

## **Civics/American Government, 12<sup>th</sup> Grade**

### **Course Vision:**

The Constitutional framers envisioned a nation where the population is educated with the purpose of becoming active political citizens. Through a complete examination of the United States Government the students will gain an appreciation for the operation, foundations, responsibilities, and applications of these systems. Students will also gain an insight into the global and regional roles of the United States and how an individual citizen can become active participants in those roles.

The 2004 election showed that only 50% of all eligible voters exercised their right to select the leader of our nation. In the current educational system a majority of our students are reaching eligible voting age and have not had adequate civic education prior to that milestone. With this in mind it should be to goal of this course to educate our students in the necessity for political action, and the implications of inaction. The students will exit American Government and Civics with an understanding of the function and purpose of the American Democracy, and what their role within that society means. It is the ultimate goal that students should leave this course with a desire to be an active political citizen.

### **Course Content:**

Civics/American Government as a course will include four main areas of focus. To begin students will gain an understanding of the historical and philosophical backdrops that shaped the creation of the American system of government. Once the students have a through understanding of governmental foundations, the students will become immersed in an exploration of the political system. This will yield to a study of the right, duties, and responsibilities afforded to all United States citizens. As educated citizens the students will then be able to examine and debate the role of the United States in a global society.

#### *Historical and Philosophical Foundations*

- Comparison of major forms of government around the world
- Understanding of key philosophers that have contributed to the development of governmental systems
- Understanding of the creation and implementation of the Checks and Balances system adopted by the United States through the adoption of the three branches of government

#### *Political Process*

- Understanding the electoral process
- Examine the role of the electoral college
- Studying the role of political parties and lobbying organizations

### *Rights, Duties, and Responsibilities*

- Learn the essential duties that all citizens are expected to complete
- Examine the rights that citizens are guaranteed
- Compare and contrast the difference between duties and responsibilities
- Discuss how voting is an essential part of American citizenship and an essential responsibility

### *America's Role in a Global Society*

- Examine America's participation in international organizations such as the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- Gain an understanding of the factors that shape American foreign policy
- Utilize current events to study and debate the course of action the nation should take

## **Social Studies Skills**

### *Reading:*

- As a part of "reading across the curriculum" standard, students will interact with a variety of texts
- Teachers will be encouraged to use primary and secondary source documents including the United States Constitution, other historically important documents, periodicals, and online discourse

### *Map and Globe Skills:*

- This course will continue to develop crucial map and globe skills such as:
  - Maps to acquire information of a political nature
  - Drawing conclusions based on information from maps and accompanying data sets (charts, tables, and graphs)
  - Comparing and Contrasting maps to identify different trends in the political system

### *Information Processing Skills:*

- This course relies heavily on the students' ability to process relevant information. Students will develop and apply the following skills
  - Identify issues and alternate solutions as seen in our society
  - Identifying main idea, details, sequence of events, and cause and effect in a social studies context
  - Constructing charts and graphs
  - Analyze graphs and diagrams
  - Determining accuracy and relevancy of information
  - Interpreting political cartoons

## **Course Texts**

*Prentice Hall: Magruder's American Government, William McClenaghan (2005).*