



Greenwich Public Schools Curriculum Overview

Civics

Personalized learning is achieved through standards-based, rigorous and relevant curriculum that is aligned to digital tools and resources.

Note: Teachers retain professional discretion in how the learning is presented based on the needs and interests of their students.

Course Description

This course addresses the complexities of governing the American people. It begins with the development of the American philosophy, examines the Constitution with a focus on the three branches of government, and concludes with an intensive study of the Bill of Rights. Current government issues are also studied. Given the nature of the content, primary source materials, film, video, and news articles are extensively utilized to apply course concepts and contextualize current events, which are a key component of the course. The content of the curriculum is used as a vehicle for critical thinking development and skill remediation. Additionally, the community service project exposes students to the importance of civic engagement. A community service commitment and reflection paper and/or related project is a requirement that must be completed to earn credit for the course and for graduation.

Unit Pacing Guide

- Unit I: Foundations of Government (approx. 2 Weeks)
- Unit II: The Role of the Citizen and Participation (approx. 3-4 Weeks)
- Unit III: Federalism and Linkage Institutions (approx. 2 -3 Weeks)
- Unit IV: The Legislature (approx. 3-4 Weeks)
- Unit V: The Executive (approx. 2-3 Weeks)
- Unit VI: The Judiciary (approx. 2 Weeks)

Enduring Understandings for the Course

- Students will use the Preamble, the aspirational goals of our governing document, to assess the progress of our nation.
- Students will understand that their voice and actions as a citizen is fundamental to our democracy.
- Students will contrast the underlying principles of American government with the current political landscape and challenges.
- Students will understand their rights as citizens in order to fulfill their civic responsibilities and protect their rights and the rights of others.

Enduring Understandings By Unit

- **Unit I: Foundations of Government**
 - a. Students will be able to discuss why people choose to be governed.
 - b. Students will understand the principles of American democracy.
 - c. Students will evaluate the extent to which the American political system reflects democratic principles.
- **Unit II: The Role of the Citizen and Participation**
 - a. Students will be able to identify the roles and responsibilities of citizens.
 - b. Students will be able to identify the key ideas of the American political spectrum.
 - c. Students will understand how and why citizens push for change.
- **Unit III: Federalism and Linkage Institutions**
 - a. Students will be able to identify and explain the role linkage institutions play in American government and politics.
 - b. Students will be able to identify the roles interest groups play in electing candidates and enacting public policy.
 - c. Students will be able to identify credible sources and recognize media bias.
 - d. Students will be able to analyze which factors are most important in winning elections.
 - e. Students will be able to explain the relationship between states and the federal government.
 - f. Students will be able to describe the conflict between state and local governments in policy-making.
 - g. Students will understand that local government is more reactive to citizens than the higher levels of government.
- **Unit IV: The Legislature**
 - a. Students will be able to evaluate how well Congress represents the citizens.
 - b. Students will be able to identify the basic structure and function of the legislative branch.
 - c. Students will be able to explain how legislation is enacted.
 - d. Students will be able to evaluate the impact of linkage institutions on the legislative process.
- **Unit V: The Executive**
 - a. Students will be able to identify the roles and responsibilities of the President.
 - b. Students will evaluate the checks on the President.
 - c. Students will determine to what extent the modern President lives up to the vision of the Framers.
- **Unit VI: The Judiciary**
 - a. Students will be able to discuss the organization and influence of the Supreme Court.
 - b. Students will be able to compare and contrast civil liberties and civil rights.
 - c. Students will be able to analyze how SCOTUS decisions affect our civil liberties and civil rights.

Standards

Connecticut Core Standards

Adopted in 2010 | [English Language Arts Standards, History/Social Studies, Grade 11-12](#)

Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks

Adopted in February 2015 | [Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies](#)

FrameworksPages 101 through 110

DIMENSION 1: DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND PLANNING INQUIRY

- INQ 9–12.1 Explain how a question reflects an enduring issue in the field.
- INQ 9–12.2 Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling question.
- INQ 9–12.3 Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a supporting question.
- INQ 9–12.4 Explain how supporting questions contribute to an inquiry and how, through engaging source work, new compelling and supporting questions emerge. INQ 9–12.5 Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.

DIMENSION 2: APPLYING DISCIPLINARY CONCEPTS AND TOOLS

(See below, beginning with “Civic and Political Institutions”)

DIMENSION 3: EVALUATING SOURCES AND USING EVIDENCE

- INQ 9–12.6 Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.
- INQ 9–12.7 Evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the sources.
- INQ 9–12.8 Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantially from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.
- INQ 9–12.9 Refine claims and counterclaims attending to precision, significance, and knowledge conveyed through the claim while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.

DIMENSION 4: COMMUNICATING CONCLUSIONS AND TAKING INFORMED ACTION

- INQ 9–12.10 Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.
- INQ 9–12.11 Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data,

while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical)

- INQ 9–12.12 Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).
- INQ 9–12.13 Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.
- INQ 9–12.14 Critique the use of the reasoning, sequencing, and supporting details of explanations.
- INQ 9–12.15 Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.
- INQ 9–12.16 Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.
- INQ 9–12.17 Apply a range of deliberative and democratic strategies and procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms, schools, and out-of-school civic contexts.

(applicable DIMENSION 2 main concepts are listed below)

Civics

Civic and Political Institutions

- CIV 9–12.1 Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of local, state, tribal, national, and international civic and political institutions.
- CIV 9–12.2 Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.
- CIV 9–12.3 Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.
- CIV 9–12.4 Explain how the U.S. Constitution establishes a system of government that has powers, responsibilities, and limits that have changed over time and that are still contested.
- CIV 9–12.5 Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.
- CIV 9–12.6 Critique relationships among governments, civil societies, and economic markets.

Participation and Deliberation: Applying Civic Virtues and Democratic Principles

- CIV 9–12.7 Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.
- CIV 9–12.8 Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

- CIV 9–12.9 Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.
- CIV 9–12.10 Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

Processes, Rules, and Laws

- CIV 9–12.11 Evaluate multiple procedures for making governmental decisions at the local, state, national, and international levels in terms of the civic purposes achieved.
- CIV 9–12.12 Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.
- CIV 9–12.13 Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.
- CIV 9–12.14 Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights

History

Perspectives

- HIST 9–12.1 Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people’s perspectives.

Economics

Economic Decision-Making

- ECO 9–12.1 Analyze how incentives influence choices that may result in policies with a range of costs and benefits for different groups.

Exchange and Markets

- ECO 9–12.2 Generate possible explanations for a government role in markets when market inefficiencies exist.
- ECO 9–12.3 Describe the roles of institutions such as clearly defined property rights and the rule of law in a market economy.

Geography

Human Population: Spatial Patterns and Movements

- GEO 9–12.1 Evaluate the impact of economic activities and political decisions on spatial patterns within and among urban, suburban, and rural regions.

Greenwich Public Schools Vision of the Graduate

- Pose and pursue substantive questions
 - Students will develop and explore their own research question during a variety of research assignments
- Critically interpret, evaluate, and synthesize information
 - Students will critically interpret, evaluate and synthesize information by analyzing a variety of primary and secondary sources and by conducting research. This

source evaluation and research will allow students to gain a variety of perspectives.

- Explore, define, and solve complex problems
 - Students will apply historical knowledge to critically analyze current problems and issues.
- Communicate effectively for a given purpose
 - Students will be evaluated on their ability to communicate effectively through a variety of methods. Through persuasive writing assignments, class discussions and presentations, students will continue to develop and improve their communication skills.
- Advocate for ideas, causes and actions
 - Students will evaluate past advocacy successes and failures and determine when others have chosen to fight for causes and taken action.
- Generate innovative, creative ideas and products
 - Students will demonstrate their mastery of curriculum objectives with innovative projects. Students will explore answers to essential questions through creative and varied assignments with research structured by the use of GPS research process.
- Collaborate with others to produce a unified work and/or heightened understanding
 - Students will learn to collaborate with one another while working in structured groups in a variety of cooperative learning activities in order to create a final product.
- Contribute to community through dialogue, service, and/or leadership
 - Through the study of community outreach, students gain the skills they need to become active citizens. The community service project will give students the opportunity to contribute to the community.
- Conduct themselves in an ethical and responsible manner
 - Current and historical situations will be analyzed so students gain perspective and information in order to conduct themselves in a responsible manner.
- Recognize and respect other cultural contexts and points of view
 - Through teaching about others' political ideologies, students will recognize and respect other cultural contexts and points of view. By developing an understanding of and empathy for others, students will appreciate differences and similarities between themselves and others.
- Pursue their unique interests, passions and curiosities
 - Students will have choice in many assignments and will be able to pursue their interests, specifically through the Capstone Community Service Project.
- Respond to failures and successes with reflection and resilience
 - Students will reflect on their writing and group work, in order to analyze what they did well and where they can improve. Frequent and constructive feedback by teachers will be used to ensure continuous reflection and refinement.
- Be responsible for their own mental and physical health
 - Social studies classes will help students develop study skills, and reduce stress through organization and planning.

Assessments / Resources

Assessments

- Bill Simulation (suggested)
 - Option 1 (500): Students will demonstrate their new learning by writing a research-based bill in response to an issue of their choice. They will present their bill in class during a simulation and reflect on their experience with the legislative process.
 - Option 2 (300/400): Students will demonstrate their new learning by conducting research on a current issue or challenge and develop a policy recommendation to a Connecticut Congressperson. They will write an evidence-based letter to persuade their Congressperson to adopt the policy recommendation and introduce a new bill in the legislative process.
- Senior Exit Project (for second semester seniors planning to participate in the Senior Options Program)
 - Seniors will review one fictional case study to determine which Amendment(s) is/are at play and make connections to Supreme Court precedents. In their written response, seniors will provide a recommendation to the plaintiff to indicate whether they should pursue the case and how the Court would decide it.
- Local Government Meeting Assignment (Assured Experience)
 - Students will research the purpose, responsibilities, and meeting schedules of political groups that make decisions in Greenwich, including the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) and the Board of Education (BOE). They will attend at least one hour of one meeting of a local government body to observe how the meeting is conducted, how residents share their voices, and how elected officials make decisions. Following the meeting, students will write a letter to the leader or chairperson of the government body based on what they learned.
- Community Service Project (Assured Experience and Graduation Requirement, Capstone VOG #8)
 - Students will volunteer for 5 hours and complete the Community Service Project to fulfill the Capstone graduation requirements. For the purpose of this project, public service is defined as time spent that is non-profit and community-focused. This can include projects in the areas of politics, the environment, religion, and community welfare. Students will research their selected organization, complete 5 hours of community service in support of that organization's work, and develop a final product to demonstrate the student's new learning and the impact of the organization in the community.

Resources

- Declaration of Independence
- United States Constitution
- The Federalist Papers: 10, 39, 51, 78
- GovTrack.us
- US Census

- [OpenSecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org)
- [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)
- [Oyez.org](https://www.oyez.org)
- [LandmarkCases.org](https://www.landmarkcases.org)
- Current Events and Public Opinion: Pew Research Center, Gallup, Washington Post, New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Economist, Fox News, CNN News, Associated Press, National Public Radio (NPR), USA Today, Reuters, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), etc.
- Greenwich Community Information: Greenwich Time, Greenwich Sentinel, Greenwich Free Press, Greenwich Public Schools website