

# UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

**The goal of this course** is to foster informed, responsible participation in public life. Knowing how to be a good citizen is essential to the preservation and improvement of the United States. Upon completion of this course the student will understand the major ideas, protections, rights, structures, and economic systems that affect the life of a citizen in the United States. Additionally, students will practice the skills needed to conduct inquiries, weigh evidence, make informed decisions, and participate in political processes. This course should nurture desirable dispositions including a commitment to the American ideals of liberty, equality, opportunity, and justice for all. This course is recommended for seniors due to their proximity to voting age.

## Foundational Practices for Civic Preparation

One of the fundamental purposes for public schools is the preparation of young people for participation in America's democratic republic. The future progress of our communities, state, nation, and world rests upon the preparation of young people to collaboratively and deliberatively address problems; to defend their own rights and liberties, as well as the rights and liberties of others; and to balance personal preferences with the common good. Social studies and history classrooms are the ideal venue to nurture civic virtue, consider current issues, practice acting civilly toward others, build a civic identity, and nurture global awareness. These skills, habits, and qualities of character will better prepare students to recognize and accept responsibility for preserving and defending the liberties secured by the Constitution.

To reach these ends, student should have ample opportunities to:

- Engage in deliberative, collaborative, and civil dialogue regarding historical and current issues.
- Apply knowledge of governmental structure, historical concepts, geographic interrelationships, and economic principles to analyze and explain current events.
- Identify local, state, national, or international problems, consider solutions to these problems, and share their ideas with appropriate public and/or private stakeholders.
- Develop and demonstrate the values that sustain America's democratic republic, such as open-mindedness, engagement, honesty, problem-solving, responsibility, diligence, resilience, empathy, self-control, and cooperation.
- Engage in dialogue regarding American exceptionalism, in the sense of the special character of the United States as a uniquely free nation based on democratic ideals and personal liberty.

## A Note on the Organization of the Utah Standards in All Core Areas

The United States Government and Citizenship core standards are organized into **strands**, which represent significant areas of learning within content areas. Depending on the core area, these strands may be designated by time periods, thematic principles, modes of practice, or other organizing principles.

Within each strand are **standards**. A standard is an articulation of the demonstrated proficiency to be obtained. A standard represents an essential element of the learning that is expected. While some standards within a strand may be more comprehensive than others, all standards are essential for mastery.

### U.S. GOV Strand 1: FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The framework of the United States Constitution and the functions of government are guided by principles essential for our way of life. An understanding of how these principles are applied in the rule of law, government, and politics is vital in order to be a responsible and effective citizen. Students need to be able to see how the ideals found in the Constitution are present in many of the issues of the day.

#### *Possible Guiding Questions to Consider:*

- How are the principles of government embedded in the Constitution?
  - How did the shortcomings in the Articles of Confederation lead to the development of the Constitution?
  - How is *e pluribus unum* related to the concept of federalism?
  - Why is an independent judiciary so essential to our democracy? What are some of the fundamental purposes of judicial review?
  - How is judicial review a reflection of, and a response to, changes in our history?
  - What are the exceptional characteristics of the United States' form of government?
- **U.S. GOV Standard 1.1:** Students will explain how documents, challenges, events, and ideas such as the rule of law, the social contract, compromise, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, Shays' Rebellion, and the Federalist Papers significantly influenced the United States Constitution.
  - **U.S. GOV Standard 1.2:** Students will describe the structure of the United States' form of government as a compound constitutional republic, including the ideas of federalism; checks and balances; separation of powers; commerce, elastic, and supremacy clauses; popular sovereignty; and limited government.
  - **U.S. GOV Standard 1.3:** Students will explain the organization, functions, and processes of the United States government, such as the purpose of the President's cabinet, the function of judicial review, and how a bill becomes a law, and apply that understanding to current issues.

**U.S. GOV Strand 2: CIVIL LIBERTIES, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

American citizenship brings with it civil liberties, civil rights, and responsibilities. Students must know their rights and responsibilities and understand the extent of those rights. Students should be able to defend their own rights and the rights of others, understanding that the Constitution and its amendments extend protections to individuals who may not share their views. Our nation's future rests on the ability and willingness of every generation to fulfill their civic responsibilities.

***Possible Guiding Questions to Consider:***

- What are the civil rights and liberties codified in the Constitution?
  - What is the relationship between a successful, functioning republic and a civically responsible population?
  - How have the rights and liberties in the Constitution been interpreted and applied over time?
  - How has the definition of citizen changed over time?
- **U.S. GOV Standard 2.1:** Students will use historic and modern case studies, including Supreme Court cases, amendment initiatives, and legislation to trace the application of civil liberties, civil rights, and responsibilities spelled out in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and other amendments.
  - **U.S. GOV Standard 2.2:** Students will examine various perspectives on a current rights-related issue; take a position; defend that position using the Constitution and Bill of Rights, historical precedents, Supreme Court decisions, and other relevant resources; and share that position, when possible, with relevant stakeholders.
  - **U.S. GOV Standard 2.3:** Students will explain the purpose and importance of fulfilling civic responsibilities, including serving on juries; voting; serving on boards, councils, and commissions; remaining well-informed; contacting elected officials; and other duties associated with active citizenship.

**U.S. GOV Strand 3: DISTRIBUTION OF POWER**

The Constitution distributes authority between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Additionally, power embedded in the federalist system, or compound constitutional republic, is distributed between the federal, state, and local governments. American Indian tribal governments maintain a unique relationship with other levels and branches of government, adding yet another dimension for consideration. Finally, individuals and groups use a range of strategies and methods for wielding their own political power.

*Possible Guiding Questions to Consider:*

- How is political power distributed? How can it be attained?
- What political power do individuals possess?
- What are issues that cause friction between local, state, sovereign tribal, and/or the federal government, and how can these tensions be resolved?
- What functions do political parties serve?
- How do people determine their affiliations with political parties, special interest groups, or other causes or movements?
- What role do lobbyists and special interest groups play in political processes?

- **U.S. GOV Standard 3.1:** Students will explain the distribution of power among national, state, tribal, and local governments in order to identify how needs are met by governance systems.
- **U.S. GOV Standard 3.2:** Students will explain the role that local elected officers fulfill, such as mayors, council members, auditors, treasurers, surveyors, assessors, recorders, clerks, sheriffs, county commissioners, and district or county attorneys and how local government roles differ from state and federal roles.
- **U.S. GOV Standard 3.3:** Students will explain the processes and motivations for how and why people organize to participate in civic society, such as developing political affiliations, joining political parties, and supporting special interest groups and other non-governmental or non-partisan civic organizations, and evaluate the political impact of those affiliations.
- **U.S. GOV Standard 3.4:** Students will use data to evaluate election results and explain election processes and strategies.
- **U.S. GOV Standard 3.5:** Students will explain how the individual roles of the members of the President’s cabinet are designed to meet various purposes in government.
- **U.S. GOV Standard 3.6:** Students will explain how the administrative rulemaking process functions within the federal system and the extent and impact of these rules.

**U.S. GOV Strand 4: FISCAL POLICIES AND DECISIONS**

Fiscal policies can have profound implications in the daily lives of citizens. An essential component of understanding government and civics rests in deliberating government’s role in the economy. Informed citizens understand taxation, budgets, and debt as these concepts relate to the government. Students use this understanding of basic economic principles to make in-

formed decisions, knowing that economic policies are a reflection of economic philosophies and values.

***Possible Guiding Questions to Consider:***

- What role should the government play in domestic economic policy?
  - What are the best uses of taxes and fees?
  - How should a local government decide budget priorities, such as a skate park or a new fire station?
  - How do we come to a consensus on the best use of resources for the good of the community?
- **U.S. GOV Standard 4.1:** Students will examine the fiscal decisions governmental agencies must make and the economic philosophies that guide those decisions.
  - **U.S. GOV Standard 4.2:** Students will explain how government services and other budget priorities are funded through various forms of revenue streams, such as fees, bonding, and regressive and progressive taxes, including property taxes, income taxes, and sales taxes.
  - **U.S. GOV Standard 4.3:** Students will propose and defend budget priorities at either the local, state, tribal, or federal level; and share their findings with appropriate stakeholders.

## U.S. GOV Strand 5: THE U.S. AND OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD

As a global superpower with an enormous influence on other nations, it is vital to understand the ways in which the U.S. interacts with the world. Whether through negotiating trade agreements, protecting the security of this nation and its allies, cooperating in humanitarian campaigns, creating infrastructure to handle immigration and refugee demands, or any number of other initiatives, this nation has significant interrelationships with other countries and international bodies. These complex relationships deserve study if students are to understand the global implications of decisions made by leaders and policymakers.

***Possible Guiding Questions to Consider:***

- How do we determine what is in our national interest, and how should that determination guide our foreign policy?
  - What are the best ways to ensure the future economic health of the United States?
  - What role should the United States play in addressing global economic, environmental, or social issues?
- **U.S. GOV Standard 5.1:** Students will analyze the constitutional process of creating foreign policy and the structures through which the federal government interacts with foreign governments, such as the Department of State, treaties, agreements, and alliances.

- **U.S. GOV Standard 5.2:** Students will analyze the justification for, and effectiveness of, specific foreign policy positions, such as military intervention, isolationism, alliance formation, economic sanctions, or other security measures.
- **U.S. GOV Standard 5.3:** Students will evaluate how global economic interdependence and international trade policies affect the economy of the United States.
- **U.S. GOV Standard 5.4:** Students will craft an argument for an appropriate role for the United States to take in addressing a global economic, environmental, or social issue such as humanitarian aid, migration, pandemics, or the loss of wildlife habitat.