to keep the Constitution a "living document." •Examine the issues involving rights, responsibilities, and the status of the individual in relation to the general welfare of the country.

**Essential Questions**

What should be the role of the judicial branch? Does the structure of the federal court system allow it to administer justice effectively? How can the judiciary balance individual rights with the common good? To what extent has the judiciary protected the rights of privacy, security and personal freedom? Why are there ongoing struggles for civil rights? What solutions do you propose concerning these struggles?

**Vocabulary**

See Vocabulary attachments.

<b>Topic:</b> The Federal Court System	Duration: 2 Day(s)
<b>Topic:</b> Civil Liberties: Freedoms and Protecting Individual Rights	Duration: 2 Day(s)
<b>Topic:</b> Civil Rights: Equal Justice Under the Law.	Duration: 3 Day(s)

**Knowledge/Skills**

Students will analyze landmark Supreme Court cases for constitutional significance.

Assessment: Storybook project McAdams class

**Unit: State, Local and Tribal Governments** Duration: 5 Day(s)

**Description**

The student will be able to: •Compare and contrast the organization of national, state, local and tribal governments. •Identify the organization and powers of the state and local executives. •Identify the structure and jurisdiction of the Alaska court system. •Evaluate the effectiveness of the various forms of municipal governments. •Explain ways to become involved in local government. •Compare and Contrast incorporated and unincorporated boroughs.

**Essential Questions**

What is the right balance of local, state and federal government? How much power should state governments have? How local should government be? What is the role of tribal governments? How much sovereignty should tribal governments have?

**Vocabulary**

Vocabulary for this unit includes but is not limited to:

<b>Topic:</b> Alaska State Government	Duration: 3 Day(s)
<b>Topic:</b> Alaska Municipal Government	Duration: 1 Day(s)
<b>Topic:</b> Tribal Government	Duration: 1 Day(s)

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**Unit: Alaska Issues**

Duration: 10 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will explore the issues that are unique to the state of Alaska.

**Essential Questions**

What led to awareness of Native rights in Alaska and led Alaska Natives to form new groups and associations? How did the Statehood Act generate the movement for Native land claims? What did ANCSA accomplish? How did ANCSA impact tribal sovereignty in Alaska? What were the results of the 1991 amendments to ANCSA? What was section 17(d)(2) of ANCSA and why was it included in the claims settlement act? How did it delay completion of the state's land selection process? What action did President Carter take in 1978 to protect Alaska environmental lands? What was the effect of his action? What did ANILCA accomplish? What conflict did ANILCA establish concerning subsistence harvest of traditional resources?

**Assessments**

Each topic has a corresponding formative project assessment as well as a unit test.

**Vocabulary**

Vocabulary for this unit includes but is not limited to:

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**Topic: Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act**

Duration: 6 Day(s)

**Knowledge/Skills**

See below

The student will: Understand the history of the Alaska Native land claims movement. Understand the role of ANCSA (Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act) in Alaska native sovereignty issues. Identify the major players and major events in the process of ANCSA being passed by Congress. Identify the major provisions of ANCSA and how it influenced ANILCA (Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act). Describe in writing the structure of Ak. Native corporations and shareholder status, rights, and responsibilities.

Assessment: The student will research and write a corporate profile for one Native corporation in the state of Alaska.

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**Topic: Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA)**

Duration: 1 Day(s)

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**Topic: The Alaska Permanent Fund**

Duration: 1 Day(s)

**Description**

Students will explore the history of establishing the Alaska Permanent Fund and the structure that maintains it today.

**Knowledge/Skills**

See extended description.

Understand the history of the founding of the Ak. Permanent Fund. Understand the structure and management of the Ak. Permanent Fund.

Discuss various perspectives about how the Ak. permanent fund is used. Analyze in writing the overall health of the fund and the management structure for the Ak. Permanent Fund Corporation.

Assessment: Projects

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**Unit: Community Project**

Duration: 5 Day(s)

**Description**

This project is designed as an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned this semester about our state, local and tribal governments. Students will be creating a "plan of action" as their final project in this class to solve a problem in an Alaska community.

**Resources**

See attached community project rubric