**Civics**

Ms. Hopkins

Email: [Ahopkins@reg4.k12.ct.us](mailto:Ahopkins@reg4.ct.us)

Room 608

Extra help: Rm. 608, 7:00-7:30 or 2:30-3:30

(by appointment)

Website (for links, major assignment uploads, and homework calendar): <http://mshopkinssocialstudies.wikispaces.com/>

Blog (for news and current events): <http://mshopkinssocialstudies.edublogs.org>

**Course Overview**

“Democracy is a verb.” ---Anonymous

The American system of government is very unique. The United States is the world’s oldest existing democracy. For all its faults, our American system has been copied throughout much of the world and continues to stand as a shining example of freedom and equality. Therefore, it is a graduation requirement (and a law!) that all Connecticut students complete a course in Civics.

“Democracy” is a Greek term meaning “the people rule” (demos = ”the people” + kratos = “to rule”). Therefore, the role citizens play in a democracy is crucial. The famous Greek statesman Pericles once said, “We…do not call a man who takes no part in public life quiet or un-ambitious; we call such a man useless.” While we can debate the extent to which Pericles’s statement defines American democracy in the 21st Century, the concept he illustrates is clear and timeless. Civic participation is democracy and democracy is civic participation. The main goal of this course is to ultimately encourage active civic participation.

**Resources**

* The Center for Civic Education: Civics in Practice: Principles of Government and Economics. Holt and McDougall: Massing, FL. 2011.
* Various supplementary materials including newspapers, magazines, primary source readings, and documentary films

**Units**

**Foundations of Democracy:**

1. Foundations of Civics and Government (Chap. 1-2)
2. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights (Chap. 3-4)

**The Structure of Government:**

1. The Three Branches of Government: The Legislative Branch, Political Ideology, and Political Parties (Chap. 5, 10, and 11)
2. The Three Branches of Government: The Presidency, the Executive Branch, and Elections (Chap. 6)
3. The Three Branches of Government: The Judicial Branch and the Court System (Chap. 7)
4. State and Local Government (Chap. 8-9)
5. Political Behavior and the Political Culture (Chap. 11 and 12)

Although this is the general outline of units, there will be frequent discussions of current events (particularly the upcoming midterm elections) throughout the course. Regular viewing of the news, reading news articles and blogs online, and keeping up with current events is expected and will greatly enhance your interest in the course.

**Materials to bring with you to class every day:**

These materials should be used ONLY for Civics.

* 3-ring binder with at least 10 pages of loose-leaf paper (keep the syllabus and study guides in the front)
* Journal or spiral notebook
* Planner
* Pen or pencil, highlighter

Additional materials: covered textbook, notecards for vocabulary, binder dividers

**Academic expectations**

High standards for all students are the hallmark of this course with a set of clear expectations to ensure that all students have the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life upon graduation from high school. Students will practice critical thinking skills through news analysis and persuasive writing, improving 21st century learning skills such as communicating effectively in writing and effectively using information.

**Students will also be expected to cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, determine the central ideas of a primary or secondary source, assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims, and compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources (CCSS).**

Each topic discussed in the course will be introduced over a one or two day period. The remaining days of the unit will consist of seminar discussions and debates, online research, simulations, and student presentations designed to facilitate understanding of important concepts.

Student progress will be assessed in a variety of ways. Students will be expected to complete nightly homework assignments (usually in the form of readings) in preparation for class discussion the next day. Since participation is a grade, it is critical that you come to class prepared by doing the readings. While homework completion is important, the focus of evaluation in this course will be on more authentic assessments such as simulations, debates, analytical essays, and research projects. In addition, students are required to complete a current events editorial (first quarter) & a constitutional issues research paper (second quarter).

Grading

First Quarter:

Homework and Classwork: 15%

Tests and Projects: 40%

Essays and Quizzes: 25%

Current Events Editorial: 20%

Second Quarter:

Homework and Classwork: 15%

Tests and Projects: 40%

Essays and Quizzes: 25%

Constitutional Issues Research Paper: 20%

Course Grades:

First Quarter: 40%

Second Quarter: 40%

Midterm Exam: 10%

Final Exam: 10%

**Assignments**

Grading scale:

* 1. Check plus (90-100): Exceeds expectations in thoughtfulness and effort
  2. Check (80-89): Meets expectations; may have some problems
  3. Check minus (60-79): Does not meet expectations; assignment may be incomplete, inaccurate, etc. Revisions suggested.
  4. Zero: Missing substantial parts of the assignment, plagiarized, etc.

Participation, effort, and attitude will also be graded on an A-F scale regularly. No late homework will be accepted for full credit unless you get in touch with me ahead of time for an extension.

Attendance is essential to success in this course. If you have to be absent from class, it is your responsibility to collect missed work from your folder and to see me if you have questions. Ask a friend or study partner first. I**t is your responsibility to make up all missing work in a timely manner.** It is also your responsibility to reschedule a make-up exam, which must be completed **no later than one week** after returning to class to receive credit. Extra credit opportunitieswill be offered four times a semester upon request.

**General Classroom Rules**

* Student attendance and punctuality is a given (three or more tardies will result in detention, referrals, etc.)
* Treat everyone in class with dignity and respect following the principles of common decency—the ability to work together and have civil discussions is particularly relevant in a civics class
* Be in your assigned seat when the bell rings and check the board for homework
* Being present in class is essential; do not leave class unless for emergencies (get all materials from your locker and use the restroom *before* class starts)
* Bring all materials with you to class each day, including all prior handouts, homeworks, etc.
* Follow directions the first time they are given and follow all school rules and procedures

Please sign below to show that you understand and agree to the above course guidelines and expectations:

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian preferred phone number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Which is the best way to contact you?

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_\_ Phone Do you have internet access at home? \_\_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS (PLEASE COPY FOR FUTURE REFERENCE):** Homework is posted at the beginning of every week under “Civics Assignment Schedule” on my blog, <http://mshopkinssocialstudies.wikispaces.com/>. You can also find study guides for each unit, directions and due dates for major projects, and helpful Civics links. Thank you for your support in helping your student be successful in Civics this semester!