

**Course Title/Grade Level:** American Life 12 (Semester course)

**Course Overview:** American Life is designed to help seniors critically examine the American democracy and understand how deeply it is connected to our everyday experiences. The course will provide a framework for exploring the basic ideas, principles, institutions and policies that make up the structure of our United States government and for investigating the forces that influence politics and political behavior. Students will also develop a more comprehensive understanding of the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities that come with being an American citizen. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to help each student prepare to assume an adult role in exercising his or her political responsibilities as thoughtful, informed citizens.

**Course Materials**

Sidlow, Edward; Henschen, Beth. *GOVT10: Principles of American Government*, Boston, MA; Cengage Learning, Inc., 2019

*Supreme Court Case Studies*, Glencoe, McGraw Hill, NY

**Course Outline**

- I. **Course Introduction and Senior Job Shadow Project Overview (3 class periods)**
- II. **Current Events and Analyzing Political Cartoons (2 class periods)**
- III. **Quarter One: Foundations of American Government and Institutions**
  - A. **Unit One: America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2-3 Weeks)**
    1. Politics and government
    2. Roles/purposes of government
    3. Systems of government
    4. Philosophical foundations
    5. English Influences and Declaration of Independence
    6. Principles of American democracy
    7. Political ideology and the American political spectrum
    8. Unit Review and Exam

Standards: 5.1.9.B, 5.1.12.C, 5.1.9.C, 5.1.9.D

**B. Unit Two: The Constitution and Federalism (2-3 Weeks)**

1. Creating and Ratifying the Constitution
2. The Constitution – Principles of Government
3. The Articles of the Constitution
4. Bill of Rights
5. Amending the Constitution
6. Federalism
7. The Changing Nature of Federalism
8. Unit Review and Exam

Standards: 5.1.9.B, 5.1.12.C, 5.1.9.C, 5.1.9.D,

**C. Unit Three: Foundations of American Government and Institutions (2-3 Weeks)**

1. The Legislative Branch
  - a) Congressional organization and leadership
  - b) Congressional committees
  - c) Congressional profile
2. The Executive Branch
  - a) The office of the President
  - b) Electoral College/ Presidential elections
  - c) Presidential power and roles
  - d) The executive branch and federal bureaucracy
3. The Judicial Branch
  - a) Federal Court system and jurisdiction
  - b) Criminal, Civil and Constitutional Law
  - c) Judicial Review
  - d) The Supreme Court at Work
4. Unit 3 Review and Exam

Standards: 5.3.9.A, 5.3.9.B, 5.3.9.F, 5.3.12.A, 5.3.12.C

**IV. Quarter Two: Personal Freedoms and the Politics of Democracy**

**A. Unit Four: Civil Liberties (2-3 weeks)**

1. Constitutional Basis and the Bill of Rights
2. Principle of incorporation and the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment
3. Rights in Conflict
4. Freedom of Speech/expression
5. Freedom of Religion
6. Freedom of the Press
7. Right to peaceably assemble
8. Right to Privacy
9. 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment
10. Unit Review and Exam

Standards: 5.1.12.E, 5.1.12.F, 5.1.9.A, 5.1.12.C

**B. Unit Five: Principle of Due Process (2-3 weeks)**

1. Due Process
2. Rights of the Accused
3. 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment
4. Focus: Probable Cause/Search Warrants
5. 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment
6. Focus: Miranda Rights
7. 6<sup>th</sup> Amendment
8. Focus: Rights to Counsel
9. 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment
10. Focus: Capital Punishment
11. Unit Review and Exam

Standards: 5.1.12.E, 5.1.12.F, 5.1.9.A, 5.1.12.C, 5.1.12.A

**C. Unit Six: The Politics of Democracy**

1. Purpose and structure of Political Parties
2. History of American Political Parties
3. Influences on Voting Behavior and forming political opinions
4. Voting and Voter Turnout
5. Elections and Election Procedures
6. Modern Political Campaigns
7. Campaign Financing controversies
8. The Role of Media in Politics
9. Candidates and Television
10. Unit Review and Exam

Standards: 5.3.9.D, 5.3.12.D, 5.3.9.E, 8.3.9.A

- V. Various news discussions and real word studies are included throughout the course such as 9/11, Veteran's Day, State of the Union address, Memorial Day, as well as any major political events which are occurring (supreme court nominations, elections, legislative priorities, foreign policy crises...etc)