**Contemporary Law Course Syllabus // 2019-2020**

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**Contemporary Law Course Overview**

The law affects us in more ways than we realize! It plays a huge role in how people interact with one another, with their families, their cities, with property, as consumers, as citizens and noncitizens, as students, and much more. On one hand, the law is meant to protect people and give them rights. On the other hand, the law also prosecutes and punishes people. Laws exist on international, tribal, national, state, and local levels, and have both a history and a future. That is, through a variety of processes, laws can change, be eliminated, and new laws can be added. In other words, the law is ever changing. Therefore, not only do we need to know the history behind our laws, but also, we must learn our rights under the law, and we must know how to change the future of laws that may be unjust.

The 10th grade Contemporary Law class is the foundational class in the Law and Politics Pathway, and it is followed by the 11th grade Constitutional Law class. In the Contemporary Law class, students will learn how laws are developed, how they affect people in different areas of life, and how they are changed. We will focus on civil and criminal law, which are most of the laws that affect people on a daily basis. We will also discuss how these laws are enforced through the criminal justice system, including police, courts, and incarceration. While we will consider these issues on a national level, there will be an emphasis on Connecticut and New Haven. In this class, we will do three mock trials, one of which will take place at the federal courthouse. We will also write essays and have debates on different aspects of law. Finally, we will conclude the year by equipping ourselves and each other with the critical skills of knowing and exercising our own rights.

**Essential Questions:**

***Yearlong:*** *How does US law both reflect and influence the values and beliefs of our society?*

***Yearlong:*** *How is the legal system created to function vs. how does it actually operate? How should it operate?*

**Unit 1:** Is the law objective or subjective?

**Unit 2:** Is justice served in the courtroom?

**Unit 3:** How do people resolve disputes? What are alternative models?

**Unit 4:** Which activities are criminalized and why? Is the criminal justice system just? Is it effective?

**Unit 5:** What are the rights of people living in the United States, and how do we exercise our rights?

**NHPS Social Studies Standards:**

**1. Critical Reading and Inquiry -** Students can comprehend and analyze information, ask questions, and develop informed opinions.

**2. Research and Argument -** Students can find, select and use evidence from a variety of sources to support and defend a position.

**3. Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools -** Students can apply tools and concepts of civics, history, geography, economics and other social sciences to analyze and evaluate historical situations.

**4. Communication and Civic Participation -** Students can communicate clearly to express ideas, participate in and influence their local, national and global communities.

**21st Century Competencies: We will be working with all 6 competencies in this course.**

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| **Unit # & Name** | **Unit Description** | **Performance Tasks / Assessments** |
| 1 - Introduction to Law | * Is the law objective or subjective?   + Purpose and history of law   + Federal, state, and local lawmaking   + Three branches of government | * Is Law Objective or Subjective? Discussion * Test on Foundations of Law (Vocabulary and Process) |
| 2 - Courts and Trials | * Is justice served in a courtroom?   + Visit New Haven courts   + Federal and state courts, appeals   + Bail, jury selection, deliberation, bias | * Criminal Mock Trial * Is Justice Served in the Courtroom? Essay |
| 3 - Civil Law | * How do people resolve disputes? What are alternative models?   + Civil law vs. criminal law   + Tort law, contract law, family law   + Restorative justice | * Civil Law Mock Trial * Structured Academic Controversy on Family Law |
| 4 - Criminal Law and Mass Incarceration | * Which activities are criminalized and why?   + Most frequently charged crimes   + Juvenile Law * Is the criminal justice system just? Is it effective?   + Police, jails, and prisons   + Immigration law   + Advocacy and Representatives   + Mass incarceration & the 13th | * Advocacy: Speech or Letter * Law Day Event - Criminal Mock Trial II |
| 5 - Civil Rights  and Liberties | * What are the rights of people living in the US, and how do they exercise these rights?   + Discrimination, individual liberties   + Research rights, develop and facilitate workshop | * Structured Academic Controversy on Hate Speech vs. Free Speech * Know Your Rights Workshop |

**Grade Breakdown**

Projects (Mock Trials, Debates/SACs, Essays, Infographics, Speeches, etc.) - 50%

Class Discussion and Participation - 30%

Tests and Quizzes (including mid-term and final) - 20%