

# American Government

## Course Outline & Objectives

### Course Description:

American Government is a semester-long course in which students will:

- Deepen their understanding of the institutions of American government,
- Compare different systems of government in the world today,
- Analyze the history and changing interpretations of the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches of government.

An emphasis is placed on analyzing the relationship among federal, state and local governments. The course is based on secondary level state standards in the area of social studies, with an emphasis on the use of technology and projects to demonstrate understanding. The course is aimed at helping students develop critical thinking skills and an understanding of the principles of American government.

Credits - One Semester (0.5 Carnegie unit / CA: 5 credits)

### Course Outline

#### Unit 1. Foundations of American Government

- 1.1 Enlightenment & Colonial Influences
- 1.2 Articles of Confederation & the Constitutional Convention
- 1.3 Principles of the Constitution
- 1.4 Ratification & the Federalist Debate
- 1.5 Bill of Rights & Protection of Liberties

#### Unit 2. Institutions of Government

- 2.1 Congress: Representing & Lawmaking
- 2.2 The Presidency: Powers, Roles, and Limits
- 2.3 Bureaucracy & Federal Agencies
- 2.4 The Federal Courts & Judicial Review
- 2.5 Checks & Balances in Action

### California Standards

#### Nevada Academic Content Standards for Social Studies

#### In Unit 1 students will learn:

The historical ideas, traditions, and experiences that influenced the creation of the U.S. Constitution.  
The structure and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and why it ultimately failed as a national government.  
How the Constitution was designed to prevent tyranny through principles such as separation of powers, checks and balances, and limited government.  
How federalism divides power between national and state governments and why this system is important to American democracy.

**California:** 12.1.1, 12.1.3, 12.1.4, 12.1.5, 12.1.6, 12.2.1, 12.2.2, 12.2.3, 12.4.2, 12.7.3, 12.7.4

**Nevada:** SS.9-12.CE.15, SS.9-12.CE.16, SS.9-12.CE.17, SS.9-12.CE.19

#### In Unit 2 students will learn:

The roles and powers of the three branches of government — legislative, executive, and judicial.  
How each branch checks and balances the others to prevent abuse of power.  
How laws are made, enforced, and interpreted through Congress, the President, and the courts.  
How the U.S. system of government maintains limited power and accountability through separation of powers and judicial review.

**California:** 12.4.1, 12.4.2, 12.4.4, 12.4.5, 12.4.6

**Nevada:** SS.9-12.CE.13, SS.9-12.CE.21, SS.9-12.CE.8, SS.9-12.CE.9

## Course Outline

### Unit 3. Public Policy & Federalism in Action

- 3.1 Federalism Crash Course: Who Does What?
- 3.2 How Policy Is Made
- 3.3 Fiscal Policy Tools
- 3.4 Regulation & the Bureaucracy
- 3.5 Evaluating Policy: Tradeoffs, Consequences, and Effectiveness

### Unit 4. Civil Liberties & Civil Rights

- 4.1 Civil Liberties: The Bill of Rights in Action
- 4.2 First Amendment Freedoms
- 4.3 Due Process & Rights of the Accused
- 4.4 Civil Rights & Equal Protections
- 4.5 Landmark Civil Rights Struggles & Court Decisions

### Unit 5. Civic Participation & American Politics

- 5.1 Voting & Elections
- 5.2 Political Parties & Ideologies
- 5.3 Interest Groups & Lobbying
- 5.4 Media, Public Opinion, & Political Communication
- 5.5 Civic Action & Citizenship

## California Standards

### Nevada Academic Content Standards for Social Studies

#### In Unit 3 students will learn:

- How policy is created and carried out in the U.S.
- How federal, state, and local governments share policy responsibilities.
- Why policies can be controversial and difficult to change.
- How to judge whether a policy is effective or fair.

**California:** 12.7.1, 12.7.2, 12.7.3, 12.7.4, 12.7.5, 12.7.6, 12.3.1, 12.3.2

**Nevada:** SS.9-12.CE.11, SS.9-12.CE.12, SS.9-12.CE.17, SS.9-12.CE.22

#### In Unit 4 students will learn:

- The freedoms protected by the Bill of Rights and how they limit government power.
- How due process protects individuals in the justice system.
- How the government works to protect civil rights and promote equality.
- The historical struggles and progress made for equal rights in the United States.
- The role of the courts in defending liberties and civil rights.

**California:** 12.5.1, 12.5.2, 12.5.3, 12.5.4

**Nevada:** SS.9-12.CE.14, SS.9-12.CE.22, SS.9-12.CE.23

#### In Unit 5 students will learn:

- How citizens participate in government and influence political outcomes.
- How voting and elections function in the United States.
- The role of political parties and interest groups in shaping policy.
- How media and public opinion affect political behavior.
- Ways individuals can engage in civic life beyond voting.

**California:** 12.6.1, 12.6.2, 12.6.3, 12.6.4, 12.6.6, 12.8.1, 12.8.2, 12.8.3, 12.2.4

**Nevada:** SS.9-12.CE.3, SS.9-12.CE.5, SS.9-12.CE.6, SS.9-12.CE.7, SS.9-12.CE.24, SS.9-12.CE.25