

# INDIAN HILL EXEMPTED VILLAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Social Studies Curriculum - May 2009

### Contemporary American Politics – Semester Course

Overall **Big Ideas** of this course:

- Students will study American government and politics with a focus on current events and societal issues.
- This course builds on the knowledge that students acquired in American history and government courses and challenges students to apply this prior knowledge to today's most important topics.
- While students are encouraged to discuss and debate, they will also take part in objective study of relevant legislation and court decisions.

**Essential Questions** (addressed in each unit throughout the course):

- What are the important facts to understand before forming an opinion on this issue?
- What interest groups in the United States impact the political realities that frame this issue?
- What economic constraints or considerations are important for understanding this issue?
- Is there any relevant Constitutional Law or Supreme Court Case Law that defines this issue?
- What relevant legislation provides the legal framework for this issue; is there any pending legislation and who is/are its sponsor(s)?
- Was this issue a relevant force/factor in any recent election for public office in the United States?
- What is the likely resolution of the issue within U.S. society?

### Contemporary American Politics: Introduction

#### **Main Ideas:**

#### **Political Parties and Campaigning:**

- Political Parties are more issue-oriented than election oriented.
- U.S. Political Parties are coalitions, or unions of people with diverse interests.
- "Big Tent" means that parties want to attract a variety of people into their coalitions.
- Elections impact public policy, and the character and makeup of U.S. political parties affects elections.

#### **Voting Behavior:**

- Understand the impact of voter turnout on elections.
- Compares voter turnout in the U.S. with other nations and describes categories of likely voters and non-voters.
- Analyze demographic voting trends.

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***Skills & Objectives:***

- Students will be able to identify likely voters and nonvoters.
- Students will be able to describe American political parties as coalitions of people with diverse interests that come together for the purpose of winning elections.
- Students will be able to define the term "Big Tent."
- Students will be able to describe the impact of elections on public policy and name two examples from history by identifying: a) issues from the election, b) the date and winning candidate and c) a specific public policy that changed as a result of the election.

***Main Ideas:***

**Gun Control and the Death Penalty:**

Students will understand the Gun Control and Death Penalty Issue within the framework of U.S. Politics, Supreme Court cases and legislation.

***Skills & Objectives:***

- Students will identify the NRA as an interest group that impacts the gun control issue in the U.S.
- Students will understand the history of the 2nd amendment and its interpretation by the Supreme Court.
- Students will analyze the impact of gun violence on public opinion with regards to gun control efforts.
- Students will be able to identify the Brady Bill as important recent gun legislation.
- Students will analyze facts and statistics about the use of the death penalty in the United States as well as methods of execution and relevant Supreme Court cases.

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##### **Main Ideas:**

##### **Life Issues - Stem Cell Research, Cloning and Abortion:**

- Examine the scientific processes of Cloning and Stem Cell Research for the purpose of understanding the relevant facts.
- Examine the history of the Stem Cell Research and Cloning Debates for the purpose of understanding the current political environment.
- Identify important interest groups on either side of these issues, as well as their impact on the political process.
- Know the Republican and Democratic Parties current and historic stances on these issues as expressed in the most recent version of the party platform.

##### **Abortion:**

- Understand methods of abortion for the purpose of identifying trimesters and the types of abortion used/allowed in each.
- Identify Roe v. Wade as the Supreme Court Case that made it impossible for states to outlaw abortion the U.S.A.
- Identify other relevant post-Roe cases and their impact on abortion law.
- Identify relevant interest groups in the abortion debate.

##### **Skills & Objectives:**

- Explain patterns of historical continuity and change by challenging arguments of historical inevitability.
- Use historical interpretations to explain current issues.
- Analyze how issues may be viewed differently by various cultural groups
- Explain the role of diverse cultural institutions in shaping American society.
- Evaluate, take and defend positions about issues concerning the alignment of the characteristics of American democracy with realities in the United States today.
- Explain how the U.S. Constitution has evolved including its philosophical foundations, amendments and court interpretations.
- Evaluate various means for citizens to take action on a particular issue.
- Explain how the exercise of a citizen's rights and responsibilities helps to strengthen a democracy.
- Obtain and evaluate information from public records and other resources related to a public policy issue.
- Critique data and information to determine the adequacy of support for conclusions.

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#### **Main Ideas:**

#### **U.S. Foreign Policy - Arab/Israeli Conflict**

- Discuss and identify the continuing conflict in the Middle East between Palestinians and Israelis.
- Create an understanding of the historic role of the United States as a supporter of Israel and how that has impacted U.S. relations with other Arab states in the Middle East.
- Discuss and identify the various interest groups in the United States that make continued U.S. support for Israel likely.
- Identify and understand the term: "Two State Solution" and identify various ways the United States could play a role in seeing it become reality.
- Identify obstacles to peace in Israel and discuss possible ways they could be overcome.

#### **Skills & Objectives:**

- Explain patterns of historical continuity and change by challenging arguments of historical inevitability. *Reinforced*
- Use historical interpretations to explain current issues.
- Analyze how issues may be viewed differently by various cultural groups.
- Explain the role of diverse cultural institutions in shaping American society.
- Explain how the character and meaning of a place reflect a society's economics, politics, social values, ideology and culture.
- Use appropriate data sources and geographic tools to analyze and evaluate public policies.
- Analyze how scarcity of productive resources affects supply, demand, inflation and economic choices.
- Explain how voluntary worldwide trade, specialization and interdependence among countries affect standards of living and economic growth.
- Evaluate, take and defend positions about issues concerning the alignment of the characteristics of American democracy with realities in the United States today.
- Evaluate various means for citizens to take action on a particular issue.
- Explain how the exercise of a citizen's rights and responsibilities helps to strengthen a democracy.
- Obtain and evaluate information from public records and other resources related to a public policy issue.

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#### Main Ideas:

#### Immigration

- Discuss the philosophical and legal framework of U.S. immigration policy.
- Create an understanding of the current immigration debate with regards to immigrants from Mexico and S. America by identifying: a) demographic trends and statistics; b) recent and current proposed legislation and; c) interests groups on either side of the immigration debate.
- Review the history of U.S. immigration policy since the 1800's.
- Compare U.S. immigration policy with that of the European Union, and compare immigration concerns that developing nations have with those of developed nations.
- Analyze immigration's impact on wages and jobs in the past (for example- meat packing industry) to provide historical framework for the current debate.

#### Skills & Objectives:

- Identify reasons for and the impacts of multinational economic organizations
  - European Monetary Union *Developed*
  - North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) *Developed*
- Explain how the character and meaning of a place reflect a society's economics, politics, social values, ideology and culture.
- Evaluate the consequences of geographic and environmental changes resulting from governmental policies and human modifications to the physical environment.
- Use appropriate data sources and geographic tools to analyze and evaluate public policies.
- Analyze how scarcity of productive resources affects supply, demand, inflation and economic choices.
- Explain how voluntary worldwide trade, specialization and interdependence among countries affect standards of living and economic growth.
- Analyze the role of fiscal and regulatory policies in a mixed economy.
- Evaluate various means for citizens to take action on a particular issue.
- Explain how the exercise of a citizen's rights and responsibilities helps to strengthen a democracy.
- Obtain and evaluate information from public records and other resources related to a public policy issue.

#### Main Ideas:

- The "War on Drugs"
- U.S. Foreign Policy – China
- U.S. Foreign Policy - "War on Terror"
- The Future of Social Security & the Aging of America

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- Identify and discuss environmental policy and “Green” occupations.
- Identify interest groups that affect U.S. policies.
- Understand the role of values and the challenges of differing values in society.
- Discuss the role of compromise, economic factors and politics.

#### ***Skills & Objectives:***

- Identify reasons for and the impacts of multinational economic organizations
- Explain patterns of historical continuity and change by challenging arguments of historical inevitability.
- Use historical interpretations to explain current issues.
- Analyze how issues may be viewed differently by various cultural groups.
- Identify the causes of political, economic and social oppression and analyze ways individuals, organizations and countries respond to resulting conflicts.
- Explain the role of diverse cultural institutions in shaping American society.
- Explain how the character and meaning of a place reflect a society's economics, politics, social values, ideology and culture.
- Evaluate the consequences of geographic and environmental changes resulting from governmental policies and human modifications to the physical environment.
- Use appropriate data sources and geographic tools to analyze and evaluate public policies.
- Analyze how scarcity of productive resources affects supply, demand, inflation and economic choices.
- Explain how voluntary worldwide trade, specialization and interdependence among countries affect standards of living and economic growth.
- Analyze the role of fiscal and regulatory policies in a mixed economy.
- Evaluate, take and defend positions about issues concerning the alignment of the characteristics of American democracy with realities in the United States today.
- Work in groups to analyze an issue and make decisions.