# **Current Issues/Civics Syllabus**

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Any additional course materials can be found on: [www.kevincomtois.com](http://www.kevincomtois.com)

***Description:*** Current Issues / Grade: 12 / Full Year

This course examines American Government, the US Constitution, International Relations and the timely domestic and foreign policy issues confronting Americans. Various topics include issues such as the federal deficit, the media, theories regarding global warming and America’s role in the world, especially the Middle East. The class is activity based, involving research, discussion and presentations. Students need to develop opinions on current issues and be able to explain them intelligently. By the time you leave this course, you will be ready to discuss the complexity of the problems facing America today from various ideological viewpoints.

***Required Materials:*** 1)Gateways To Democracy: The Essentials, An Introduction to American Government by John Geer et al (ISBN: 978-0-495-90619-3)

1. Internet access (at home and in school) for current issues research
2. Laptop or tablet to use in the classroom and at home

***Additional Materials***: a) Three ringed binder for notes, research and other class materials

b) Blank lined paper for binder

Please Note: Class notes and discussions will be an integral part of preparation for the exams. Articles and other information **will** be added to the curriculum and will be handed out in class or links available on:

www.kevincomtois.com

**Schedule:** Due to the fact that this class as based on current issues; the timing of lectures, discussion, tests, and oral reports will be scheduled around certain current events and issues.

1. Each student will do a 3-5 minute outline of a news story once a week
2. Each student will do a 10-15 minute audio visual presentation at the end of each quarter on one current issue of that quarter
3. There will be at least three exams per quarter
4. Each student is expected to be prepared to present and/or discuss current issues and American Government during every class meeting

***Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives:***

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

1. Describe and compare important facts, concepts, and theories pertaining to current issues
2. Identify and explain various ideological viewpoints toward current issues
3. Interpret basic data provided by governments, think tanks, and media sources
4. Critically analyze current events with an eye to recognizing ideological interpretation and bias
5. Explain current issues using various ideological approaches
6. Present an oral argument with visual support materials that comprehensively analyzes a certain category of current issues
7. Describe the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights
8. Explain the structure and operation of the three branches of American Government and Federalism
9. Understand the structure and basic history of the United Nations
10. Compare the basic structure and ideologies of various governments in the world to the US Government
11. Connect the power and influence of political parties, interest groups and the mass media to the creation of public perceptions of current issues
12. Understand how the US Government develops and implements economic and social policy
13. Explain the structure, process and history of American elections
14. Identify America’s allies, advisories and enemies among the nations of the world

***Four basic fields of research:***

1. Economic
2. Political
3. Social
4. Foreign

***Teaching Procedures:***

This course is structured around a complete examination of the United States Constitution, Government and the domestic and foreign issues facing the United States. Because participation is an essential element to our Representative Constitutional Democratic Republic, participation in every class is required. Before each class, students should have either 1) read the appropriate material in the text book, 2) prepared material to present to the class for analysis and discussion or 3) be ready to discuss another student’s news report. Each class will begin with a brief discussion of the news of the day. The class will then discuss the meaning of the news. Students will be expected to participate in the class discussions by asking questions and expressing observations about the material at hand. Students are expected to take detailed notes. During the civics portion of the class we will discuss and answer a series of questions related to the text chapter that we are currently working on. The questions will be provided in advance

***Grading Policy:***

**Exams:** 30%

Multiple choice questions, matching and short essays based on class notes, oral news reports, lectures, and class discussions

**Homework**: 25%

Weekly homework will consist of “Ten to Test Yourself” questions at the end of each chapter

**News Reports:** 25%

Weekly news reports on your assigned topic of the month.

**Quarterly Presentations** 20%

Each student will be required to make a presentation each quarter on one of the four basic fields of current issue research.

**Final Project/Presentation (in lieu of final exam)**

More information will be provided throughout the course

**Late Policy:** An assignment that is late lose 10 points (out of a hundred) for each class day that the assignment is late. If an assignment is turned at the end of the day (instead of in class) the assignment will lose 5 points.

**Class Participation:**  Class notes and discussions will be an integral part of the exams. Students must attend class. It is the student’s responsibility to obtain any missed notes due to an absence.

**Make- Up Policy:**A missed test is to be replaced by a make-up exam or a 10 - 12 page paper (method of make-up and subject of paper to be determined by instructor). It is each student’s responsibility to contact the instructor to schedule the makeup exam or to receive the essay topic and due dates.

**Student Accountability***:* Cheating on tests or plagiarism on essays will not be tolerated. If any student is caught cheating they will immediately fail the exam and may be reported to the proper school authorities.