



ANSONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Introduction to Criminal Justice from University of Bridgeport (Grades 10-12)

Courtesy · **P**ride · **P**erseverance · **C**ooperation

Chargers Promoting Positive Change

The mission of AHS is to prepare all students to reach their potential by teaching them the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary for academic, civic, and social success. Students will be college and career ready in the ever-changing technological world of the 21st century by meeting high expectations, engaging in authentic problem solving, and utilizing critical thinking.

Academic Expectations

- Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems
- Access, evaluate, apply, and communicate information and ideas through writing, speaking, and effective use of technology
- Read effectively for a variety of purposes
- Work independently, reflectively, and/or collaboratively to accomplish goals

Civic Expectation

- Demonstrate service to the school and community

Social Expectation

- Demonstrate respect for self, others, and property within our school community

Ansonia's Vision of a Graduate

Content Area: Social Studies	Course: Introduction to Criminal Justice
Vision of Graduate: • Communication & Collaborator • Critical Thinking • Life Long Learner • Responsible Citizen	Standards for Social Studies 1. Inquiry: Developing questions, conducting investigations, evaluating evidence, and communicating conclusions 2. History: Understanding change over time, multiple perspectives, evidence, and historical argumentation 3. Geography: Analyzing places, environments, populations, and global connections 4. Economics: Examining decision-making, markets, resources, and economic systems 5. Civics: Exploring institutions, civic participation, democratic processes, and the rule of law
Unit Titles	
Unit 1: Types of Crime	
Unit 2: Types of Murder and Defenses	
Unit 3: Federalism and Types of Laws	
Unit 4: Law Enforcement	
Unit 5: Law Enforcement and the Constitution	
Unit 6: Criminal Trials	
Unit 7: Judicial System	
Unit 8: Punishment and Sentencing	
Unit 9: Prisons and Jails	
Unit 10: Juvenile Justice	

Course Overview:

Introduction to Criminal Justice is a year-long course offered in partnership with University of Bridgeport and is designed to introduce students in grades 10–12 to the foundational concepts, systems, and processes that shape the American criminal justice system. Students examine how laws are created, interpreted, and enforced while exploring the historical, political, and constitutional principles that guide civic life. Through an analysis of crime types, theories of criminal behavior, and the structure of local, state, and federal systems, students build an understanding of how justice is defined and applied in a democratic society. Key themes include the balance between individual rights and public safety, the role of government institutions, and the ways social, cultural, and historical contexts influence what is considered criminal behavior.

Across units such as types of crime, homicide and defenses, federalism, law enforcement, courts, sentencing, corrections, and juvenile justice, students engage in case-based learning, structured debates, simulations, and argumentative writing. Emphasis is placed on interpreting primary and secondary sources, applying constitutional principles to real-world scenarios, and constructing evidence-based arguments. Students regularly analyze legal cases and ethical dilemmas to determine culpability, evaluate justice system decisions, and consider the impact of policy on individuals and communities. By the end of the course, students are expected to demonstrate critical thinking, civic understanding, and the ability to articulate reasoned judgments about complex issues within the criminal justice system.

Unit 1: Types of Crimes

Priority Standards:	Supporting Standards:
CIV 9-12.2 Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles US.Inq.4.b Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence, relevant examples, and pertinent details RH.9-10.4 Determine meaning of domain-specific vocabulary in social studies texts WHST.9-10 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
Big Ideas	Essential Questions
• Crime is socially constructed, meaning that behaviors are defined as criminal based on changing cultural, political, and historical contexts. Competing models of crime (conflict, consensus, and integrated) explain how societies determine what is considered deviant and how power influences those definitions.	• What makes some behaviors criminal and others not? • How do conflict, consensus, and integrated models differ? • What is at the root of criminal behavior?
AHS Expectations	
• Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems. • Access, evaluate, apply and communicate information and ideas through writing, speaking and effective use of technology. • Read effectively for a variety of purposes. • Work independently, reflectively, and/or collaboratively to accomplish goals.	
Skills (I will be able to...)	

- Analyze and compare models of crime and justice
- Determine and interpret types of crime using evidence
- Construct written explanations using reasoning and examples
- Evaluate how social and political systems define crime
- Apply criminological theories to real-world scenarios

Unit 2: Types of Murder and Defenses

Priority Standards:	Supporting Standards:
RH.9-10.4 Determine meaning of domain-specific vocabulary US.Inq.4.b Construct explanations using reasoning and evidence CG.Civ.5.a Evaluate relationship between law-making, enforcement, and interpretation	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
Big Ideas	Essential Questions
• Criminal homicide is differentiated by levels of intent, which determine degrees of culpability and punishment. • Legal responsibility is shaped not only by actions but also by mental state (mens rea) and legally recognized defenses that can reduce or eliminate guilt.	• How does intent influence degrees of murder? • When is someone legally responsible for a crime? • What defenses can reduce or eliminate criminal liability?
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Skills (I will be able to...)	
• Distinguish between degrees of homicide • Identify mens rea and actus reus in cases • Evaluate legal defenses using evidence • Construct arguments using legal reasoning • Apply legal concepts to case-based scenarios	

Unit 3: Federalism and Types of Laws

Priority Standards:	Supporting Standards:
CIV 9-12.1 Distinguish powers of government at all levels CIV 9-12.4 Explain constitutional structure and limits of government CIV 9-12.2 Evaluate civic systems and democratic principles US.Inq.4.b Construct explanations using evidence and reasoning	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
Big Ideas	Essential Questions
The U.S. system of federalism divides legal authority between state and federal governments, shaping how laws are created, enforced, and interpreted. Criminal and civil law serve different purposes, and constitutional protections ensure a balance between governmental power and individual rights.	- How does the Constitution balance government power and individual rights? - What determines state vs. federal authority? - How are criminal and civil laws different?
AHS Expectations	
- Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems. - Access, evaluate, apply and communicate information and ideas through writing, speaking and effective use of technology. - Read effectively for a variety of purposes. - Work independently, reflectively, and/or collaboratively to accomplish goals.	
Skills (I will be able to...)	

- Categorize state vs. federal powers
- Distinguish civil vs. criminal law
- Apply constitutional principles to case scenarios
- Evaluate legal consequences of behavior
- Construct arguments using evidence

Unit 4: Law Enforcement

Priority Standards:	Supporting Standards:
CIV 9-12.1 Distinguish government powers and responsibilities CG.Civ.5.a Evaluate enforcement and interpretation of laws US.Inq.4.b Construct explanations using reasoning and evidence WHST.9-10 Write arguments using discipline-specific content	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 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.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
Big Ideas	Essential Questions
• Law enforcement operates within a layered system of local, state, and federal jurisdictions, each with distinct responsibilities in maintaining public safety. Effective policing requires balancing crime control, officer discretion, and constitutional protections for citizens.	• When should a crime be handled locally vs. federally? • What responsibilities do law enforcement agencies have? • How should police balance risk and civil liberties?
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Skills (I will be able to...)	

- Differentiate law enforcement agencies and jurisdictions
- Analyze police decision-making and ethics
- Evaluate use of force and constitutional limits
- Construct arguments about policing practices
- Interpret real-world policing scenarios

Unit 5: Federalism and Types of Laws

Priority Standards:	Supporting Standards:
CIV 9-12.1 Distinguish powers of government at all levels CIV 9-12.4 Explain constitutional structure and limits of government CIV 9-12.2 Evaluate civic systems and democratic principles US.Inq.4.b Construct explanations using evidence and reasoning	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
Big Ideas	Essential Questions
The U.S. system of federalism divides legal authority between state and federal governments, shaping how laws are created, enforced, and interpreted. Criminal and civil law serve different purposes, and constitutional protections ensure a balance between governmental power and individual rights.	- How does the Constitution balance government power and individual rights? - What determines state vs. federal authority? - How are criminal and civil laws different?
AHS Expectations	

- Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems.
- Access, evaluate, apply and communicate information and ideas through writing, speaking and effective use of technology.
- Read effectively for a variety of purposes.
- Work independently, reflectively, and/or collaboratively to accomplish goals.

Skills (I will be able to...)

- Categorize state vs. federal powers
- Distinguish civil vs. criminal law
- Apply constitutional principles to case scenarios
- Evaluate legal consequences of behavior
- Construct arguments using evidence

Unit 6: Federalism and Types of Laws

Priority Standards:	Supporting Standards:
CIV 9-12.1 Distinguish powers of government at all levels CIV 9-12.4 Explain constitutional structure and limits of government CIV 9-12.2 Evaluate civic systems and democratic principles US.Inq.4.b Construct explanations using evidence and reasoning	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
Big Ideas	Essential Questions
• The U.S. system of federalism divides legal authority between state and federal governments, shaping how laws are created, enforced, and interpreted. Criminal and civil law serve different purposes, and constitutional protections ensure a balance between governmental power and individual rights.	• How does the Constitution balance government power and individual rights? • What determines state vs. federal authority? • How are criminal and civil laws different?
AHS Expectations	
• Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems. • Access, evaluate, apply and communicate information and ideas through writing, speaking and effective use of technology. • Read effectively for a variety of purposes. • Work independently, reflectively, and/or collaboratively to accomplish goals.	
Skills (I will be able to...)	

- Categorize state vs. federal powers
- Distinguish civil vs. criminal law
- Apply constitutional principles to case scenarios
- Evaluate legal consequences of behavior
- Construct arguments using evidence

Unit 7: Judicial System

Unit 7: Judicial System	
Priority Standards:	Supporting Standards:
CG.Civ.5.a Evaluate justice system balance CG.Civ.2.e Analyze citizen rights CG.Civ.4.c Explain constitutional interpretation over time US.Inq.4.b Construct explanations using evidence	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5 Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
Big Ideas	Essential Questions
The judicial system interprets and applies laws through a hierarchical court structure guided by precedent, ensuring consistency and fairness in legal decisions. Judicial review allows courts to serve as a check on government power while adapting constitutional principles to new circumstances.	- Why do courts follow precedent? - When should precedent be overturned? - How do courts influence government power?
AHS Expectations	
- Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems. - Access, evaluate, apply and communicate information and ideas through writing, speaking and effective use of technology. - Read effectively for a variety of purposes. - Work independently, reflectively, and/or collaboratively to accomplish goals.	

Skills (I will be able to...)
• Analyze court decisions and precedent • Explain judicial reasoning • Evaluate appellate court rulings • Construct written legal opinions • Apply constitutional interpretation

Unit 8: Punishment and Sentencing

Unit 8: Punishment and Sentencing	
Priority Standards:	Supporting Standards:
CG.Civ.2.e Analyze rights and responsibilities CG.Civ.5.a Evaluate justice system balance RH.9-10.4 Analyze disciplinary vocabulary WHST.9-10 Write arguments using evidence	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 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.RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
Big Ideas	Essential Questions
Sentencing decisions reflect competing goals of punishment, deterrence, rehabilitation, and public safety, often influenced by legal guidelines and judicial discretion. Social factors such as race, wealth, and status can significantly impact sentencing outcomes, raising questions of fairness and justice.	- How do race, wealth, and status affect sentencing? - What is the purpose of punishment? - How do courts decide appropriate sentences?
AHS Expectations	
- Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems. - Access, evaluate, apply and communicate information and ideas through writing, speaking and effective use of technology. - Read effectively for a variety of purposes. - Work independently, reflectively, and/or collaboratively to accomplish goals.	
Skills (I will be able to...)	

- Evaluate sentencing decisions
- Compare theories of punishment
- Apply sentencing guidelines to cases
- Construct written sentencing arguments
- Analyze fairness in the justice system

Unit 9: Prisons and Jails

Priority Standards:	Supporting Standards:
CG.Civ.5.a Evaluate justice system balance US.Inq.4.b Construct explanations using evidence CIV 9-12.1 Distinguish government roles WHST.9-10 Write arguments using evidence	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
Big Ideas	Essential Questions
• Incarceration systems are designed to balance punishment, deterrence, rehabilitation, and incapacitation, but often struggle to achieve these goals equitably. Correctional practices raise ethical and constitutional questions about human rights, conditions of confinement, and the effectiveness of incarceration.	• What is the goal of incarceration? • Are prisons effective at rehabilitation? • Is solitary confinement ethical or constitutional?
AHS Expectations	
• Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems. • Access, evaluate, apply and communicate information and ideas through writing, speaking and effective use of technology. • Read effectively for a variety of purposes. • Work independently, reflectively, and/or collaboratively to accomplish goals.	
Skills (I will be able to...)	

- Evaluate correctional systems
- Analyze incarceration practices
- Construct arguments about prison reform
- Apply constitutional reasoning to corrections
- Compare correctional models

Unit 10: Juvenile Justice

Priority Standards:	Supporting Standards:
CG.Civ.5.a Evaluate justice system balance US.Inq.4.b Construct explanations using evidence WHST.9-10 Write arguments using evidence	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.1 Write arguments focused on <i>discipline-specific content</i>.
Big Ideas	Essential Questions
Juvenile justice systems are based on the principle that youth are developmentally different from adults and therefore require separate legal treatment focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment. Decisions about trying juveniles as adults reflect ongoing tensions between accountability, public safety, and developmental psychology.	- Should juveniles be tried as adults? - How does age affect culpability? - What is the purpose of juvenile justice?
AHS Expectations	

- Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems.
- Access, evaluate, apply and communicate information and ideas through writing, speaking and effective use of technology.
- Read effectively for a variety of purposes.
- Work independently, reflectively, and/or collaboratively to accomplish goals.

Skills (I will be able to...)

- Evaluate juvenile sentencing decisions
- Analyze juvenile vs. adult justice systems
- Construct arguments about culpability
- Apply legal reasoning to case studies
- Interpret juvenile justice scenarios