Current Events

Course Overview: Current Events
In Current Events, students will drive discussion of significant events and trends as they are reported in national and international media outlets. Students will practice expressing their views honestly and with empathy. Discussions will also be framed around how the news itself is framed. Put another way, a significant portion of this class is devoted to media literacy, and becoming educated (skeptical?) news consumers. We may look at questions such as: What’s it like to be a reporter, and be simultaneously responsible for producing fair, informative stories but also attracting a significant number of views online? What news should reporters cover, and not cover? What really is fake news? We also plan to examine such topics as propaganda, satire, disinformation, deep fakes, the 1st Amendment, and the role of social media.

Units and Activities

Unit 1 Media Literacy Basics
Activities: Examine, and create your own, propaganda, biased news, op-eds, and “click-bait” headlines. Produce an issue of the “Wunion,” a fake news publication.

Unit 2 Speaking and Listening
Activities: Present, and listen to (without the help of a laptop!), current events and lead a class discussion. Quiz your classmates on their comprehension, and opinions on the topic and the media’s presentation of the topic.

Unit 3 Taking Action
Activities: Research and write about a topic you are interested in, and take action (send a letter/fill out a form/create a YouTube video) that would help advance your cause.

Standards: What knowledge and skills will I gain by the end of this course?

This course will assess the knowledge and skills students build in key Anchor Standards and Content Standards.

Anchor Standards:
Sourcing: Who is giving me this information? Why does it matter?
Arguing and Explaining: How can I use what I know to inform and persuade others?
Taking Action: How can I use my ideas to impact the world around me?
Speaking and Listening: How can I share and grow my ideas through respectful dialogue?

Content Standards: This course builds student knowledge using the C3 standards. The content standards for Current Events are:
**D3.1.9-12.** Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

**D3.3.9-12.** Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantively from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.

### Assessment of Learning

#### Assessment Types:

Three types of assessments will be used to determine if you have gained the necessary knowledge and skills of this course: Formative assessments, Summative assessments, and Habits of Work for Learning. Each is briefly described below:

**Formative Assessments:** *Formative = Forming my knowledge and skills.* Formative Assessments receive a weight of .1 in the overall grade. Formative assessments are information for teachers, students, and parents on the progress students are making as they practice gaining knowledge and skills found in Anchor Standards. Teachers use the results of these assessments as data to understand individual student learning needs, adjust instructional pathways, and modify lessons to help students better meet course standards. Students use the results of these assessments to determine how they are progressing and to plan steps to ensure their success.

**Summative Assessments:** *Summative = Summation of my knowledge and skills.* Summative Assessments can receive three different weights: 1, 1.5, or 2 depending on the size of the assessment, and therefore have the greatest impact on the Overall Course Mastery Grade. Summative assessments are used as a measure of independent student achievement in Anchor Standards. Throughout this course, summative assessments provide benchmark student achievement data. A summative assessment will always have clear scoring criteria for students to understand how they are performing.

**Habits of Work for Learning:** Habits of Work for Learning (HOWLs) are skills and dispositions that are essential to the learning process but do not provide evidence of what a student knows or can do in relation to content. WUHSMS teachers work to foster Habits of Work for Learning in three categories: preparation, participation, and perseverance.

#### Assessment Scoring:

Teachers will provide framing for summative assessment scores using proficiency level scoring criteria similar to the example below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anchor Standard: Sourcing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Standards:</strong> D3.1.9-12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sourcing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
select a variety of sources and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.
authority, structure, context, and corroborative value to select sources that represent a range of views on an issue or topic.

*scores in the “Beginning range” are well below proficient and thus they are below passing.

HOWL Scoring:
HOWLs will be scored at least once per checkpoint, and will be based on the frequency with which students demonstrate each of the habits: preparation, participation, and perseverance.

How is my Overall Course Grade Determined?
Overall course grades will be reported as letter grades and will be comprised of:
● Formative & Summative Scores: 95%
● HOWLs: 5%
For more information, please see the WUHSMS student handbook.

Communication:
How Do I Know My Grades?
● On Summative Assessments, a teacher will provide both a 4-point grade and a letter grade.
● You can monitor your progress in the following ways:
  ○ By reading feedback and scoring returned to students on summative assessments
  ○ By monitoring the scores and Overall Course Mastery Grade in the Parent/Student portal on JumpRope
  ○ By monitoring the grades sent home quarterly through report cards

Where Can I Find This Syllabus during the School Year?
● This syllabus will be available on the school website in each subject’s department tab once the school year is up and running.

How Do I See What’s Due?
● Summative assessment due dates and handouts are posted to the blue “Upcoming Assessment” section of the JumpRope Parent/Student Portal on or before the day they are assigned to students.

How Do I See What’s Past Due?
● If a student is missing an assessment, it will be listed in the red “Missing Assessment” section of the JumpRope Parent/Student Portal along with any attachments.

Materials:
Students should arrive in class with a laptop, a notebook that can be devoted to this class, and a writing utensil.

Schoolwide Procedures:
Please see the Student Handbook for Procedures and Policies related to: Due dates and deadlines, extra credit, retaking assessments, and turnaround time for grade entry.

**Personal Mobile Devices:** This class will follow the procedures outlined in the student handbook.

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**Classroom Expectations:**

Students should arrive ready to engage and help lead the learning. Phones should be set in the cradle or in backpacks. Also, the topics in this class can be thought-provoking, and emotional. Students are asked to work especially hard to consider diverse points of view. All of our ideas matter. As the late President George H.W. Bush said of his friend President Bill Clinton: "Just because you run against someone does not mean you have to be enemies."