

GRADE 12  
AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

HISTORY/SOCIAL SCIENCE STANDARDS

Students in grade twelve pursue a deeper understanding of the institutions of American government. They compare systems of government in the world today and analyze the life and changing interpretations of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the current state of the legislative, executive and judiciary branches of government. An emphasis is placed on analyzing the relationship among federal, state and local governments, with particular attention paid to important historical documents such as the *Federalist Papers*. These standards represent the culmination of civic literacy as students prepare to vote, participate in community activities and assume the responsibilities of citizenship.

**Principles of American Democracy**

**Student Performance Expectations:** All students who have completed one year of American Democracy experience shall be expected to:

*Standard 1: Students explain the fundamental principles and more values of American democracy as expressed in the U.S. Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy.*

1. Analyze the influence of ancient Greek, Roman, English, and leading European political thinkers such as John Locke, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, Nicolo Machiavelli, and William Blackstone on the development of American government.
2. Discuss the character of American democracy and its promise and perils as articulated by Alexis de Tocqueville.
3. Explain how the U.S. Constitution reflects a balance between the classical republican concern with promotion of the public good and the classical liberal concern with protecting individual rights, and how the basic premises as liberal constitutionalism and democracy are joined in the Declaration of Independence, states ad "self-evident truths."
4. Explain how the Founders' realistic view of human nature led directly to a constitutional system that limited the power of the governors and the governed as articulated in the *Federalist Papers*.
5. Describe the systems of separated and shared powers, the role of organized interests, checks and balances, the importance of an independent judiciary, enumerated powers, rule of law, federalism, and civilian control of the military.

6. Understand the Bill of Rights as a document limiting the power of the federal government and state governments.

***Standard 2: Students evaluate, and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured.***

1. Discuss the meaning and importance of each of the rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights and how each is secured.
2. Explain how economic rights are secured and what their importance is to the individual and to society.
3. Discuss the individual's legal obligations to obey the law, serve as a juror, and pay taxes.
4. Understand the obligations of civic-mindedness including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service.
5. Describe the reciprocity between rights and obligations, i.e., why enjoyment of one's rights entails respect for the rights of others.
6. Explain how one becomes a citizen of the United States, including the process of naturalization.

***Standard 3: Students evaluate, take and defend positions on what fundamental values and principles of civil society are, and their interdependence, and meaning and importance for a free society.***

1. Explain how civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, economic, and political purposes.
2. Explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections.
3. Discuss the historical role of religion and religious diversity.
4. Understand comparisons between the relationship of government and civil society in constitutional democracies and the relationship of government and civil society in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

***Standard 4: Students analyze the unique roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government as established by the U.S. Constitution.***

1. Discuss Article I of the U.S. Constitution as it related to the legislative branch, including eligibility for office and lengths of terms of Representatives and

- Senators, election to office, the role of the House and Senate in impeachment proceedings, the role of the Vice President, the enumerated legislative powers, and the process by which a bill becomes a law.
2. Explain the process through which the U.S. Constitution is amended.
  3. Identify their current representatives in the legislative branch of the national government.
  4. Discuss Article II of the U.S. Constitution as it relates to the executive branch including eligibility for office and length of term, election to and removal from office, the Oath of Office, and the enumerated executive powers.
  5. Discuss Article III of the U.S. Constitution as it related to judicial power including the length of terms of judges and the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.
  6. Explain selection and confirmation of Supreme Court judges.

***Standard 5: Students summarize landmark U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the U.S. Constitution and its amendments.***

1. Understand the changing interpretations of the Bill of Rights over time, including the basic freedoms articulated in the First Amendment, and the due process and equal protection of the law clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment.
2. Analyze judicial activism and judicial restraint and the effects of each policy over the decades.
3. Evaluate the effects of the interpretations of the U.S. Constitution, including *Marbury v. Madison*, *McCulloch v. Maryland*, and *U.S. v. Nixon*, with emphasis on the arguments espoused by each side in these cases.
4. Explain controversies that have resulted over changing interpretations of civil rights, including *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Miranda v. Arizona*, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña*, and *United States v. Virginia*.

***Standard 6: Students evaluate issues regarding campaigns for national, state, and local elective office.***

1. Analyze the origin, development, and role of political parties, noting those occasional periods in which there was only one major party or were more than two major parties.
2. Discuss the history of the presidential candidate nomination process and increasing importance of primaries in general elections.
3. Evaluate the roles of polls, campaign advertising and the controversies over

- campaign funding.
4. Describe the means that citizens use to participate in the political process.
  5. Discuss the features of direct democracy in numerous states such as the process of referendums and recall elections.
  6. Analyze trends in voter turnout, the causes and effects of reapportionment and redistricting, with special attention to spatial districting and the rights of minorities, and the function of the Electoral College.

***Standard 7: Students analyze and compare the powers and procedures of the national, state, tribal, and local governments.***

1. Explain how conflicts between levels of government and branches of government are resolved.
2. Identify the major responsibilities and sources of revenue for state and local governments.
3. Discuss reserved powers and concurrent powers of state governments.
4. Discuss the Ninth and Tenth Amendments and interpretations of the extent of the federal government's power.
5. Explain how public policy is formed, including the setting of the public agenda and how it is carried out through regulations and executive orders.
6. Compare the process of lawmaking at each of the three levels of government, including the role of lobbying and the media.
7. Identify the organization and jurisdiction of federal, state, and local courts, and the interrelationships between the federal, state, and local courts.
8. Understand the scope of presidential power and decision-making through the examination of case studies such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, passage of Great Society legislation, War Powers Act, Gulf War, and Bosnia.

***Standard 8: Students evaluate, take and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life.***

1. Discuss the meaning and importance of a free and responsible press.
2. Describe the roles of electronic, broadcast, print, media and the Internet as means of communication in American politics.
3. Explain how public officials use the media to communicate with citizenry and to shape public opinion.

***Standard 9: Students analyze the origins, characteristics, and development of***

*different political systems across time, with emphasis on the quest for political democracy, its advances and obstacles.*

1. Explain how the different philosophies and structures of feudalism, mercantilism, socialism, fascism, communism, monarchies, parliamentary systems, and constitutional liberal democracies influence economic policies, social welfare policies, and human rights practices.
2. Compare the various ways power is distributed, shared, and limited in systems of shared powers and in parliamentary systems, including the influence and role of parliamentary leaders.
3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of federal, confederal, and unitary systems of government.
4. Describe the consequences of conditions that gave rise to tyrannies during certain periods applied to at least two countries.
5. Identify the forms of illegitimate power that twentieth century African, Asian, and Latin American dictators used to gain and hold office and the conditions and the interests that supported them.
6. Identify the ideologies, causes, states, and outcomes of major Mexican, Central and South American revolutions of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries.
7. Describe the ideologies that gave rise to communism, methods to maintain control, and the movements to overthrow such governments in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, including the role of individuals.
8. Identify the successes of relatively new democracies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the ideas, leaders, and general societal conditions that have launched and sustained or failed to sustain them.

*Standard 10: Students formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within the U.S. constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the these concepts of majority rule and individual rights, liberty and equality, state and national authority in a federal system, civil disobedience and the rule of law, freedom of the press and right to a fair trial, the relationship of religion and government.*