



## Participation in Government

Dear students and families,

Welcome to the freshman year of SLJ! I'm very excited to teach Participation in Government. In this packet, you will find a lot of information about the class:

- **Course description**
  - Overview
  - Objectives of the class
  - Short description of what you will learn and do in each unit
  - Daily agenda
- **Grading policy**
  - How I determine your grade for each marking period
  - Late work
- **Class policies**
  - Required materials
  - Attendance and lateness
  - Procedures for entering and exiting the class, bathroom, etc.
- **Code of conduct**
  - Expectations
  - Consequences of breaking the code

Please read the entire packet with your parent/guardian, and then sign the last page together. Return the last page to me by **Thursday, September 6** for one homework grade of an A, or 10 points (turn it in a day late and you will receive half credit). If you or your parent/guardian has any questions, please e-mail me at [gnadel@sljhs.org](mailto:gnadel@sljhs.org). You can also leave me a message at 718-858-1160, and I will return your call.

I look forward to getting to know each of you!

Sincerely,

Ms. G

## Course Description

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### Overview

In this class, you will be empowered to make positive change in your world. You will find out how our government works and how it affects your daily life. You will learn how to use that knowledge to get results about issues that matter to you. Through role-playing and real-life projects, you will consider challenging issues from a variety of perspectives and develop strategies for persuading others to share your point of view. You will participate in a number of public events in which you share your knowledge from this class with members of the community—and have a real impact on the world.

As you learn to take an active role in our society, I hope you will take an equally active role in this classroom. It is important that you voice your ideas, so that we can all develop a deeper understanding together. Expressing yourself may require courage if you disagree with me or with other students. To make this classroom a place where everyone can speak their mind, you must also truly listen, even when you find someone else's ideas uncomfortable or offensive. Think of this class as a place to practice participation and activism, a place where we all share our ideas with an open mind.

### Course Objectives

Wherever you go, you're sure to think things could be better. In your family, in school, and in the world at large, you can complain; you can remain silent; or you can take action. This course will help you make your ideas happen. More specifically, you will learn to do the following:

- Research issues that matter to you, interpret data, and develop powerful conclusions based on the evidence you find.
- Read a variety of sources critically—seeing through biased language, emotional manipulation, and even misinformation.
- Develop proposals for change that are concrete, realistic, and based on the facts.
- Get the attention and cooperation of people in power
- Speak and write persuasively, marshalling evidence and organizing your ideas for maximum impact.
- Negotiate with people who disagree with you to reach a compromise that everyone can work toward.

## Syllabus

This class is organized into six units, approximately corresponding to the six marking periods. Each unit focuses on one strategy for making change, as well as one issue that is currently being debated in our society.

Unit Title	Overview of Unit	Assessments
<b>Seek Justice!</b>	What is justice? When someone does something wrong, should they be punished? You will explore the purpose for rules and consequences, investigate how effective prison is, and examine alternative approaches to crime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judge's decision: What should happen to this criminal?</li> <li>• Policy proposal: How should New York respond to illegal drugs?</li> </ul>
<b>Join a Movement!</b>	What is a hero? What have people done to fight for what they believe? You will read the memoir of a student who helped to integrate her high school. You will also analyze how other groups at that time fought to expand their rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Warriors Don't Cry</i></li> <li>• Research: Movements of the Civil Rights era.</li> <li>• Essay: Which strategies are most effective?</li> </ul>
<b>Vote!</b>	How can talking change the world? You will research presidential candidates as they gear up for the New York primary. On the night before the primary, you will register voters and try to persuade adults in your community to vote for your candidate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign platform: What is your candidate's stand on the issues?</li> <li>• Campaign commercial: Why should people vote for your candidate?</li> <li>• Primary Night</li> </ul>
<b>Lobby &amp; Protest!</b>	How do we make our voices heard? You will research local housing issues, generate policy proposals, then try to get the City to follow your proposals through meetings with politicians, public education, and protest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class blog</li> <li>• Meeting with City Councilwoman</li> <li>• Create a protest toolkit: humor, petition, event</li> </ul>
<b>Pass a Law!</b>	How do we balance competing ideas about justice? After studying healthcare, you will take the role of U.S. senators and determine what your constituency wants you to do about this issue. You will negotiate changes to a proposed health reform bill and pass a new law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kids' book or game board: How a bill becomes a law</li> <li>• Persuasive essay: What should the U.S. do about health care?</li> <li>• Senate role play</li> </ul>
<b>Participate in the global community!</b>	How do we compromise between competing needs? You will analyze how environmental protection may conflict with economic development. You will then take on the role of various countries and negotiate an action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model United Nations</li> <li>• Letter to senators: What should the U.S. do about global warming?</li> </ul>

## Daily Agenda

Most days, we will follow this schedule:

Warm-up	Lesson and work time	Wrap-up
7 minutes	40 minutes	7 minutes
<p>The warm-up will be either written on the board or available as a handout as you enter the room. I will check that it is complete <b>seven minutes</b> after class begins.</p>	<p>This portion of the class may vary from day to day. For example, I may model a particular skill that you will then practice, or you may work in small groups to create a product that you then share.</p>	<p>In the last few minutes of class, you will reflect on what you learned. This may involve a structured writing task, a brief discussion, or an opportunity to write freely about your questions or ideas.</p>
<p>During this time, you should also take out your homework, make sure I initial it, and place it in your classwork folder.</p>		<p>During this time, you should also place all your classwork in your classwork folder, copy the homework assignment, and make sure you have everything you will need to do it.</p>

## Grading Policies

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Your grade for each marking period will be calculated based on the following:

**10% Professionalism:**

Attendance, timeliness, dress code, behavior, preparedness, manners. You can also earn professionalism points by coming to homework help after school.

**20% Participation:**

Contribution to whole-class and small-group discussions; listening to others. (This is instead of the “minor assessments” category in your other classes.)

**25% Classwork:**

Warm-up, notes, and in-class assignments.

For the warm-up, you will get:

5 points if your warm-up is complete when I check 7 minutes after class starts. 3 points if your warm-up is incomplete 0 points if you are late, have no pen, or for any reason do not start the warm-up
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**25% Major assessments:**

A grading checklist will be provided to you for each project, based on the assignment instructions.

**20% Homework:**

Each homework is worth 10 points. You will get:

10 points for homework that is complete and handed in on time. 5 points for homework that is incomplete or one day late. 0 points for anything else.
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### Late Work

If your work is one day late, it will receive half credit. If your work is more than one day late, it will be marked as completed, but you will not receive any credit. This means that **an excellent project handed in a day late cannot earn more than 50 points**—so please make sure you do hand in your work on time!

## Classroom Policies

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### Required Materials

These materials are due on **Thursday, September 6**. If you are not able to supply these materials, please see me before then.

- Six folders with pockets and three holes.
- Loose-leaf paper for your folder.
- 2 blue or black ink pens.
- 1 red or green ink pen.
- A section in your SLJ binder for PiG homework.

### Attendance

If you are absent, please see me **after school** on the day that you return for the work you missed. You must hand in this work on the following day to receive full credit. **It is your responsibility to find out what you missed.** I will not track you down, and I will not excuse you from the work. It is important that you know what you missed, so you will understand all the work that follows.

### Lateness

If you are not in your seat when I take attendance, you will be marked late and receive a ½ hour detention. You will also lose points for professionalism and get a 0 on your warm-up.

### Participation

Since PiG is designed to teach you to get yourself heard, you are expected to be heard right here in class. We all learn from each other, and everyone's unique perspective will deepen our understanding. It is very important to me to hear your ideas, and I weigh participation more heavily than homework in your final grade.

At the same time, I expect you to learn to consider other people's perspectives, and this includes listening to me and to each other. Please give real thought to what other people say, and wait until they are finished before raising your hand. Your participation grade will reflect the extent to which you listen as well as talk.

### Getting your attention

It is important that I get your attention quickly and easily so that we can move from one activity to the next without wasting your time. When I count down from 5, you will stop speaking, put your pen down, look at me, and listen silently.

## **Classroom Entry and Exit Procedures**

You will line up outside the room and wait for me to greet you at the door. When you enter, you will collect your classwork folder, sit in your assigned seat, take out your homework and begin the warm-up.

When class ends, I will dismiss you. Please do not get up or begin packing your bag until I tell you that you may do so.

## **Restroom Use**

I understand that nature sometimes calls, but I do not want this to become a disruption in class. For this reason, I always give permission, but only if you ask at the right time and in the right way:

- Before you request permission to leave the room, ask yourself these questions:
  - Is Ms. G teaching a lesson or giving instructions?
  - Do I have work to finish in the next few minutes?
  - Is anyone else out of the room?
- If the answer to ALL three questions is NO, then you may raise two fingers to request permission. Please do NOT ask me for permission verbally.
- If I nod to you, then you may give me a bathroom pass to initial, then go to the bathroom quickly and return quickly.

If I find that you a particular student leaves my class unreasonably often, I will give you a warning. If the problem continues, I will stop giving you permission to leave. Please do not abuse my sympathy.

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## Code of Conduct

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It's a free country. That means that we have the right to do whatever we want—as long as we do not interfere with each other's rights. Your #1 right as a young person is to get a powerful education. No one may interfere with that right. No one has the right to distract other students or to disturb the learning process. The SLJ code of conduct is based on the 3 Principles of Respect: Respect for Self, Respect for Others, and Respect for Property. In this class, these principles look like this:

### **Respect yourself:**

You are here to learn and to develop your unique mind. Take full advantage of your learning time. Come to class on time, prepared with all your materials, and in dress code. Focus on your work the whole time you are in class.

### **Respect others:**

Please listen quietly while I speak, and address me with respectful language at all times. If you disagree with a decision I make, please discuss it with me privately **after class**. Likewise, please listen while other students are talking. Of course, this means that you are silent when someone else speaks, but it also means that you **really think** about what they say—not about what you plan to say when they're done. In addition, please address others with respectful language. Remember to argue with each other's ideas, not to attack each other's intelligence.

### **Respect our space:**

Please do your share to keep our classroom clean and comfortable. When you have trash, please **walk over** to the garbage can and throw the trash out. There is no eating or gum chewing in classrooms, but you may drink water from a bottle. When you leave the room, please make sure you have not accidentally left trash or papers on your desk or the floor around you. And, of course, please take good care of the furniture, books, bulletin boards and other classroom materials. We want them to look as good in June as they do now.

If a student breaks our code of respect:

- 1st offense → Reminder (informal student-teacher conference)
- 2nd offense → Intervention (removed from group work, change seat, etc.)
- 3rd offense → Consequences (detention, call home, barred from field trip, sent out of room, etc.)

**A severe disruption will result in a student being sent to the dean immediately and their parent/guardian being required to come in for a conference.** You do not need a reminder to know that you may not fight, throw things, or insult a teacher.

Please sign and return this page. Keep the rest of the packet in your binder, in the PiG section.



I have read the class description, grading policy, classroom policies and code of conduct. I will abide by these policies.

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Student's name

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Student's signature

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Parent/guardian's name

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Parent/guardian's signature

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Home phone number

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Parent/guardian's cell phone number

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Student's email

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Parent/guardian's email