

Virginia and United States Government

Standards for Virginia and United States Government define the knowledge that enables citizens to participate effectively in civic and economic life. Students will apply social science skills as a foundation to examine fundamental constitutional principles, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, the political culture, the policy-making process at each level of government, and the characteristics of the United States economy. The standards emphasize an understanding of the duties and responsibilities that facilitate thoughtful and effective participation in the civic life of an increasingly diverse democratic society. The standards also reflect the evolving political and economic roles of Virginia and the United States in the global community.

Civic education also must emphasize the intellectual skills required for responsible citizenship. Students will apply these skills as they extend their understanding of the essential knowledge defined by the standards for Virginia and United States Government.

Skills

- GOVT.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking, geographical analysis, economic decision making, and responsible citizenship by
- a) planning inquiries by synthesizing information from diverse primary and secondary sources;
 - b) analyzing how political and economic trends influence public policy, using demographic information and other data sources;
 - c) comparing and contrasting historical, cultural, economic, and political perspectives;
 - d) evaluating critically the quality, accuracy, and validity of information to determine misconceptions, fact and opinion, and bias;
 - e) constructing informed, analytic arguments, using evidence from multiple sources to introduce and support substantive and significant claims;
 - f) explaining how cause-and-effect relationships impact political and economic events;
 - g) taking knowledgeable, constructive action, individually and collaboratively, to address school, community, local, state, national, and global issues;
 - h) using a decision-making model to analyze the costs and benefits of a specific choice, considering incentives and possible consequences;
 - i) applying civic virtues and democratic principles to make collaborative decisions; and
 - j) communicating conclusions orally and in writing to a wide range of audiences, using evidence from multiple sources and citing specific sources.
- GOVT.2 The student will apply social science skills to understand the political philosophies that shaped the development of Virginia and United States constitutional government by
- a) describing the development of Athenian democracy and the Roman republic to differentiate between a democracy and a republic;
 - b) explaining the influence of the Magna Carta, the English Petition of Rights, and the English Bill of Rights;
 - c) evaluating the writings of Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu;

- d) explaining the guarantee of the “rights of Englishmen” set forth in the charters of the Virginia Company of London;
- e) analyzing the natural rights philosophies expressed in the Declaration of Independence; and
- f) evaluating and explaining George Mason’s Virginia Declaration of Rights, Thomas Jefferson’s Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and James Madison’s leadership role in securing adoption of the Bill of Rights by the First Congress.

GOVT.3 The student will apply social science skills to understand the concepts of democracy by

- a) recognizing the fundamental worth and dignity of the individual;
- b) recognizing the equality of all citizens under the law;
- c) recognizing what defines a citizen and how noncitizens can become citizens;
- d) recognizing majority rule and minority rights;
- e) recognizing the necessity of compromise; and
- f) recognizing the freedom of the individual.

GOVT.4 The student will apply social science skills to understand the Constitution of the United States by

- a) examining the ratification debates and *The Federalist*;
- b) evaluating the purposes for government stated in the Preamble;
- c) examining the fundamental principles upon which the Constitution of the United States is based, including the rule of law, consent of the governed, limited government, separation of powers, and federalism;
- d) defining the structure of the national government outlined in Article I, Article II, and Article III; and
- e) analyzing and explaining the amendment process.

GOVT.5 The student will apply social science skills to understand the federal system of government described in the Constitution of the United States by

- a) evaluating the relationship between the state government and the national government;
- b) examining the extent to which power is shared;
- c) identifying the powers denied state and national governments; and
- d) analyzing the ongoing debate that focuses on the balance of power between state and national governments.

GOVT.6 The student will apply social science skills to understand local, state, and national elections by

- a) describing the nomination and election process, including the organization and evolving role of political parties;
- b) examining campaign funding and spending, including the impact of Supreme Court decisions, the nationalization of campaign financing, and the role of issue groups;
- c) analyzing the influence of media coverage, campaign advertising, public opinion polls, social media, and digital communications on elections;
- d) investigating and explaining the impact of reapportionment and redistricting on elections and governance;
- e) describing how amendments have extended the right to vote; and

- f) analyzing voter turnout in local, state, and national elections.

GOVT.7 The student will apply social science skills to understand the organization and powers of the national government by

- a) examining the legislative, executive, and judicial branches;
- b) analyzing the relationships among the three branches in a system of checks and balances and separation of powers; and
- c) investigating and explaining the ways individuals and groups exert influence on the national government.

GOVT.8 The student will apply social science skills to understand the organization and powers of the state and local governments described in the Constitution of Virginia by

- a) examining the legislative, executive, and judicial branches;
- b) examining the structure and powers of local governments (county, city, and town);
- c) analyzing the relationship between state and local governments and the roles of regional authorities, governing boards, and commissions;
- d) investigating and explaining the ways individuals and groups exert influence on state and local governments; and
- e) evaluating the effectiveness of citizen efforts to influence decisions of state and local governments by examining historical or contemporary events.

GOVT.9 The student will apply social science skills to understand the process by which public policy is made by

- a) defining public policy and determining how to differentiate public and private action;
- b) examining different perspectives on the role of government;
- c) describing how the national government influences the public agenda and shapes public policy by examining examples such as the Equal Rights Amendment, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 9524 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965;
- d) describing how the state and local governments influence the public agenda and shape public policy;
- e) investigating and evaluating the process by which policy is implemented by the bureaucracy at each level;
- f) analyzing how the incentives of individuals, interest groups, and the media influence public policy; and
- g) devising a course of action to address local and/or state issues.

GOVT.10 The student will apply social science skills to understand the federal judiciary by

- a) describing the organization, jurisdiction, and proceedings of federal courts;
- b) evaluating how the Marshall Court established the Supreme Court as an independent branch of government through its opinion in *Marbury v. Madison*;
- c) describing how the Supreme Court decides cases;
- d) comparing the philosophies of judicial activism and judicial restraint; and
- e) investigating and evaluating how the judiciary influences public policy by delineating the power of government and safeguarding the rights of the individual.

GOVT.11 The student will apply social science skills to understand civil liberties and civil rights by

- a) examining the Bill of Rights, with emphasis on First Amendment freedoms;
- b) analyzing due process of law expressed in the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments;
- c) explaining how the Supreme Court has applied most of the protections of the Bill of Rights to the states through a process of selective incorporation;
- d) investigating and evaluating the balance between individual liberties and the public interest; and
- e) examining how civil liberties and civil rights are protected under the law.

GOVT.12 The student will apply social science skills to understand the role of the United States in a changing world by

- a) describing the responsibilities of the national government for foreign policy and national security;
- b) assessing the role of national interest in shaping foreign policy and promoting world peace; and
- c) examining the relationship of Virginia and the United States to the global economy, including trends in international trade.

GOVT.13 The student will apply social science skills to understand how world governments and economies compare and contrast with the government and the economy in the United States by

- a) describing the distribution of governmental power;
- b) explaining the relationship between the legislative and executive branches;
- c) comparing and contrasting the extent of participation in the political process; and
- d) comparing and contrasting economic systems.

GOVT.14 The student will apply social science skills to understand economic systems by

- a) identifying the basic economic questions encountered by all economic systems;
- b) comparing the characteristics of traditional, free market, command, and mixed economies, as described by Adam Smith and Karl Marx; and
- c) evaluating the impact of the government's role in the economy on individual economic freedoms.

GOVT.15 The student will apply social science skills to understand the role of government in the Virginia and United States economies by

- a) describing the provision of government goods and services that are not readily produced by the market;
- b) describing government's establishment and maintenance of the rules and institutions in which markets operate, including the establishment and enforcement of property rights, contracts, consumer rights, labor-management relations, environmental protection, and competition in the marketplace;
- c) investigating and describing the types and purposes of taxation that are used by local, state, and federal governments to pay for services provided by the government;
- d) analyzing how Congress can use fiscal policy to stabilize the economy;

- e) describing the effects of the Federal Reserve's monetary policy on price stability, employment, and the economy; and
- f) evaluating the trade-offs in government decisions.

GOVT.16 The student will apply social science skills to understand that in a democratic republic, thoughtful and effective participation in civic life is characterized by

- a) exercising personal character traits such as trustworthiness, responsibility, and honesty;
- b) obeying the law and paying taxes;
- c) serving as a juror;
- d) participating in the political process and voting in local, state, and national elections;
- e) performing public service;
- f) keeping informed about current issues;
- g) respecting differing opinions and the rights of others;
- h) practicing personal and fiscal responsibility;
- i) demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that foster the responsible and respectful use of digital media; and
- j) practicing patriotism.