



Course Description
<p><b>United States and Massachusetts Government and Civic Life</b></p> <p>United States and Massachusetts Government and Civic Life is a course that engages 8th grade students in the study of the roots and foundations of U.S. democracy, how and why it has developed over time, and the role of individuals in maintaining a healthy democracy. They study these topics by exploring essential questions such as, “How do the institutions of the U.S. political system work?” and “How can power be balanced in government?” Students study these topics against the historical backdrop of the democratic civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome, the European Enlightenment, the American Revolution, the creation of our American founding government documents, the Civil War and Civil Rights Movement, up to the present day. Students engage in learning activities that include reading and analyzing primary and secondary historical sources, respectfully discussing and debating topical issues, writing assignments ranging from concise responses to full-length essays and multiple research and class presentation projects. Essential questions are included to stimulate teachers’ and students’ own questions for discussion and research.</p>
Content Standards
<p><a href="#"><u>Grade 8 Massachusetts Curriculum Framework - History and Social Science</u></a></p>



Units	Essential Questions	Key Activities May Include
<b>TERM 1</b>  <b>Unit 1 - Philosophical Foundations of U.S. Government</b>  <b>MA Standards: 8.T1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What were the roots of the ideas that influenced the development of the United States political system?</li> <li>How have societies progressed from a system of rule by one person (e.g. king, pharaoh, emperor) to rule by many (democracy)?</li> <li>What non-European sources of inspiration led to the beginning of the American Revolution and subsequently the creation of the United States government?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family History Foundations Research Project</li> <li>Primary Source Document Analysis of the Roman “Twelve Tables” and England’s “Magna Carta” and “Mayflower Compact”</li> <li>Writer’s Workshop Essay</li> <li>Project</li> <li>“Rome: The Power and the Glory- Episode 1: The Rise” Discovery channel documentary (edited for time and content)</li> <li>“Native America: Episode 1: Iroquois Confederacy” PBS documentary (edited for time)</li> </ul>
<b>TERM 1</b>  <b>Unit 2 - Development of U.S. Government</b>  <b>MA Standards: 8.T2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did the framers of the Constitution attempt to address issues of power and freedom in the design of the new political system?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Declaration of Independence” and “U.S. Constitution” Primary Source Document Analysis</li> <li>U.S. Constitution Roundtable Discussion</li> <li>Bill of Rights Trial Debate Project (Federalists vs Anti-Federalists)</li> <li>HBO’s “John Adams Episode 2: Independence” (edited for time and content)</li> <li>“Liberty’s Kids: We the People” episode</li> <li>“Hamilton: The Musical” on Disney+ (edited for time and content)</li> <li>“10 Days That Unexpectedly Changed America: Shays’ Rebellion” History channel documentary</li> </ul>



Units	Essential Questions	Key Activities May Include
<b>TERM 2</b>  <b>Unit 3 - Institutions of U.S. Government</b>  <b>MA Standards:</b> <b>8.T3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do the institutions of the U.S. government system work?</li> <li>How is power balanced within the structure of the U.S. government?</li> <li>What are the roles of each branch of the U.S. government?</li> <li>How are people chosen to fill the positions of the three branches of the U.S. government?</li> <li>What are political parties and what do they do?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary Source Document Analysis of FDR's "Day of Infamy" Speech</li> <li>Supreme Court Case Study: Herrera v. Wyoming (2019)</li> <li>First Amendment Letter Writing Project</li> <li>"The Supreme Court: One Nation Under Law Episode" MacArthur Foundation documentary</li> <li>"The Best and Worst U.S. Presidents" Biography channel documentary</li> </ul>
<b>TERM 2</b>  <b>Unit 4 - The Constitution, Amendments and Supreme Court decisions</b>  <b>MA Standards:</b> <b>8.T5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How has the content and interpretation of the Constitution evolved over time?</li> <li>What are some important Amendments added to the Constitution since its inception?</li> <li>What are some important Supreme Court decisions since the original Constitution in 1787?</li> <li>How have these Amendments and decisions affected social, economic, and political life in the United States since their nascency?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supreme Court Case Research Project and Presentation</li> </ul>
<b>TERM 3</b>  <b>Unit 5 - Massachusetts State and Local Governments</b>  <b>MA Standards:</b> <b>8.T6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the role of state and local governments in the U.S. political system?</li> <li>What are the similarities and differences between the U.S. national and Massachusetts state governments?</li> <li>What are the roles of each branch of the Massachusetts state government?</li> <li>How does the United States Constitution both empower and limit state governments under the 10th Amendment?</li> <li>What are the major components, roles and functions of local governments in Massachusetts?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Massachusetts Constitution of 1780" Primary Source Document Analysis</li> <li>Massachusetts State Constitution Roundtable Discussion</li> <li>Boston Massacre Trial Debate Project (British soldiers vs American Colonists)</li> <li>HBO's "John Adams Episode 1: Join or Die" edited for time and content</li> </ul>



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<b>TERM 3</b>  <b>Unit 6 - Freedom of the Press and News/Media Literacy</b>  <b>MA Standards:</b> <b>8T.7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does a free press support a democratic government?</li> <li>▪ Why was freedom of the press included as a right in the United States and Massachusetts Constitutions?</li> <li>▪ What are the different functions of various news formats (articles, editorials, editorial cartoons and op-eds)?</li> <li>▪ What are the benefits and challenges of digital news and social media in a democratic society?</li> <li>▪ Which methods can be used to assess credibility and validity of various news sources?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Primary/Secondary Source Analysis of selected news articles</li> <li>▪ Propaganda Poster Project</li> <li>▪ The United States in 25 Photos Project</li> </ul>
<b>TERM 3</b>  <b>Unit 7 - Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens</b>  <b>MA Standards:</b> <b>8T.4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is the role of the individual in maintaining a healthy democracy?</li> <li>▪ How do you become a citizen?</li> <li>▪ What rights do citizens have?</li> <li>▪ What responsibilities do citizens have?</li> <li>▪ What are the differences between civic, political, and personal life?</li> <li>▪ How can citizens engage in the political process?</li> <li>▪ How do elections work?</li> <li>▪ Which matters more, individual rights or the common good?</li> <li>▪ What defines political leadership? Who are examples of both positive and negative leaders?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ End of Course Civics Action project</li> </ul>