TAMALPAIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Street Law Course of Study

Overview Information

Title of Course: Street Law	
Course Author(s): Jon Hirsh; Kathleen McCormick; Aaron Pribble	Schools where the course will be taught: Tam, Archie, Redwood, Tamiscal, San Andreas
Length of Course: One semester	Subject Area and Discipline: Social Studies
Grade Levels: 11th and 12th	Is this course an integrated course? No
Is this course being submitted for possible UC honors designation? No	Are you seeking UC approval? If so, in what area (A-G)? Yes, G
Prerequisites (required or recommended): None	Co-requisites (required or recommended): None
If there are prerequisites for the course, please include a justification as to why they are in place: N/A	
Check all that apply: ✅ UC A-G course ❑ Graduation Requirement (specify the requirement this course meets) ✅ Elective ❑ Honors/AP ❑ CTE	

Introduction to the Course

Course Overview:

Street Law is an introduction to the American legal system designed specifically for high school seniors preparing to transition into adulthood. The course serves to transition students from passive observers of the news to active participants in the justice system by exploring the foundational architecture of constitutional law, the high stakes of the criminal justice system, and the daily applications of civil law. Over the course of three units, students will not just study statutes, but actively apply them and examine the boundaries of their rights under the Bill of Rights, stepping into the courtroom for a hands-on criminal Mock Trial simulation, and evaluating real-world liability through case studies. Ultimately, the course equips students with the critical reading, analytical reasoning, and civil communication skills necessary to navigate legal rights and responsibilities, and serves to prepare students to confidently handle adult milestones from apartment leases and consumer contracts to workplace rights and interactions with law enforcement.

Unit 1 Title: ***Introduction to Law***

Unit Summary:

The first unit of the Street Law course is intended to provide students with a foundational understanding of the U.S. legal system in general. It works on the assumption that students have no prior knowledge of the legal system or its many facets. In this unit, students will learn about concepts of justice and the philosophical underpinnings of law, such as the goals of the legal system, our constitutional foundations in documents such as the bill of rights, and the organization of our court system at the state and federal levels. Students will learn about the ways that laws are created by different branches of government at federal, state and municipal levels, as well as the attorney-client relationship and the rules which govern it.

Unit Outcomes:

Content

1. Describe the goals of the legal system in the United States and analyze how those goals apply to different laws we discuss.
2. Apply understanding of specific amendments from the Bill of Rights (amendments 1-10) to specific legal cases and laws discussed to demonstrate legal precedents and case law.
3. Explain how laws are created, challenged and changed at the local, state and federal levels within the system of courts in the United States and the different branches of government, as well as the process by which it is determined whether or not a law has been broken.
4. Compare and describe different types of courts that hear cases, and how a case might move through the courts if an initial ruling is appealed.
5. Explain the rules which govern the attorney-client relationship.

Skills

1. 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.
2. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source (such as the U.S. Constitution); provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
3. 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.
4. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text
5. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
6. 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

Sample Unit Assignments:

Bill of Rights Jigsaw, Gallery Walk and Jeopardy! In small groups, students collaborate to learn about the 10 amendments of the Bill of Rights. For each amendment, the groups must create a unique, culturally relevant title, a summary of the rights protected in their own words, which of the goals of the legal system that right aims to protect, and a specific court case which revolved around that amendment. After each group completes their documents, students walk around to posters on the wall which show different case examples such as Tinker v. Des Moines, Atkins v. Virginia, Cunningham v. California, Florida v. Bostick, and others, identifying which amendment from the Bill of Rights was in question, and which side they would rule in favor of if they were a judge on the Supreme Court. This transitions smoothly into a class discussion of each case to clarify understanding of each amendment, and is concluded with a game of Bill of Rights Jeopardy.

Sample unit Assessment: Students will identify the primary goals of the legal system and evaluate how effectively specific laws meet those goals.

Unit 2 Title: ***Criminal Law***

Unit Summary:

In the second unit of Street Law students will investigate how the laws define crime and how the justice system responds when those laws are broken. Criminal law focuses on actions that harm individuals or society, and outlines how the government responds to those actions. Students will examine key questions such as: What makes something a crime? What rights do people have when they are accused of a crime? What is a search and when is it legal? Students will also learn about important concepts like intent, the elements of a crime, evidence, investigations, forensics, due process, juries, the role of judges and attorneys, and systems of incarceration. Students will connect the law to real-life situations by examining real and hypothetical cases. Students will also explore the rights of defendants, including protections during arrest and questioning, and examine different types of legal defenses. Students will focus on their rights and responsibilities and understand how the justice system balances fairness, safety, and justice, specifically analyzing how those rights and responsibilities are different for juvenile and adult defendants.

Unit Outcomes:

Content

1. Students will explain what makes an act a crime, by identifying the elements of a crime, including intent.
2. Students will describe the rights of individuals accused of a crime, including protections during searches, arrests and questioning.
3. Students will analyze how the criminal justice system responds to a crime, including the roles of police, lawyers, judges and juries.
4. Students will understand and apply key legal concepts including evidence, due process, and burden of proof.
5. Students will evaluate different types of legal defenses and how they are used in criminal cases.
6. Students will explain how trials work, including how decisions are made about guilt or innocence.
7. Students will apply legal reasoning to real and hypothetical cases by identifying facts, issues, and possible outcomes.
8. Students will Analyze how forensic science is used in criminal investigations by examining different types of evidence (such as fingerprints, DNA, and trace materials) and explaining how this evidence can support or challenge a case in court.
9. Students will analyze the priorities, processes and possible outcomes specific to the juvenile justice process, and how those compare and contrast with the justice process for adults.

Skills

1. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.1. Students will cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of defenses to crimes, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
2. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.2. Students will determine the central ideas or information of California's Minor in Possession of Alcohol Laws, Business and Professions Code 25662 BP and Vehicle Code 13202.5 VC; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
3. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.3. Students will evaluate various explanations for California's Good Samaritan and 911 Good Samaritan Laws and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
4. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.4. Students will determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in California sexual assault penal codes 261(a)(2), 261(a)(3), and 261.5., including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.
5. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.7. Students will integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in drunk driving homicide news videos and the California penal code in order to address whether such actions should be prosecuted as involuntary manslaughter or second degree murder.
6. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.8. Students will evaluate local city curfew ordinance's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

Sample Unit Assignments:

Is it a crime? Case Analysis. To build understanding of the elements of a crime (act, intent, harm) students will read short scenarios and decide Is this a crime? What is the act? What is the intent? What harm was caused?

Search and Seizure Scenarios. Students will analyze real-life situations (school locker or backpack search, phone search, or car search) and decide if the search was legal, what rights are involved and if the search is admissible in court. Students will write a short justification for their response using CER format. Students can also engage in an informal debate: *Should schools have more power to search students?*

Study of Legal Defenses. Students will match definitions to types of defenses and apply these defenses to short case scenarios. In groups students will engage in discussion as to which defense is strongest in a case.

Sample unit Assessment:

Mock Trial: Students will be assigned a role in a criminal trial (previous cases used in Mock Trial competition). Working with their group, defense or prosecution, they will prepare and perform their part of the case. Students will use evidence, legal reasoning, and clear communication to argue their position, with the goal of learning how the adversarial trial process works by taking part in it.

Unit 3 Title: *Civil Law*

Unit Summary:

As opposed to the wrongs against society of criminal law, students will learn about the wrongs against individuals of civil law, which aims to provide compensation rather than punishment. Students will explore topics such as torts; standards of care; liability; small claims court; negligence; defamation; alternative dispute resolution; consumer law; housing law; family law; divorce law; bankruptcy law; contract law and immigration law. Students will be encouraged to consider how the law of wrongful injury acts to uphold standards of reasonable care, applying this precept to their lives and the world around them.

Unit Outcomes:

Content

1. Students will compare and contrast criminal law with civil law.
2. Students will describe a tort as wrong to an individual.
3. Students will identify the reasonable person standard of care and juxtaposed that against the concept of liability.
4. Students will explore the benefits and drawbacks of the small claims court system.
5. Students will apply the four pillars of negligence to case studies and contemporary fact patterns.
6. Students will evaluate the extent to which real and hypothetical individuals are liable for defamation.
7. Students will evaluate the efficacy of alternative dispute resolution.
8. Students will analyze how various stems of civil law such as family and housing law apply to their lives beyond high school.

Skills

1. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.2. Students will determine the central ideas or information of search warrant requirements; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
2. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.1. Students will cite specific textual evidence to support warrantless car searches requirements, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
3. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.4. Students will determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a defamation reading, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.
4. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.7. Students will integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in a McDonald's Hot Coffee video and reading in order to address a question involving civil liability.
5. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.8. Students will evaluate a case participant's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information from another case participant in a mediation simulation involving liability for a stolen bicycle.
6. CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.11-12.10. Students will read and comprehend a Four Elements of Negligence article, which is in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band, independently and proficiently.

Sample Unit Assignments:

Injury Liability Hypotheticals. As an introduction to the concept of liability, students will evaluate whether the plaintiffs in 15 discrete fact patterns were liable for their conduct, such as a dog biting a neighbor, a babysitter watching a child, and a teenager posting on social media.

Case of the Spilled Coffee Simulation. Students will engage in mini hearings with a judge, plaintiff attorney, and defense attorney to relitigate *Liebeck v. McDonald's Restaurants, P.T.S., Inc..* and determine what liability, in any, McDonald's has for the burns suffered by Ms. Stella Liebeck as a result of her spilling hot coffee in her lap.

Stolen Bike Mediation. In groups students will attempt to resolve through mediation a case involving a stolen bicycle, with the goal of achieving a satisfactory outcome for the affected parties and thereby avoiding a potentially costly and painful lawsuit.

Sample unit Assessment:

Choose Your Own Civil Law Adventure. Students will choose one area of civil law in which they are interested and create an authentic artifact, such as a booklet, brochure, magazine or podcast, that demonstrates how their

subject is applicable to themselves and their society. Potential subjects include consumer law; housing law; family law; divorce law; bankruptcy law; contract law and immigration law.

Recommended Texts and Resources:

Textbook:
Street Law, Inc. *Street Law: A Course in Practical Law*. 10th ed., McGraw Hill, 2021.

Supplementary Resources:
Bergman, Paul, and Sara J. Berman. *The Criminal Law Handbook: Know Your Rights, Survive the System*. 12th ed., Nolo, 2011.

Shouse Law Group. *Shouse Law Group*, 2025, https://www.shouselaw.com/.

The Constitution of the United States. National Archives, 2024, https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript.

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