

# Fairfield Public Schools Social Studies Curriculum

## Civics: Contemporary Issues Grades 11-12



**FAIRFIELD  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

## Civics and Contemporary Issues: Description

This course is designed to explore the role of an engaged citizen of the United States in confronting important social, political, economic, and environmental issues on a national and global scale. This course will reinforce and expand values analysis, as well as develop skills in leadership, collaboration, research, and communication. Students will be able to identify some of the challenges and issues facing contemporary Americans, comprehend the importance of informed citizen participation in the political process, make informed decisions, and analyze the consequences of decisions for themselves, for our country, and for the world.

Objectives and Standards:

**Civic Understandings:** Shown as content objectives, these goals define what students should know and be able to do upon completion of each unit. These understandings are drawn from the *Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks* (2015), the *C3 Social Studies for the Next Generation National Framework* (2013), and from the *National Standards for Civics and Government* (2000) developed by the Center for Civic Education. They provide students with the knowledge and skills required to analyze domestic and international contemporary issues and make informed decisions about public policy.

**Critical Thinking / Inquiry Skills:** These standards center on four dimensions driven by the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigation, acquire rigorous content, and enable students to apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings so they can become active and engaged citizens. Drawn from the *Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks* (2015) and the *C3 Social Studies for the Next Generation National Framework* (2013), these standards enable students to evaluate evidence, develop comparative and causal analyses, interpret the historical record, and construct sound historical arguments and perspectives.

# Civics and Contemporary Issues: Overview

## Central Understandings

- Evaluate how power, authority, and responsibility are distributed, shared, and limited as established by the United States Constitution and our political and economic system.
- Assess what it means to be an engaged citizen at the state, national, and global levels.
- Understand how citizens exercise the roles, rights, and responsibilities of participation in civic life at the state, national, and global levels.
- Analyze case studies in relation to the role of citizens within the American and global political, economic, and/or social systems.
- Generate and research compelling questions on contemporary national and global issues to apply their knowledge and understanding of civics, government, and our political, economic, and social systems.
- Develop plans to take informed action on contemporary national and global issues
- Engage in activities that promote the development of research, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills as part of the inquiry cycle.
- Analyze and interpret different types of primary and secondary sources of fundamental importance and relevance to topical inquiry.
- Analyze and evaluate sources and interpretations (e.g. credibility, perspective, bias, and authenticity; verifiable or unverifiable; fact or interpretation).
- Utilize research strategies, methods, and sources to obtain, organize, and interpret data.
- Compose arguments / positions, and participate in debates on different interpretations of the same events or concepts; synthesize primary and secondary sources to justify a claim.
- Develop open-ended questions that can be addressed through research and interpretation.

## Course Compelling Questions

- How is power and authority distributed, shared, and limited as established by the United States Constitution and our political system?
- What does it mean to be an engaged citizen at the state, national, and global levels.
- How can American citizens influence solutions to political, economic, social, and/or environmental problems at home and throughout the world?

## Civics and Contemporary Issues: Year-at-a Glance

Unit	Title	Unit Compelling Questions
1	Foundations of Power, Authority, and Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the sources of power and authority in American society?</li> <li>• What are the values and principles that are basic to American democracy?</li> <li>• How is power and responsibility distributed, shared, and limited to meet the needs of citizens?</li> <li>• How do we define citizenship at the local, state, national, and global levels?</li> <li>• How can government balance the rights of individuals with the overall well-being of the society?</li> </ul>
2	National Contemporary Issues and Informed Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does our government uphold and protect the rights and liberties of American citizens?</li> <li>• How can government work to balance the rights of individuals with the overall well-being of society?</li> <li>• To what extent does our government foster civic responsibility?</li> <li>• In what ways can citizens take part in civic life at the local, state, and national level?</li> <li>• What contemporary issues are most pressing to American democracy? How do these issues impact the citizens of Connecticut?</li> </ul>
3	Global Contemporary Issues and Informed Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has globalization changed our world over the past generation and how will it continue to change our world?</li> <li>• Are some rights universal and should be protected throughout the world, regardless of political, economic, and social system?</li> <li>• Do we, as Americans, have a responsibility to protect the human rights of the global community?</li> <li>• Is there a global community? Is there such a thing as “global citizenship”?</li> <li>• In what ways can American citizens take part in civic life at the global level?</li> <li>• What contemporary issues are most pressing to the global community? How do these issues impact the citizens of the United States and the state of Connecticut?</li> </ul>

## Monitoring Student Progress

Students' progress in relation to the content and skill standards will be measured with teacher-generated, as well as district-wide, formative and summative assessments in the following areas:

1. Determine the central ideas or information of course content; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH11-12.2).
2. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the content as a whole (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH11-12.1).
3. Evaluate differing points of view on the same course concept or issue by assessing various claims, reasoning, and evidence (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH11-12.6).
4. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g. visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH11-12.7)
5. Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of a concept or issue, noting discrepancies among sources (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH11-12.9).
6. Produce arguments (written or presented) focused on discipline-specific content (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.1).
7. Produce informative / explanatory interpretations (written or presented) focused on discipline-specific content (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2).
8. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.7).
9. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source; integrate information into the text selectively; avoid plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and follow a standard format for citation (CSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.8).

# Foundations of Power, Authority, and Responsibility

## Overview

In order to act responsibly and effectively, citizens must understand the important institutions of their society and the principles that these institutions are intended to reflect. That requires a widespread knowledge of law, politics, and government. In addition to the institutions, this unit also explores the principles – such as adherence to the social contract, consent of the governed, limited government, legitimate authority, federalism, and separation of powers – that are meant to guide official institutions such as legislatures, courts, and government agencies.

## Unit Content Objectives

At the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

- Analyze the philosophical basis for democratic government.
- Describe and evaluate the values and principles that are basic to American democracy.
- Analyze how power and authority is distributed, shared, and limited in the American political system to meet the needs of the people (e.g. Federalism, Separation of Powers, Checks and Balances at the state and national levels).
- Demonstrate an understanding of how the U.S. Constitution establishes a system of government that has powers, responsibilities, and limits that have changed over time and that are still contested.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which citizens can take part in civic life (e.g. voting, activism, media, public interest groups, political parties).

## Unit Compelling Questions

Students will apply disciplinary concepts to investigate compelling questions such as:

- What are the sources of power and authority in American society?
- What are the values and principles that are basic to American democracy?
- How is power and responsibility distributed, shared, and limited to meet the needs of citizens?
- How do we define citizenship at the local, state, national, and global levels?
- How can government balance the rights of individuals with the overall well-being of the society?

## Standards Emphasized in the Unit: Inquiry in the Social Studies

### **DIMENSION 1: DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND PLANNING INQUIRY**

It is expected that students in high school Civics will individually and with others:

**INQ 9–12.1** Explain how a question reflects an enduring issue in the field.

**INQ 9–12.2** Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas

associated with a compelling question.

**INQ 9–12.3** Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a supporting question.

**INQ 9–12.4** Explain how supporting questions contribute to an inquiry and how, through engaging source work, new compelling and supporting questions emerge.

**INQ 9–12.5** Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources

**Corresponding CT Core Standards: CCSS.ELA-Literacy, RH.11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.7**

**Key academic vocabulary: *questioning, argument, explanation, point of view***

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## **DIMENSION 2: APPLYING DISCIPLINARY CONCEPTS AND TOOLS**

It is expected that students in high school Civics will individually and with others:

### Civic and Political Institutions

**CIV 9-12.1** Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of local, state, tribal, national, and international civic and political institutions.

**CIV 9-12.2** Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present

**CIV 9-12.3** Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.

**CIV 9-12.4** Explain how the U.S. Constitution establishes a system of government that has powers, responsibilities, and limits that have changed over time and that are still contested.

**CIV 9-12.5** Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

**CIV 9-12.6** Critique relationships among governments, civil societies, and economic markets.

### Participation and Deliberation

**CIV 9-12.7** Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.

**CIV 9-12.8** Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

**CIV 9-12.9** Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.

**CIV 9-12.10** Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

### Processes, Rules, and Laws

**CIV 9-12.11** Evaluate multiple procedures for making governmental decisions at the local, state, national, and international levels in terms of the civic purposes achieved.

**CIV 9-12.12** Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.

**CIV 9-12.13.** Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.

**CIV 9-12.14** Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

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### **DIMENSION 3: EVALUATING SOURCES AND USING EVIDENCE**

It is expected that students in high school Civics will individually and with others:

**INQ 9–12.6** Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

**INQ 9–12.7** Evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the sources.

**INQ 9–12.8** Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantively from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.

**INQ 9–12.9** Refine claims and counterclaims attending to precision, significance, and knowledge conveyed through the claim while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.

**Corresponding CT Core Standards: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1-10; CCSS.ELA-WHST.11-12.1-2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.7-10**

**Key academic vocabulary: *argument, sources, evidence, claims, counterclaims***

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### **DIMENSION 4: COMMUNICATING CONCLUSIONS AND TAKING INFORMED ACTION**

It is expected that students in high school Civics will individually and with others:

**INQ 9–12.10** Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

**INQ 9–12.11** Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical)

**INQ 9–12.12** Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

**INQ 9–12.13** Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

**INQ 9–12.14** Critique the use of the reasoning, sequencing, and supporting details of explanations.

**INQ 9–12.15** Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.

**INQ 9–12.16** Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.



**INQ 9–12.17** Apply a range of deliberative and democratic strategies and procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms, schools, and out-of-school civic contexts.

**Corresponding CT Core Standards:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.1-8

**Key academic vocabulary:** *argument, explanation, sources, evidence, claims, counterclaims, visually / visualize, credibility*

# National Contemporary Issues and Informed Action

## Overview

This unit will focus on an exploration of the civil and individual rights protected by the United States Constitution and our political and legal process. Through a case-study approach, students will explore the most significant contemporary issues our nation is dealing with and will collaboratively and individually work to develop action plans to address the problems associated with these issues.

## Unit Content Objectives

At the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the political and civil rights protected by the United States Constitution and subsequent Amendments.
- Assess how laws and court decisions both shape and reflect characteristics of contemporary American society.
- Describe how government must work to balance the rights of individuals with the overall well-being of society.
- Evaluate how citizens, as individuals or in groups (interest groups, political parties, etc.) can participate in the decision-making process at the local, state, and national level.
- Research and evaluate important case studies concerning contemporary national political, social, economic, and/or environmental issues and develop action plans to address these issues.

## Unit Compelling Questions

Students will apply disciplinary concepts to investigate compelling questions such as:

- To what extent does our government uphold and protect the rights and liberties of American citizens?
- How can government work to balance the rights of individuals with the overall well-being of society?
- To what extent does our government foster civic responsibility?
- In what ways can citizens take part in civic life at the local, state, and national level?
- What contemporary issues are most pressing to American democracy? How do these issues impact the citizens of Connecticut?

## Standards Emphasized in the Unit: Inquiry in the Social Studies

### **DIMENSION 1: DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND PLANNING INQUIRY**

It is expected that students in high school Civics will individually and with others:

**INQ 9–12.1** Explain how a question reflects an enduring issue in the field.

**INQ 9–12.2** Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling question.

**INQ 9–12.3** Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas

associated with a supporting question.

**INQ 9–12.4** Explain how supporting questions contribute to an inquiry and how, through engaging source work, new compelling and supporting questions emerge.

**INQ 9–12.5** Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources

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**Key academic vocabulary: *questioning, argument, explanation, point of view***

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## **DIMENSION 2: APPLYING DISCIPLINARY CONCEPTS AND TOOLS**

It is expected that students in high school Civics will individually and with others:

### Civic and Political Institutions

**CIV 9-12.1** Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of local, state, tribal, national, and international civic and political institutions.

**CIV 9-12.2** Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present

**CIV 9-12.3** Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.

**CIV 9-12.4** Explain how the U.S. Constitution establishes a system of government that has powers, responsibilities, and limits that have changed over time and that are still contested.

**CIV 9-12.5** Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

**CIV 9-12.6** Critique relationships among governments, civil societies, and economic markets.

### Participation and Deliberation

**CIV 9-12.7** Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.

**CIV 9-12.8** Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

**CIV 9-12.9** Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.

**CIV 9-12.10** Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

### Processes, Rules, and Laws

**CIV 9-12.11** Evaluate multiple procedures for making governmental decisions at the local, state, national, and international levels in terms of the civic purposes achieved.

**CIV 9-12.12** Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.

**CIV 9-12.13.** Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.

**CIV 9-12.14** Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

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### **DIMENSION 3: EVALUATING SOURCES AND USING EVIDENCE**

It is expected that students in high school Civics will individually and with others:

**INQ 9–12.6** Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

**INQ 9–12.7** Evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the sources.

**INQ 9–12.8** Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantively from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.

**INQ 9–12.9** Refine claims and counterclaims attending to precision, significance, and knowledge conveyed through the claim while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.

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**Key academic vocabulary: *argument, sources, evidence, claims, counterclaims***

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### **DIMENSION 4: COMMUNICATING CONCLUSIONS AND TAKING INFORMED ACTION**

It is expected that students in high school Civics will individually and with others:

**INQ 9–12.10** Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

**INQ 9–12.11** Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical)

**INQ 9–12.12** Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

**INQ 9–12.13** Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

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**INQ 9–12.15** Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.

**INQ 9–12.16** Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

**INQ 9–12.17** Apply a range of deliberative and democratic strategies and procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms, schools, and out-of-school civic contexts.

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**Key academic vocabulary: *argument, explanation, sources, evidence, claims, counterclaims, visually / visualize, credibility***

# Global Contemporary Issues and Informed Action

## Overview

This unit focuses on framing civic responsibility not only as a local and national concept, but as a global concept as well. Students will evaluate the history of human rights from various perspectives and assess the role of the United States and individual citizens in addressing global issues. Through a case-study approach of the most significant contemporary international issues, students will collaboratively and individually work to develop action plans to address the problems associated with these issues.

## Unit Content Objectives

At the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of globalization and the interdependence of the modern world.
- Define, discuss, and evaluate human rights from various perspectives.
- Debate whether or the United States should be responsible for protecting human rights around the world and addressing global issues.
- Assess how the international community can address global issues.
- Describe how differences in culture and values affect perceptions of human rights and responsive government.
- Evaluate how citizens, as individuals or in groups (interest groups, non-governmental organizations, political parties, etc.) can respond to global issues.
- Research and evaluate important case studies concerning contemporary global political, social, economic, and/or environmental issues and develop action plans to address these issues.

## Unit Compelling Questions

Students will apply disciplinary concepts to investigate compelling questions such as:

- How has globalization changed our world over the past generation and how will it continue to change our world?
- What rights are universal and should be protected throughout the world, regardless of political, economic, and social system?
- Do we, as Americans, have a responsibility to protect the human rights of the global community?
- Is there a global community? Is there such a thing as “global citizenship”?
- In what ways can American citizens take part in civic life at the global level?
- What contemporary issues are most pressing to the global community? How do these issues impact the citizens of the United States and the state of Connecticut?

## Standards Emphasized in the Unit: Inquiry in the Social Studies

### **DIMENSION 1: DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND PLANNING INQUIRY**

It is expected that students in high school Civics will individually and with others:

**INQ 9–12.1** Explain how a question reflects an enduring issue in the field.

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