

Curriculum at a Glance
US Law & Government 300
Grade 12 / US Law & Government 300

US Law & Government 300 is a semester course that fulfills district and State of Connecticut requirements for graduation. The goal of the course is to provide students with a foundation for understanding and interpreting legal and political events and trends in their historical and contemporary contexts. In this course students will understand and analyze the factors that affect the relationship between the state and the individual. Students will assess the role of citizenship, the scope and breadth of government, the impact of political parties in the US, and understand political philosophies and expectations regarding the role of government based on principles of good governance and on law.

The enduring understandings that we expect our students to take away from the course are that:

- decision-making and politics are shaped by many competing forces and politics is often accurately defined as “the art of the possible.”
- participation in a democracy is essential to its success -- whether it be through running for office, voting, jury duty, influencing public officials, obeying laws or civil disobedience.
- citizens have a responsibility to educate themselves in order to contribute to our society.

In addition to instilling in students a broad understanding of U.S. law and government, this course has as its goal the development and reinforcement of basic learning skills. These skills have been divided into six broad categories:

- Reading Comprehension Skills: Students will be able to locate ideas in a textbook, locate the main idea, outline, sequence ideas (timelines and cause/effect), interpret primary source documents, draw conclusions, and create an outline and take organized notes for a research-based paper or project.
- Writing Skills: Students will be able to write a research-based paper, complete a persuasive project or essay, and document their sources according to the MLA format.

- **Study Skills:** Students will be able to take clear and organized notes, prepare a study guide for quizzes and tests, use general and specific reference works, use the internet for research, and evaluate websites for reliable content.
- **Oral Expression Skills:** Students will be able to participate in class discussion, listen and respond to classmates, participate in a debate, and conduct an individual and collaborative formal and informal oral presentation.
- **Research Skills:** Students will be able to perform library and online research. They will also demonstrate the ability to identify, critically evaluate and select appropriate primary and secondary resources, going beyond “popular” search engines and encyclopedias.
- **Decision-making and Analysis Skills:** Students will demonstrate the ability to compare, contrast, connect, critique and conclude. Through an examination of available evidence, they will determine (or infer) causation. They will engage in decisionmaking, first by assessing and evaluating impacts of historical decisions, and then by identifying alternatives, projecting outcomes, and by applying these skills to situations in the world today.

Unit Name	Essential Content
Introduction to Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In this unit, students will focus on identifying the purposes of government and determine how societies balance their interests and rights against government power.
U.S. Constitution & Federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In this unit (and throughout the course) students will read and analyze the U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, and other Amendments; explore how power and responsibility are divided among the branches of government; analyze the origins and exercise of individuals’ rights, powers and responsibilities; and explore federalism and how the relationship between the central government and the states has changed over the course of time.
Legislative Branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In this unit, students will focus on the roles and responsibilities of the Legislative branch as a whole, as well as on the individuals who make-up the branch. Current bills will be analyzed and debated. Students will also explore the legislative process and examine the factors, institutional and extra-institutional, affecting it.

<p>Executive Branch</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In this unit, students will focus on the roles and responsibilities of the President and the Executive branch. There will be a focus on the bureaucratic organization of the branch as well as the legal and practical limitations on the President. We will also explore the electoral process through project work and discussion.
<p>Judicial Branch & Constitutional Law</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In this unit, students will focus on the role and responsibilities of the Judicial branch. Students will study how the judiciary is organized and how its role has changed over time. Through project work, the students will investigate Constitutional Law and how the court's interpretation and rulings impact the legislative and executive branches, as well as the American public.
<p>Local & State Government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In this unit, students will focus on the functions of state and local government and identify the similarities and differences among the town, state, and national governments. They will gain an understanding of the responsibilities of the state representatives, board of selectmen, and RTM members and the relationship between local government and taxation.
<p>Political Culture, Parties & Elections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In this unit, students will read and analyze what is meant by the term "American political culture" and explore how it developed into differing political belief systems and the evolution of political parties. Students will evaluate and discuss the goals and strategies of political parties and their differing political philosophies. Students will analyze and assess demographic, socioeconomic, and other factors that appear to play a role in helping determine one's political orientation and political affiliations.
<p>Media & Interest Groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In this unit, students will evaluate the role of outside forces on the political process in the United States. It will explore how the role of the media and interest groups have evolved and affected the American political system. Students will assess and evaluate the effect of the media and interest groups on the political agenda.