

Brunswick School Department
Social Studies
Grades 11-12 The American Political System

Adopted: _____

Course Overview

This semester-long course provides students with a practical understanding of the principles and procedures of government that originate with the founding principles of the Constitution. Students will be expected to understand their rights and responsibilities as American citizens and how to exercise these rights and responsibilities in local, state, and national government. Instruction will incorporate the development of critical thinking skills that are essential to citizenship. Throughout the course, students will examine primary and secondary sources, including political cartoons, essays, and judicial opinions. Content and practice will be balanced to give students a deep understanding of what it means to live in a democratic society.

Essential Understandings

- People establish governments to create order, provide security, and accomplish common goals.
- The value that a society puts on individual rights is often reflected in that society's government.
- Citizens have rights and responsibilities.
- Citizens take action to solve problems.
- Leaders can bring about change in society.

Priority Standards and Performance Indicators

(as based on Maine Learning Results)

PS SS1 Conduct and present original research that utilizes primary and secondary sources in order to analyze, interpret and explain historical (*and/or*) contemporary social studies topics.

- c. Synthesize information from varied sources (primary and secondary), fieldwork, experiments, and/or interviews that reflect multiple perspectives.

PS SS2 Draw on concepts from civics and government to understand political systems, power, authority, governance, civic ideals and practices, and the role of citizens.

c. Evaluate how people influence government through such activities as voting, writing to legislators, performing community service, and engaging in civil disobedience.

PS SS3 Draw on concepts and processes from economics to understand issues of personal finance and issues of production, distribution, and consumption in the community, Maine, the United States, and world.

d. Analyze economic activities and policies in relationship to freedom, efficiency, equity, security, growth, and sustainability.

PS SS5 Draw on concepts and processes from history to develop historical perspective and understand issues of continuity and change in the community, Maine, the United States, and world.

e. Identify and analyze major turning points and events in the history of Native Americans and various historical and recent immigrant groups in the United States, and other cultures in the world.

Examples of Formative / Summative Assessments

- Responses to in-class activities
- Entrance and exit slip questions
- Visual displays that describe Constitutional Amendments and civil rights laws
- Writing, revising, and voting on bills in the House of Representatives
- Public-interest campaign on a current issue
- Campaign to elect local officials

Sample Texts and Materials/Resources

Sample Texts

- *Bound for America: The Story of the European Immigrants*, by Milton Meltzer
- *The United States Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation* by Jonathan Hennessey and Aaron McConnell
- *Is There a Woman in the House . . . or Senate?* by Bryna J. Fireside
- *See How They Run: Campaign Dreams, Election Schemes, and the Race to the White House* by Susan E. Goodman
- *Government: How Local, State, and Federal Government Works* by Mark D. Friedman

Sample Films

- *Iron Jawed Angels*
- *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*
- *John Adams*
- *Thirteen Days*
- *Recount*