

~ Syllabus ~



Course: Research and Critical Thinking
Instructor: Ms. Mayté Armas
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Course #: 1700000/100
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Course Description ~ Grades 7-8

A. Major Concepts/Content: The purpose of this course is to enable students to develop fundamental knowledge of the steps in the research process as well as to enable students to develop learning strategies, critical-thinking skills, logical reasoning, and problem-solving skills to enhance their performance in academic and nonacademic endeavors. The content should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- learning strategies for acquiring, storing, & retrieving info
- critical-thinking operations, processes, and enabling skills
- test-taking skills & strategies for linking new info with prior knowledge
- nature and purpose of research
- research questions and hypotheses
- review of literature and other resources
- research methods and procedures
- time management and organizational skills
- strategies for oral and written communication
- problem-solving skills and strategies
- report formats, styles, and content
- directed investigations
- critical analysis of research
- reflection of research product/skills

B. Materials Required:

- (1) 2" Three-ring Binder with Paper
- (5) Pocket Dividers
- (2) Composition Notebooks (*no spirals*)
- (2) Pocket Folders: RED & BLUE

* **USB Storage Device** - w/student name marked

* **Pencil Pouch** for *inside* 3-ring binder to include:
pens (blue/black/red), pencils, erasers, colored pencils,
rainbow colored highlighters, index cards, hand-held
sharpener, 4-glue sticks, 1-scissors, 1-ruler

* *Keep in mind as projects arise more supplies will be needed.*

C. Course Requirements: These requirements include, but are not limited to, the benchmarks from the FL Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) and common-core state standards (CCSS) that are most relevant to this course. Benchmarks correlated with a specific course requirement may also be relevant in other courses as appropriate. Other subject areas and content may be used to fulfill course requirements (*cross-curricular*); for more info, visit: www.fldoe.org

D. Course Objectives & Learning Goals: After successfully completing this course, the student will:

1. Demonstrate awareness of research as scientific inquiry, which knowledge is acquired.

- SC.H.1.3.1 know that scientific knowledge is subject to modification as new information challenges prevailing theories and as a new theory leads to looking at old observations in a new way.
- SC.H.1.3.7 know that when similar investigations give different results, the scientific challenge is to verify whether the differences are significant by further study.
- SC.H.3.3.6 know that no matter who does science & mathematics or invents things, or when or where they do it, the knowledge and technology that result can eventually become available to everyone.

2. Identify issues and problems in specified topics and define research questions.

- MA.E.3.3.1 formulate hypotheses, design experiments, collect and interpret data, and evaluate hypotheses by making inferences and drawing conclusions based on statistics (range, mean, median, & mode) by tables/graphs/charts.
- SC.H.2.3.1 recognize that patterns exist within and across systems.
- SS.C.2.13 examine multiple perspectives on public and current issues
- SS.E.2.1 explain how federal, state, and local taxes support the economy as a function of the govt.
- SS.C.2.2 evaluate citizens' obligations to obey laws, pay taxes, defend the nation, and serve on juries.
- SS.C.2.3 experience the responsibilities of citizens at the local, state, or federal levels.
- SS.C.2.4 evaluate rights contained in the Bill of Rights and other amendments to the Constitution.
- SS.C.2.5 distinguish how the Constitution safeguards and limits individual rights.
- SS.C.2.6 simulate the trial process and the role of juries in the administration of justice.
- SS.C.3.6 evaluate Constitutional rights and their impact on individuals and society.

3. Demonstrate awareness of potential sources of information (e.g., books, periodicals, databases, Internet, experts) and strategies for locating and searching the information.

- LA.A.2.3.5 locate, organize, and interpret written information for a variety of purposes; classroom research, collaborative decision making, and performing a school or real-world task.
- LA.A.2.3.6 use a variety of reference materials (e.g.; *indexes, newspapers, journals*); and tools (e.g.; *card catalogs, online databases, internet*) to gather information for research topics.
- LA.A.2.3.7-8 check the validity and accuracy of information obtained from research in such ways as differentiating fact and opinion, identifying strong vs. weak arguments, and recognizing that personal values (*bias*) influence the conclusions an author draws.

4. Demonstrate awareness of methods and procedures used to collect and analyze data for research, interpret results, and report findings.

- SC.H.1.3.4 know that accurate record keeping, openness, and replication are essential to maintaining an investigator's credibility with other scientists and society.
- SC.H.1.3.5 know that a change in one or more variables may alter the outcome of an investigation.
- SS.A.1.3.2 know the relative value of primary and secondary sources and use this information to draw conclusions from historical sources such as data in charts, tables, and graphs.

5. Demonstrate awareness of accepted formats, styles, and content of research reports.

resource: [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](http://owl.english.purdue.edu) at: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

6. Conduct one or more directed investigations and produce research reports.

- LA.B.1.3.1-2 draft/revise writing that is focused, purposeful, and reflects insight into the writing situation;

- LA.B.1.3.3 conveys a sense of completeness/wholeness with adherence to the main idea; has an organizational pattern that provides for a logical progression of ideas; has support that is substantial, specific, relevant, concrete, and/or illustrative; demonstrates a commitment to and an involvement with the subject; has clarity in presentation of ideas; uses creative writing strategies appropriate to the purpose of the paper; demonstrates a command of language (word choice) with freshness of expression; has varied sentence structure and sentences that are complete except when fragments are used purposefully; and has few, if any, conventional/grammatical errors. produce final documents that have been edited for correct spelling; correct punctuation, including commas, colons, and semicolons; correct capitalization; effective sentence structure; correct common usage, including subject/verb agreement, common noun/pronoun agreement, common possessive forms, and with a variety of sentence structures, including parallel structure; and correct formatting.
- MA.E.1.3.1 collect, organize, and display data in a variety of formats (e.g., tables, line/bar graphs, charts) to determine how different ways of presenting data can lead to different interpretations.

7. Conduct a Critical Analysis of one's own research study (i.e., discuss results, identify limitations of the investigation, and suggest directions for future investigations).

Final Product will consist of a cumulative portfolio which demonstrates the collection, organization, preparation, and presentation of all research collected in a variety of formats, along with individual interpretations for each resource found & data presented; each section of the process will be followed up with a reflective essay outlining the process involved and suggestions for improvement.

E. Course Disclosure: *Please Note** Students will be assigned pre-selected topics based on cross-curricular content, current events/foreign affairs, and other relevant issues. Some topics may be sensitive and/or controversial in nature as they may account for historical significance and/or are relevant (i.e.; North Korea & US tensions, US Supreme Court recent decisions, Congressional Reform, School shootings/gun control, etc.). Students are expected to be courteous and respectful to perspectives different than their own and conduct themselves within the guidelines set forth in our debate procedures. Parents are encouraged to inquire about current class topics to stay informed. Should there be any legitimate concern with an assigned topic: the parent **MUST** contact the instructor **directly** to arrange an alternative topic/assignment as soon as possible. **DO NOT** send a message or note with your child, as it will **NOT** be accepted. Furthermore, over the course of the year, we may be watching several movies that are relevant to our content focus. These movies may be rated **PG-13** and will be followed up with a learning activity (i.e.; Runaway Jury, The Hunger Games, The Wave, Historical documentaries, etc.) – should there be any issue with giving parental consent for these movies, the parent **MUST** contact the instructor **directly** to arrange an alternate assignment as soon as possible. **DO NOT** send a message or note with your child, as it will **NOT** be accepted.

F. Course Grades, Assignments, & Policies:

Grading Policy Per Grading Period:

- **Assessments:** (Tests, quizzes, evaluations, essays, products, etc.) **35 %**
- **Classwork:** (Group/individual assignments, power points, etc.) **25 %**
- **Projects:** (Research, projects, presentations, papers, debates, etc.) **20 %**
- **Home Learning:** (HW-Current Events bi-weekly, other HW assigned, etc.) **10 %**
- **Participation:** (Planner checks, Journals, Participation in discussions, etc.) **10 %**

* *Midterm & Final Exams account for 20% of a student's GPA in all academic classes and may possibly be projects and/or other forms of assessment rather than traditional paper & pencil exams.*

Journals:

Students are required to have a composition notebook for daily journal entries which topics will be posted on the board at the beginning of class and a paragraph must be written on the topic within the first 5-7 minutes of class. Journals **MUST** remain in the classroom and are graded weekly. ***DO NOT TAKE HOME** or that weekly grade will result in an **F grade***

Assignments:

- Homework is due at the *beginning* of the class period and will be assigned as needed.
- Class work will be collected at the end of the period or may be allowed to finish for homework.
- Assignments **must** be written in pencil, blue or black ink and on loose leaf paper. **Any other color ink will not be accepted and must be recopied within 24 hours to receive credit.**
- All **Projects** are due on the assigned due date. If a student is absent on a project due date, the student must turn it in upon returning to class or in advance, in the case of a scheduled absence.

Late Work Policy: Any LATE work must be in the NEXT day to receive credit /then reduced 1 letter grade per day late

Late policy does not apply to any Projects!! I may offer a forgiveness policy that will refresh each quarter as follows:

- 1st late assignment may receive **FULL** credit accompanied by a parental note for valid reason.
- 2nd late assignment grade will be reduced by 10% (1 grade) - *per day* it is late.
- 3rd and/or more late assignments will receive a max credit of 50% (F) and will **not** be accepted.

~Instructor's Message ~

I expect good, positive behavior **at all times**. Disruptive behavior is not accepted nor will it be tolerated in the classroom. Parent contact is vital for student success; therefore I will use several means to communicate; via our Class Website, Twitter, Skyward Messages & School Emails. I will only make calls and/or send emails as needed. Please make sure that your contact information is updated & correct in Skyward so that communication is possible. Parents are encouraged to monitor their child's Skyward weekly for updates on grades, messages & other relevant info.

Finally, students are here for an education and my responsibility is to prepare you for high school & *beyond*. Our West Gate Faculty will give you the skills, teach you responsibility, encourage organization and model positive attitude so that you may believe in yourself and have the ability to succeed in life. It is important to start setting goals now and think of the future. **So plan to have a Positive Attitude and we'll have a Fantastic school year!**

Please PRINT your name followed by your SIGNATURE indicating you have read all the course details and are consenting to the above terms & conditions of this course.

Student Name/Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent Name/Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent Contact # (772) _____ **Parent Email:** _____

Signed Syllabus is due **NEXT DAY upon receipt for a HW Grade, reduced daily if late; **MUST** be kept in binder/folder at all times.**