

Current Issues

Grade Level:	11-12
Length:	1 Semester
Period(s) Per Day:	1
Credit:	½
Credit Requirement Fulfilled:	Social Studies Elective

Course Description

The goal of this class is to become aware and engaged in the most current issues featured in our national headlines. The course content includes bi-partisan and unbiased debates which discuss the most current policy issues that face America today including Gun Control, Social Liberties, Foreign Policy, Immigration, Voting Rights, and Education. Each year's topics will evolve as the current events in our news evolve. Students will gain the knowledge they need to become active citizens in today's world. Coursework includes current events, debates, discussion, worksheets, and use of the Close Up Foundation's Current Issues textbook. Election cycles will also determine course content.

This course is designed for upper level grades 11-12 who have an interest in current events and a desire to become a more informed citizen. Students taking this course will be expected to keep up-to-date with current events and class readings. Students will be expected to participate in all areas of class, whether it is online discussion, classroom discussion, or turning in assignments.

Theme Samples

- Media Literacy
- Forms of Persuasion
- The Role of the Federal Government
- The Federal Budget
- Gun Control
- The War on Drugs
- The Affordable Care Act
- Immigration Policy
- Social Liberties
- Environmental Policy
- Foreign Policy
- Cyber Security

Course Objectives and Expectations

- To effectively exercise their responsibilities as citizens—the most important political office in U.S. society—students need to be able to analyze current issues.
- Students will learn methods that will allow them to form opinions on how they think their government should respond when faced with critical national decisions.
- Students will learn how to analyze important issues. Current events instruction also

serves to help students develop critical-thinking skills.

- By defining problems, collecting and analyzing data, developing alternative solutions, selecting appropriate responses, working with their peers, defending a position, and persuading others, students can learn the skills and attitudes that will make them informed and effective citizens.

Coursework

Current Issues class will be supplemented by the Close Up Foundation's textbook Current Issues which features in depth discussion on both sides of an issue. Students will be required to read and discuss the various perspectives of an issue. Each topic will include debate style discussion, reflection essays, and viewing of various news media. CNN Student News will be a supplementary visual resource which aims to deliver the news to middle school and high schools in a student-friendly manner.

Pacing

Pacing Guide for Current Issues- 1 semester (18 weeks)

Week 1- Overview of Media Literacy (American news networks, detecting biases, propaganda)

Week 2- Politics 101- Describe the major features of American political parties

Week 3- Individual Rights- Social issues (Marriage Equality, Gun Rights)

Week 4- Terrorism, Security, Defense- (ISIS, NSA, Military)

Week 5- War on Drugs- (prison reform, drug legalization)

Week 6- Immigration Reform (border security, immigration history)

Week 7- Education Reform (NCLB, Race to the Top, MT Education)

Week 8- Social Safety Net (Government intervention, programs, ACA)

Week 9- Presidential Campaign

Week 10- Presidential Campaign

Week 11- Presidential Campaign and MT state elections

Week 12- Local Government and Hill County

Week 13- International Policy- Iran and North Korea

Week 14- International Policy- North Africa

Week 15- International Policy- Middle East

Week 16- Environment and Natural Resources (Fracking, Nuclear Energy, nuclear energy)

Week 17- Independent study project

Week 18- Independent Study Project

Montana Standards for Social Studies

Content Standard 1—Students access, synthesize, and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.

Benchmarks:

1. Analyze and adapt an inquiry process (i.e., identify question or problem, locate and evaluate potential resources, gather and synthesize information, create a new product, and evaluate product)

and process).

2. Apply criteria to evaluate information (e.g., origin, authority, accuracy, bias, and distortion of information and ideas).

3. Synthesize and apply information to formulate and support reasoned personal convictions within groups and participate in negotiations to arrive at solutions to differences (e.g., elections, judicial proceedings, economic choices, community service projects).

Content Standard 4—Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

Benchmarks:

1. Select and analyze various documents and primary and secondary sources that have influenced the legal, political, and constitutional heritage of Montana and the United States.

2. Interpret how selected cultures, historical events, periods, and patterns of change influence each other.

3. Apply ideas, theories, and methods of inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary developments, and to formulate and defend reasoned decisions on public policy issues.

4a Analyze the significance of important people, events, and ideas (e.g., political and intellectual leadership, inventions, discoveries, the arts) in the major eras/civilizations in the history of Montana, American Indian tribes, the United States, and the world. 4b analyze issues (e.g., freedom and equality, liberty and order, region and nation, diversity and civic duty) using historical evidence to form and support a reasoned position.

5. Analyze both the historical impact of technology (e.g., industrialization, communication, medicine) on human values and behaviors and how technology shapes problem solving now and in the future.

6. Investigate, interpret, and analyze the impact of multiple historical and contemporary viewpoints concerning events within and across cultures, major world religions, and political systems (e.g., assimilation, values, beliefs, conflicts).

7. Analyze and illustrate the major issues concerning history, culture, tribal sovereignty, and current status of the American Indian tribes and bands in Montana and the United States (e.g., gambling, artifacts, repatriation, natural resources, language, jurisdiction).

Content Standard 5—Students make informed decisions based on an understanding of the economic principles of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption.

Benchmarks:

1. Analyze the impact that supply and demand, scarcity, prices, incentives, competition, and profits influence what is produced and distributed in various economic systems.
2. Use basic economic concepts (e.g., production, distribution, consumption, market economy and command economy) to compare and contrast local, regional, national, and global economies across time and at the present time.
3. Assess the costs and benefits to society of allocating goods and services through private and public sectors.
4. Compare and contrast how values and beliefs influence economic decisions in different economic systems.
5. Explain the operations, rules, and procedures of common financial instruments (e.g., stocks and bonds, retirement funds, IRAs) and financial institutions (credit companies, banks, insurance companies).
6. Explain and evaluate the effects of new technology, global economic interdependence, and competition on the development of national policies (e.g., social security system, medicare, other entitlement programs) and on the lives of the individuals and families in Montana, the United States and the world (e.g., international trade, space exploration, national defense).

Content Standard 6—Students demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human interaction and cultural diversity on societies.

Benchmarks:

1. Analyze and evaluate the ways various groups (e.g., social, political, cultural) meet human needs and concerns (e.g., individual needs, common good) and contribute to personal identity.
2. Analyze human experience and cultural expression (e.g., language, literature, arts, traditions, beliefs, spirituality, values, behavior) and create a product which illustrates an integrated view of a specific culture.
3. Analyze the impact of ethnic, national and global influences on specific situations or events.
4. Evaluate how the unique characteristics of American Indian tribes and other cultural groups have contributed to Montana's history and contemporary life (e.g., legal and political relationships between and among tribal, state, and federal governments).
5. Analyze the conflicts resulting from cultural assimilation and cultural preservation among various ethnic and racial groups in Montana, the United States and the world.
6. Analyze the interactions of individuals, groups and institutions in society (e.g., social mobility, class conflict, globalization).

