



Course Syllabus: Red, White, and Who? Politics & Government in the Modern Classroom

Number of Credits: 2

Course Instructors: Miriam Woods and Damian Thompson

Course Description: As educators, it is a core responsibility that students are provided the resources to engage in civil and thoughtful political discussions in and outside of the classroom. Our current high school, middle schools, and elementary students will be shaping our nation's future in a very direct and significant way. It is a moral imperative that our future voters are not only taught how to be civically engaged but to also have respectful discussions in an increasingly polarized world.

The purpose of this course is to identify the unique problems facing educators in navigating politics in the classroom. Participants in this class will reflect on our nation's current political climate and the foundations that support our political system. This includes reflections on our nation's elections, political parties, and contemporary media landscape. At the conclusion of the course, participants will develop an implementation plan to increase civic engagement from students and ensure that politically charged discussions are handled in an appropriate manner.

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of our nation's political parties and the basis of each party's respective political perspective.
- Recognize the importance of Iowa's role in our nation's electoral process.
- Analyze trends in our current media landscape and be able to educate students on proper media literacy.
- Understand their own political biases and how to navigate these in the classroom.
- Create a classroom lesson plan or school action plan to be implemented to teach civil discourse and help amplify student voice.

Resources: No texts are required to purchase in order to complete this course

The mission of Iowa Safe Schools is to provide safe, supportive and nurturing learning environments for all students. Staff of the Iowa Safe Schools are experts in the fields of bullying prevention and intervention, developing positive school climate, and advocating for underrepresented and marginalized populations. The Iowa Safe Schools staff provides key insight and awareness in the subject, as they remain actively engaged with local, state, and federal government officials and entities through their direct advocacy/public policy efforts. Staff at Iowa Safe Schools have significant experience in understanding the legislative process and increasing student engagement in local and state politics.

Science Daily. (2006). Emory Study Lights Up The Political Brain. Retrieved July 31, 2019, from <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/01/060131092225.htm>

This study showcases how partisans from both political parties are not influenced by factual information. The research sheds light on why staunch Democrats and Republicans can hear the same information but walk away with opposite conclusions.

Education Week. (2017). Survey: Teachers Talk Politics to Students, Despite Divisive Atmosphere. Retrieved July 31, 2019, from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/04/05/survey-national-politics-causing-classroom-divisions.html>

This study explains the difficulty that educators feel when discussing politically charged topics in the classroom. The survey results linked an increase in bullying incidents and uncivil discourse in the classroom to the 2016 election cycle. Almost half (44 percent) of educators surveyed felt they were adequately trained to discuss controversial issues in a civic manner.

Agarwal-Rangnath, R. (2013). **Social Studies, Literacy, and Social Justice in the Common Core Classroom: A Guide for Teachers**. ISBN: 9780807754085.

This book provides a framework (grades 3-8) to help educators literacy and social students for social studies. This text frames the lessons with the Language Arts Common Core Standards while also making it applicable for the daily realities of the classroom. Each chapter explains how teachers can restructure, reshape, and work with mandated curriculum materials to teach from a critical perspective. The book also discusses how to meet Common Core Standards by teaching language arts and social studies as complementary subjects.

Course Requirements: To receive full credit for the course, participants must complete ALL assignments and respond to specific questions outlined in each assignment. Failure to complete all assignments will result in a disqualification in the course and a failing grade.

Other Course Information:

Getting Started

- After registering for the course, you will be sent an email with the website address, password and course key you need to access your online course, along with login instructions.
- Access each assignment through the course home page. All assignments will be submitted through the Moodle platform on each respective assignment page.
- Please save a backup copy of all course assignments and completed work.

Participation

- You are not required to be present (i.e. online) specific days or times. You will work at your own pace. The course is structured in 3 Weekly Units, however all assignments will not be due until the final day of the course.
- All responses will be posted online. Large documents, files, photographs or PowerPoint presentations may be attached as part of your response by using the "Submit A File" option.
- You may work collaboratively and submit similar responses on all assignments except for quizzes which must be done individually.

INTASC Standards that are addressed in this course:

- 2. The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.
- 3. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
- 4. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills.
- 5. The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
- 6. The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
- 7. The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
- 9. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professional in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.
- 10. The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

Check the Iowa Teaching Standards that are addressed in this course:

X	1. Enhance Student Achievement		5. Monitoring Student Learning
	2. Content Knowledge	X	6. Classroom Management
X	3. Planning and Preparation	X	7. Professional Growth
X	4. Instructional Strategies	X	8. Professional Responsibilities

Assignment Checklist

Topic/Activity	In Class	Out of Class
Getting to Know the Class; Additional Readings: Take the time to get to know the class layout, read over the Help section, and review any other materials present in the class to get started. Take your time!		3 hrs
<u>Week 1 – What Makes Politics Uncomfortable</u>		
Discussion: Introductions – Participants will introduce themselves to the class and talk about what they hope to gain from the course.	1 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: What is a Democracy? – Participants will reflect on the different types of democracy. Participants will analyze these systems in a discussion post.	1.5 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: The Political Compass – Participants will analyze the contemporary political spectrum and identify where they fall on this “political compass”, identifying their own biases. Participants will reflect on these findings in a discussion post.	1.5 hrs	4 hrs
<u>Week 2 – Elections</u>		
Quiz: Rockin’ the Caucus – Participants will review Iowa’s history and importance regarding presidential elections. Participants will take a quiz on this knowledge.	1 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: Discussing Televised Political Debates – Participants will learn the history of presidential debates in the United States and evaluate their effect on the general public. Participants will discuss these findings with their peers.	2 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: Post-Election Season – Participants will learn about the electoral “off-season” and how politics continues to affect our daily lives and surroundings. Participants will share their findings in a discussion post.	2 hrs	4 hrs
<u>Week 3 – Part(ies) in the U.S.A.</u>		
Discussion: The Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives – Participants will examine resources that examine the basis of liberal versus conservative thought. Participants will reflect on resources analyzed through discussion post.	1 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: Policy vs Personality – Participants will analyze resources defining a candidate’s policy versus personality appeal. Participants will be able to identify between these two items, discussing their findings with their peers.	2 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: Third Parties – Participants will learn the history and increasing presence of third-party candidates in our political environment. Participants will reflect on this in a discussion post.	2 hrs	4 hrs
<u>Week 4 – Staying Engaged in Today’s Media Landscape</u>		
Discussion: Identifying Bias – Participants will examine biases present in popular news media today. Participants will share their reflections.	1 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: The Politics of Social Media – Participants will reflect on how social media has revolutionized our political discourse and candidate communications. Participants will analyze this change in a discussion post.	2 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: Teaching Media Literacy – Participants will be provided resources on teaching modern media literacy. In a discussion post, participants will discuss the strengths of these resources and the unique challenges in their own schools.	2 hrs	4 hrs
<u>Week 5 – Teaching Strategies for Civil Discourse</u>		

Discussion: Teaching Social Justice – In this lesson, participants will review four different approaches to infusing student voice and social justice into their school curriculum. They will reflect on where their curriculum lands and how they can make improvements to their curriculum.	2 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: Having Civil Political Discussions – Participants will be provided resources on ensuring civil discussions in the classroom. Participants will reflect on their own teaching strategies on civil discussions alongside the provided materials.	2 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: Teaching Strategies for Politics & Elections – Participants will examine teaching strategies for election cycles and politics. Participants will compare these strategies with their own and discuss them with their peers.	2 hrs	4 hrs
<u>Week 6 – Amplifying Student Voice</u>		
Discussion: Amplifying Student Voice - In this lesson, participants will learn about the intersectional views that students have and the value of including those perspectives in the classroom. They will understand why the lived experiences of students can enrich the classroom. Additionally, participants will reflect on student views and perspectives and how they would integrate that in their classroom.	2 hrs	3 hrs
Discussion: Fostering Student Engagement – Participants will learn how to properly and professionally foster student engagement in and out of the classroom. Participants will share their thoughts in a discussion post.	2 hrs	3 hrs
Implementation Plan - Participants will design a lesson that can be used to help all students be properly engaged and active in their civic communities.	1 hrs	4 hrs
Total Class Time	30 hours	60 hours

Coursework: Participants can earn up to 135 points total for the course. The following table depicts the breakdown of points possible for the required coursework

Activity	Points
16 Discussion Posts (5 Points Each)	80
1 Quiz (5 Points)	5
Final Implementation Plan/Paper	50
Total	135

Grading Scale – Graduate Credit

100-90% (135 - 122 points)	A
89-80% (121 - 108 points)	B
79-70% (107 - 95 points)	C
69-60% (94 - 81 points)	D
59%-Below (<81 points)	F

Grading Scale - License Renewal Credit

100-80% (135 - 108 points)	P
79%-Below (<108 points)	NP

Student Requirements Students are required to:

- Participate in **ALL** discussion forums and quizzes
- Complete a final implementation plan

Americans with Disabilities Act: If you are a student with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services, or other accommodations for this class, please see the instructor to discuss your accommodation needs.

Statement of Plagiarism: Academic dishonesty results in failure of this course. Give credit where credit is due. Use the APA Publication Manual to cite references when needed. Not crediting ideas or words of others is unacceptable scholarship as is submitting work that was done for a previous course or that is not your own origin in design or completion. Submit original assignments. Do not submit work for this course that you have done for other courses.

Grading Rubrics for Individual Activities

Discussions (80 points possible) Discussion Forums are asynchronous ways to engage in class discussions. They require you to submit an answer to a question and respond to the posts of other peers. Because they are an integral part of sharing strategies, analyzing research, and sharing ideas, discussion forums in this course comprise a significant percentage of your final grade. It's highly recommended that you read and respond to more than the required two peer postings because greater participation will facilitate a greater depth of understanding. Additionally, it's important to make posts in a timely manner to benefit from peer responses.

Grading Rubric for Discussion Forums		
		Points
Critical Thinking	Makes connections to the other content and real-life that are supported by reference(s) and example(s)	1
	Offers new ideas, connections, or applications	1
	Expresses and justifies personal opinion	1
Assignment Specific Criteria	Addresses all parts of the assignment, cites sources	1
Participation (Responses to at least 2 peer posts)	Responds to other posts (when available)	1
Total Points Possible		5

Final Assignment (50 points possible)

The final assignment is a critical part of this course. Participants must complete a two-page final assignment. The paper is meant to be a reflection as well as a chance to state what you will use going forward. The rubric below will be used to grade the final assignment, but additional details will be provided within the course.

Grading Rubric for Implementation Plan		
		Points
Critical Thinking	Highlights any new knowledge gained as a result of course.	10
	Offers new ideas, connections, or applications	10
	Expresses and justifies personal opinion	6
	Discusses Overall Implications	4
Assignment Specific Criteria	Addresses all parts of the assignment, cites sources	4
Mechanics	Writing is clear, well developed, and organized, No or few grammar and spelling errors	4
Implementation	Clearly states ideas to use in the future	4
	States resources to be used	4
	Is realistic in their approach – understands limitations may exist	4
Total Points Possible		50