

COURSE: American Civilization

INSTRUCTOR: Mrs. Lisa Dennehy (ldennehy@holyfamilyacademy.org)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To Understand “American Civilization” from its origins to the present day through reading original documents
2. To gain an understanding of the “Foundations” of American Civilization with special focus on the predominant political, economic, and religious causes/influences
3. To gain an overview and “literacy” of the course of American History from 1492-2013.
4. To explain and evaluate the principles of the American political system
5. To explore and understand New Hampshire history, Constitution, and government
6. To develop a sound, Catholic political foundation for citizenship and action
7. To help students to make intelligent choices for themselves-to learn how to think, rather than what to think

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE:

1. What are the philosophical and historical foundations of the American political system?
2. How did the framers create the Constitution?
3. How was the Constitution changed to further the ideals contained in the Declaration of Independence?
4. How were the values and principles embodied in the Constitution that shaped the American institutions and practices?
5. What rights does the Bill of Rights protect?
6. What are the challenges facing the American Constitutional democracy in the twenty-first century?
7. To explore New Hampshire history, Constitution, and government.

COURSE TEXT:

- *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* by the Center for Civic Education
- *Witness* by Whittaker Chambers

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS:

- Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891 [Handout]
- Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 1991

- Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*
- Other readings as assigned

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

- Keeping a Journal
 - In lieu of reading quizzes on *The Witness*, students will record thoughts on reading in their journals
 - A personal record of summary statements, reflections, or questions about what is being learned. Students are encouraged to reflect on the “what,” “why,” and “how” of their own learning.
 - Journals will be collected periodically to offer feedback on content.
 - Journals will help students to think critically, organize, prepare and articulate their thoughts.
- Briefing Supreme Court Case
 - Students will be taught how to summarize a Supreme Court Case separating out legal issues, relevant facts, and decisions.
- Legislative Hearing and Debate
 - Legislative hearings are held by committees of US Congress and other legislative bodies to gather information on matters of public concern. These hearings are a basic function of legislative branch.
 - Legislative debate is used in the formulation and development of laws.
 - Through role playing, students will gain increased understanding of the purpose and procedures of such hearings as well as roles and responsibilities of committee members.
 - Students also gain experience identifying and clarifying information, interests and values associated with subject studied.
 - Students will increase their understanding of the power of legislatures to make laws and to debate matters of public policy.
 - The *We the People* culminating activity is a simulated congressional hearing in which students testify before a panel of judges acting as Members off Congress. Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles and have opportunities to evaluate, take and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues.
- Pro Se Court
 - Court simulation

- Students will role play a court case using simple rules of evidence.
- Students will learn the roles of a judge, plaintiff, defendant and will have opportunity to act in a role.
- Moot Court
 - Patterned on a Supreme Court hearing.
 - Court composed of a panel of judges asked to rule on a lower court's decision.
 - There are no witnesses called nor are the basic facts disputed, arguments are prepared based on the application of the law, constitutionality of a law or fairness of previous court's procedures.
- Town Meeting
 - Provide students an opportunity to act as members of a community involved in a decision making process considering a matter of public policy.
- Debate
 - Students will have the opportunity to persuade others, to clearly and logically formulate arguments based on evidence and to adequately support a position on an issue.
 - To develop a sense of the ability to sway public opinion or to change public policy.

GRADING

- 10% Class Participation
- 45% Presentations
- 20% Journal/Quizzes
- 25% Final Exam

The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus subject to notification.