



Course Overview

High School | Social Studies | Law & Justice - Last Updated on April 3, 2025

DESCRIPTION

K-12 Content Area | Mission & Philosophy Statement

- Social Studies prepares the nation’s young people for college, careers, and civic life.
- Inquiry is at the heart of social studies instruction which involves interdisciplinary applications, deep understandings, concepts, and skills from the disciplines.
- Young people require analytic, strategic, chronological, and critical thinking skills to prepare for participating in democratic decision-making.
- Social studies instruction directly and explicitly connects to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.

Course Description

This elective course offers students an engaging exploration of the American legal system and the pursuit of justice in a democratic society. Blending elements of sociology, political science, and history, the course provides a broad understanding of how law functions in everyday life—from Supreme Court decisions and law enforcement practices to criminal justice procedures and civil court processes. Students will examine the structure, function, and challenges of the U.S. legal system through case studies, collaborative problem-solving, and group presentations. Topics include citizens’ rights, criminal behavior, juvenile justice, corrections, and civil litigation. The course culminates in an in-depth student research project that allows for critical analysis of a current legal issue or area of interest.

The curriculum is divided into six units that guide students through the foundations and complexities of American law. Students will begin by understanding the purpose and structure of laws in society before exploring individual rights and classifications of crime. They’ll then examine the role and responsibilities of law enforcement agencies at the federal, state, and local levels. A focused study on juvenile justice and the court system introduces students to trial procedures and the corrections system, highlighting both its functions and ongoing challenges. In later units, students will investigate contemporary legal issues and follow the civil court process from filing to verdict. This course fosters civic awareness, analytical thinking, and a deeper appreciation for the role of law in shaping a just society.

STANDARDS

Pennsylvania - High School - Civics and Government - US History

5.1.U.A.

5.1.U.C.

5.2.U.B.

5.2.U.C.

5.2.U.D.

5.3.U.F.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Objectives for this course are aligned to Pennsylvania Standards in History, Civics and Government, Economics, and Geography.



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ASSESSMENT TYPES

The following assessment types will be used during the course:

- Curriculum-based Measures
- Formative Assessments
- Summative Assessments

SUGGESTED METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Below is a list of suggested strategies for high-quality instruction in Social Studies:

- Instructional components outlined in the *Framework for Teaching*
- Lecture/discussion
- Directed research
- Demonstrations
- Inquiry-based instruction

RESOURCES