
Course Description for P-Principles of Democracy (37600)/ P Sh Prin of Dem

DEPARTMENT: Social Studies

GRADE: 12

LENGTH: One Semester

CREDITS: 5 units

PREREQUISITE: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is a required course to be taken in the 12th grade designed to meet the “a-f” requirements for UC/CSU. In this course students apply knowledge gained in previous years of study to pursue a deeper understanding of the institutions of American government. In addition, they draw on their studies of American history and of societies to compare different systems of government in the world today. This course prepares students to vote, to reflect on the responsibilities of citizenship, and to participate in community activities.

EXIT CRITERIA:

- 1. The fundamental principles and morals of American democracy as expressed in the U.S. Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy**
Students explain:
 - a. The influence of ancient Greek, Roman, English, and leading European political thinkers such as John Locks, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, Machiavelli, and William Blackstone on the development of American government
 - b. The character of American democracy and its promise and perils as articulated by Alexis de Tocqueville
 - c. 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 of liberal constitutionalism and democracy are joined in the Declaration of Independence, states as “self-evident Truths”
 - d. 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*
 - e. The systems of separated and shared powers; the role of organized interests (*The Federalist Number 10*); checks and balances (*The Federalist Number 51*); the importance of an independent judiciary (*The Federalist Number 78*); enumerated powers; rule of law; federalism; and civilian control of the military
 - f. The Bill of Rights as a document limiting the power of the federal government and state governments

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2. The Scope and Limits of Rights and Obligations as Democratic Citizens:

Students will evaluate, and take and defend positions; analyze the relationships among them and how they are secured:

- a. The meaning and importance of each of the rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights and how each is secured (e.g., freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, petition, privacy)
- b. How economic rights are secured and what their importance is to the individual and to society (e.g., right to acquire, use, transfer, and dispose of property; right to choose one's work; join or not join labor unions; copyright and patent)
- c. The legal obligations of obeying the law, serving as a juror, and paying taxes
- d. The obligation of civic-mindedness including voting, and serving in the military or alternative service
- e. The reciprocity between rights and obligations, i.e., why enjoyment of one's rights entails respect for the rights of others
- f. How one becomes a citizen of the United States, including the process of naturalization (e.g., literacy, language, and other requirements)

3. The Fundamental Values and Principles of a Civil Society:

Students evaluate, take and defend positions (i.e., the autonomous sphere of voluntary personal, social, and economic relations not part of government:

- a. How civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, economic, and political purposes
- b. 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
- c. The historical role of religion and religious diversity
- d. 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

4. The Three Branches of Government as established by the U.S. Constitution:

Students analyze the unique roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government in terms of:

- a. Article I of the U.S. Constitution as it relates to the legislative branch; including eligibility of 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

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President, the enumerated legislative powers, and the process by which a bill becomes a law

- b. The process through which the U.S. Constitution is amended
- c. The student's current representatives in the legislative branch of the national government
- d. 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
- e. Article III of the U.S. Constitution as it relates to judicial power including the length of terms of judges and the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. The selection and confirmation of Supreme Court judges

5. Landmark U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the U.S. Constitution and its amendments:

Students will summarize:

- a. The changing interpretations of the Bill of Rights over time, including the basic freedoms (religion, speech, press, petition, and assembly) articulated in the First Amendment and the due process and equal protection of the law clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment
- b. Judicial activism and judicial restraint and the effects of each policy over the decades (e.g., Warren vs. Rehnquist courts)
- c. The effect 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
- d. The 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. Pena* and *United States v. Virginia* (VMI)

6. Campaigns for National, State and Local Elective Office:

Students will evaluate issues in terms of:

- a. 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
- b. The history of the presidential candidate nomination process and increasing importance of primaries in general elections
- e. The role of polls, campaign advertising and the controversies over campaign funding
- f. The means that citizens use to participate in the political process (e.g., voting campaigning, lobbying, filing a legal challenge,

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- demonstrating, petitioning, picketing, running for political office).
- g. The features of direct democracy in numerous states such as the process of referendums and recall elections
- h. 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

7. Powers and Procedures of the National, State, Tribal and Local Governments

Students analyze and compare in terms of:

- a. How conflicts between levels of government and branches of government are resolved
- b. The major responsibilities and sources of revenue for state and local governments
- c. Reserved powers and concurrent powers of state governments
- d. The Ninth and Tenth Amendments and interpretations of the extent of the federal government's power
- e. How public policy is formed, including the setting of the public agenda and how it is carried out through regulations and executive orders
- f. The process of lawmaking at each of the three levels of government, including the role of lobbying and the media
- g. The organization and jurisdiction of federal, state and local (e.g., California) courts, and the interrelationships between the federal state and local courts
- h. 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

8. Influences of the Media on American Political Life

Students will evaluate, take and defend positions in terms of:

- a. The meaning and importance of a free and responsible press
- b. The role of electronic, broadcast, print media, and the Internet as means of communication in American politics
- c. How public officials use the media to communicate the citizenry and to shape public opinion

9. Political Systems Across Time

Students analyze the origins, characteristics, and development, with emphasis on the quest for political democracy, its advances and obstacles, in terms of:

- a. How the different philosophies and structures of feudalism, mercantilism, socialism, fascism, communism, monarchies,

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parliamentary systems, and constitutional liberal democracies influence economic policies, social welfare policies and human rights practices

- b. 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 (e.g., William Gladstone, Margaret Thatcher)
- c. The advantages and disadvantages of federal, cofederal, and unitary systems of government
- d. The consequences of conditions that gave rise to tyrannies during certain periods applied to at least two countries (e.g., Italy, Japan, Haiti, Nigeria, Cambodia)
- e. The forms of illegitimate power that twentieth century African, Asian, and Latin American dictators used to gain and hold office and the conditions and interests that supported them
- f. The ideologies that give rise to communism, methods to maintain control, and the movements to overthrow such governments in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, including the role of individuals (e.g., Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Pope John Paul II, Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel)
- g. 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

10. The Evaluation Process

- a. The students will formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within U.S. constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between these concepts (e.g., 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)

