

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

LENGTH OF TIME: one semester, 90 minutes daily

GRADE LEVEL: 12

COURSE STANDARDS:

Students will:

1. Identify, analyze, interpret and evaluate sources and examples of citizens' rights and responsibilities (NCSS Civic Ideals and Practices Xb; PA Std 5.2 a, 5.1 j)
2. Evaluate the degree to which public policies and citizen behaviors reflect or foster the stated ideals of a democratic republican form of government (NCSS Civic Ideals and Practices Xh; PA Std 5.2 e)
3. Explain the purpose of government and analyze how its powers are acquired, used, and justified (NCSS Power, Authority & Governance VIb; PA Std 5.1 a)
4. Predict how data and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference (NCSS Culture Ib; PA Std 9.2 d)
5. Investigate, interpret, and analyze multiple historical and contemporary viewpoints within and across cultures related to recurring dilemmas and persistent issues, while employing empathy, skepticism, and critical judgment (NCSS Time, Continuity & Change, IIe; PA Std 9.2 d)
6. Explain conditions and motivations that contribute to conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations (NCSS Global Connections, IXb; PA Std 8.4 d)
7. Write a scholarly research paper, with full bibliography (NCSS Acquiring Information IB2; PA Std 1.5)
8. Express personal convictions (NCSS Interpersonal Relationships & Social Participation 3A; PA Std 1.6)
9. Present visually information extracted from print (NCSS Organizing and Using Information 2A4; PA Std 1.6)
10. Keep informed on issues that affect society (NCSS Interpersonal Relationships & Social Participation 3c; PA Std 9.3 a)
11. Work individually or with others to decide on an appropriate course of action (NCSS Interpersonal Relationships & Social Participation 3c; PA Std 1.6)

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

- I. Culture and Cultural Diversity
- II. Time, Continuity, and Change
- III. People, Places, and Environments
- IV. Individual Development and Identity
- V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
- VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- VIII. Science, Technology, and Society
- IX. Global Connections
- X. Civic Ideals and Practices

RELATED PA ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR READING, WRITING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- 1.5 Quality of Writing
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening

RELATED PA ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

- 5.1 Principles and Documents of Government
 - A. Purpose of Government
 - J. Individual Rights and the Common Good
- 5.2 Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship
 - A. Civic Rights, Responsibilities and Duties
 - E. Ways Citizens Influence Decisions and Actions of Government

RELATED PA ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR HISTORY

- 8.4 World History
 - D. Conflict and Cooperation Among Groups

RELATED PA ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR ARTS AND HUMANITIES

- 9.3 Critical Response
 - A. Critical Processes

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS:

Students will demonstrate achievement of the standards by:

1. Participating in class discussions and problem-solving sessions (Course Standard 2, 4, 8, 11)
2. Responding verbally and in writing to class material, class readings and guest speakers (Course Standard 1, 3, 8)
3. Participating in a mock trial (Course Standard 1, 9, 11)
4. Group and individual presentations responding to proposed domestic policy changes from various points of view (Course Standard 4, 9, 10)
5. Designing, completing and presenting a graduation project, using library and media center sources for research (Course Standard 6, 7, 9, 10)

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE:

This course provides an overview of government, development of public policy, cultural diversity and conflict resolution from a sociological perspective. It is designed to provide students with an opportunity to extend their techniques of research, critical thinking skills, and presenting points of view in project-based activities. This course provides extensive structure and guidance for the completion of the senior project required for graduation.

TITLES OF UNITS:

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| 1. Principles of American Government | 2 weeks |
| 2. Process of public policy development | 2 weeks |
| 3. Cultural diversity in America | 4 weeks |
| 4. Contemporary implications & conflict resolution | 4 weeks |
| 5. Senior Graduation Project | 6 weeks |
| 6. Oral presentations of Senior projects | 2 weeks |

SAMPLE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES:

1. Research assignments-using both conventional and electronic technology
2. Use of visual and audio learning tools
3. Written and oral presentations, both individually and/or with partners
4. Lecture and discussion
5. Study guides based on text materials and supplemental readings
6. Independent reading and writing emphasizing analysis and synthesis of materials
7. Problem-solving exercises
8. Cooperative learning groups
9. Debate forums
10. Guest speakers
11. Simulations

MATERIALS:

Selected Readings From:

1. Bigelow, Bill, L. Christensen, S. Karp, B. Miner and B. Peterson, Editors (1994). Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice. A *Rethinking Schools* Publication, Milwaukee.
2. Kabagarama, Daisy (1993). Breaking the Ice: A Guide to Understanding People from Other Cultures. Allyn & Bacon Press, Needham Heights.
3. Davis, James E, P. Fernlund (2003) Civics: Participating in Government. Prentice Hall, New York.
4. Online subscription service for American Government – ABC-CLIO
5. Supplemental readings in current events, taken from audio and print material

METHODS OF ASSISTANCE AND ENRICHMENT:

1. Use of appropriate level reading materials
2. Pairing students
3. Small group work
4. Adjusting level of expectations and delivery appropriately
5. Alternative methods of assessment
6. Variety of assignments and activities
7. Guest speakers

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT:

1. Performance tasks on topics studied.
2. Oral presentation of graduation project.
3. Position papers on perspectives studied.

METHODS OF EVALUATION:

1. Small group activities
2. Discussion forums
3. Class debates
4. Reaction papers
5. Test/quiz
6. Senior graduation project
7. Rubrics for both content standards and skills

8. Homework
9. Peer evaluation/cooperative groups

INTEGRATED ACTIVITIES:

1. Concepts
 - issue framing on contemporary issues
 - identifying multiple intelligences
2. Communication
 - exhibit listening skills
 - exhibit reading skills
 - exhibit writing skills
 - respond orally (discuss/debate)
3. Thinking/Problem Solving
 - compare/contrast
 - analyze
 - evaluate
 - make predictions
4. Application of Knowledge
 - producing a graduation project which demonstrates research skills
 - formulate personal views on various contemporary issues
5. Interpersonal Skills
 - demonstrate skills of communication (oral and written)
 - work cooperatively in small or large groups
 - develop leadership skills/qualities
 - demonstrate the ability to listen