Course Overview
How can citizens use public policy to improve the quality of life of people in the United States? This guiding question will inform how this class views our government’s foundations and how it operates today. Throughout the class, students will consider difficult topics, such as weighing individual rights versus the collective good. Which one is more important, and why? We will take a positive, productive viewpoint regarding what makes an active and effective self-governing citizenry, and students are asked to work especially hard to consider diverse points of view. All of our ideas matter. As the late President George H.W. Bush said of political differences: "Just because you run against someone does not mean you have to be enemies."

Units and Activities

Unit 1  Foundations of American Democracy
Activities: Close-read documents such as the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. What is a democratic republic, and what does it mean to you? Can you draw it?

Unit 2  Interactions Among Branches of Government
Activities: Why do we have three branches of government, when it would be more efficient to have a CEO? Which has more influence on your life - the state government, or the federal government?

Unit 3  Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
Activities: What’s the difference between civil liberties and civil rights? Discuss, and debate the Supreme Court decision in Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission.

Unit 4  American Political Ideology and Beliefs
Activities: Determine and document what you, and others, believe about politics, and why. Discuss how and why we formed our beliefs.

Unit 5  Political Participation
Activities: What national or state policy would you change to improve peoples’ quality of life? Complete a project that demonstrates authentic civic engagement.

Standards: What knowledge and skills will I gain by the end of this course?

Anchor Standards

Sourcing: Who is giving me this information? Why does it matter?
Arguing and Explaining: How can I use what I know to inform and persuade others?
Taking Action: How can I use my ideas to impact the world around me?
Speaking and Listening: How can I share and grow my ideas through respectful dialogue?

Content Standards: While this is not an AP class, this course builds student knowledge and skills on the following AP practices:

Practice 1: Apply political concepts and processes to scenarios in context
Practice 2: Apply Supreme Court decisions
Practice 3: Analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics
Practice 4: Read, analyze, and interpret foundational documents and other text-based and visual sources
Practice 5: Develop an argument in essay format

Note on content and skills
While this course emphasizes the development of skills, versus memorization of names, or dates, it should be noted that content knowledge is critical to understanding. For example, a student needs to know the difference between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution (and which came first) in order to debate or write effectively about the topic.

Assessment of Learning

For information about assessment types, scoring, and overall grade calculation: click here.

Communication:

How Do I Access Work from Home, and What Should I Expect?
• All work will be posted in Google Classroom.
• The work will be explained during our in-person meetings and/or by video posted to Google Classroom.
• The work will also be explained in our Class Planner posted to Google Classroom.
• If you have any questions, email your teacher.

How Do I Know What My Grades Are?
• On Summative Assessments, teachers will provide both a 4-point grade and a letter grade.
• You can monitor your progress in the following ways:
  ○ By reading feedback and scoring returned to students on summative assessments.
  ○ By monitoring the scores and Overall Course Mastery Grade in the Parent/Student portal on JumpRope. Reminders to check grades will be sent from the school.
  ○ Communicating with your teacher if you are unclear.

Where Can I Find This Syllabus during the School Year?
• This syllabus will be available on the school website in each subject’s department tab once the school year is up and running. It will also be available in our Google Classroom.

How Do I See What’s Due?
• Assignment and summative assessment due dates with handouts are posted in Google Classroom, with connection to Google Calendar, for student access.

How Do I See What’s Past Due?
• If a student is missing a grade on an assessment, it will be listed in the red “Missing Assessment” section of the JumpRope Parent/Student Portal along with any attachments. Please contact your teacher if you have any questions.

Resources:
Students will frequently use online resources such as the Constitution Center’s Interactive Constitution as well as articles from news outlets including the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, and The Hill.

Students should arrive in class with a writing utensil, paper, laptop, and an eager readiness to put their phones away.

Schoolwide Procedures:
Please see the Student Handbook for Procedures and Policies related to: Due dates and deadlines, extra credit, retaking assessments, and turnaround time for grade entry.

Personal Mobile Devices: This class will follow the procedures outlined in the student handbook.

Plagiarism: We will have a class discussion on this topic. A first offense results, in a minimum, with a zero on the assignment and a note to the Dean of Students and parents.

Classroom Expectations:
Students should arrive ready to engage and help lead the learning. Phones should be set in the cradle or in backpacks. The topics in this class can be sensitive, and generate strong emotions. Again, I ask students to work especially hard to listen, respect, and consider diverse points of view.