Department: History
Course Name: United States Government

Course Description:
This semester-long course exposes students to the study of United States government with special emphasis on the following: the foundations of American democracy and federal government; the impact of voters, political parties, interest groups, and the media on policy decisions; political campaign and the electoral process; and the role of the courts in civil rights and civil liberties. In addition, students should emerge from the course more comfortable with assessing and critiquing bias in political discourse.

Content:
Constitutional democracy – how the U.S. Constitution establishes a system of checks and balances among branches of government and divides power between federal and state governments
Institutions of government – the role that Congress, the executive branch, and the courts play in making public policy
Policy-Making Interests – the role of political parties, interest groups, the media, and individuals in public policy and decision making
Participation in a Representative Democracy – how citizen engage and participate in politics through voting, volunteerism, and other kinds of activism
Civil rights and civil liberties – how laws and policies are based on the U.S. Constitution and how they have been interpreted differently over time

Skills:
To analyze and interpret political cartoons, charts, graphs, and poll results.
To solve problems, draw conclusions, and think critically.
To develop written and oral communication skills.
To distinguish between fact and opinion, and to write persuasively

Text and Materials:
Government Alive!, Teachers' Curriculum Institute
United States Constitution and other foundational documents
News articles
News and other video clips pertinent to U.S. Government
Pertinent websites, especially Pew Research

Methods of Instruction:
Student centered data analysis
Group activities/partner activities/Google Docs
Lecture/discussion
Google Form surveys
Individual presentations
Interactive, web-based learning activities

Methods of Evaluation:
Participation, discussion
Current events, vocabulary and reading quizzes
Research-based and creative projects
Major assessments (tests/mid-term)