

## **Civics**

### **Focus on Analysis**

#### **Overview**

First, let me state that I have a major passion for politics. I follow politics closely and have a similar passion for imparting what I know to students. Keep in mind that this course is not leveled. When you enter the voting booth, nobody will ask you which courses you took in high school, what your gpa was or what you scored on your SATs. You're all equal at that point. This is the principle of one man or woman and one vote. As such, you might ask yourself whether you are ready to enter the adult world and what knowledge you will need as it pertains to how your community, state and country run. That is where this class comes in. My goal for you, at a minimum, is to be able to pass a test that would be given to someone seeking American citizenship, with flying colors.

#### **Objectives**

As much as anything else, I expect engagement. I will do my best to make the class interesting, entertaining and interactive. There are days I may fail miserably in that endeavor. However, I expect that you ask good questions, offer answers when possible, and act like somebody who is several years away from being a high school graduate and depending on your birth date, an adult with all of the rights and responsibilities that go along with that title. Or if you are a younger student, I expect you to conduct yourself like someone who plans to vote in the near future and be an active participant in the political process at the local, state and national levels. I do not expect you to have a plethora of prior knowledge, and if you know zero about the way the government functions, this will not place you at a disadvantage. With this in mind, whether you do or do not have prior knowledge of issues, stances, policies, laws and functions, you will respect your classmates viewpoints, questions and comments. The academic expectation for this course is **Analysis**. As such, there will be assessments that use the Literacy rubric for grading.

#### **Materials**

I expect you to bring something to write with and a loose-leaf binder with paper in it. There are times when notes can be taken and I tend to give a substantial amount of handouts. Also, bring your phones. There are times when you will need them. However, unless I tell you we are using them they should be off of your desks and silent.

#### **Behavioral Expectations**

With respect to behavior, I do not have a specific written policy, save for what is already covered in the handbook. I will know misbehavior when I see it and discipline accordingly. Use common sense, and treat your classmates and teachers as you'd like to be treated. Also, see the not above about the phones.

## Attendance

### *I. Attendance Policy (BOE Policy #5113) – as stated in handbook:*

The learning experiences that take place in the classroom are considered to be meaningful and essential parts of the education process. Absences tend to disrupt the continuity of that process. The time lost from class is irretrievable, particularly in terms of opportunity for interaction and exchange of ideas between students and between students and teachers. Knowing and abiding by the attendance regulations and procedures are student and parent responsibilities. On January 2, 2008, the State Board of Education approved the following definition of attendance for public school districts:

*A student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field Trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent.*

Students attending the North Stonington Public Schools must remain on school property during the normal school day, unless the building principal authorizes a student to leave school grounds. Exceptions to this rule may be approved by the building principal for those reasons which would justify an excused absence under this policy.

1. There shall be no penalty for an excused absence. Students must bring a note from their parent or guardian to the main office on the day of return to school. For an illness, the student should provide documentation from a doctor. This note must specify the reason(s) for the absence and must conform to the Board of Education Policy # 5113. Excused absences will be listed on the morning bulletin of the day the note is received, and students will be allowed to make up all work missed. Excused absences as defined by the Board of Education are:

- a. Illness or injury,
- b. Death in the immediate family,
- c. Religious obligation,
- d. Court appearance,
- e. School sponsored activity,
- f. College Visitation (prior approval needed from building principal)
- g. An emergency, or
- h. Other exceptional circumstances.

2. For every unexcused absence, the student will not be allowed to make up or receive credit for work missed.

3. Students who are absent from school should make every effort to obtain their assignments during their absence. When a student is absent for extended periods of time--more than three days-- parents may obtain assignments from the teachers through the guidance office. Failure to make up assignments may result in a grade of zero for each missing assignment. A student may expect to have one day for each day of absence in order to make up missed work.

4. If a student is absent from school, he/she may not be on school grounds. Extenuating circumstances will be dealt with on a case by case basis by the administration.

5. IF A STUDENT MISSES MORE THAN 15 MINUTES FROM CLASS, OTHER THAN BECAUSE OF A SCHOOL SANCTIONED EVENT, THEY WILL BE CONSIDERED ABSENT FROM CLASS.

Limit on Total Number of Absences: No student will receive course credit for a full year course after having been absent from that course for more than 20 class periods (excused or unexcused) the school year for reasons other than school sponsored activities (i.e. field trips). The total number of absences will be pro-rated for less than full year courses and for courses which meet other than five times per week

Notification Procedures: When a student has accumulated one-half (ten (10) full year or five (5) half year) of the maximum allowed number of total absences for a particular course, excluding school functions, the teacher will notify the student, parent/guardian (by mail), administration, and the guidance counselor on a form designated for that purpose.

## I. Final Assessment Policy

*For one credit or half-credit full year courses, course assessments (exams/activity) are given at the conclusion of each semester, a mid-term and a final. For half-credit courses, a course assessment (exam/activity) will be given at the end of the semester. All course assessments, except in selected classes, are one and one-half hours in length. All students must arrive on time and remain in class for the full duration of the period. Students taking the AP test will not be required to sit for a final exam. **Seniors are exempt from taking a final course assessment, in any course where the students have at least a 90 average.** Physical Education classes will not be required to give an exam, but there will be a health exam which could be given earlier. Normally, no excuse for missing a course assessment other than illness will be accepted. The principal must give such permission. In cases where an absence is unexcused, a "0" will be recorded for the grade, and no course credit will be given if it is the final course assessment.*

## **Grading**

As it relates to grading, please keep in mind that receiving Civics credit is a graduation requirement. Given this, I'm confident none of you, nor me, want to be concerned about your grade in June and face the prospect of finding a way to achieve the Civics credit required to graduate. Or, again, if you are a younger student, you do not want to be faced with the prospect of taking Civics again on top of all of the classes you would currently be taking in a future semester. Thus, it would be in your best interest to shoot for the stars, particularly in the first quarter. I foresee several tests, an occasional homework assignment, a mini-paper, grades for assignments completed in class, and possibly a debate and/or individual or group project. **Next, students are required to attend a town meeting (Board of Education, Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen, Town-wide meeting, to name a few) during the semester. An assignment sheet with directions for attending these meeting will be distributed early in the semester.** Additionally, as I have always done, I will award **three extra points** at the end of each quarter to non-disruptive students who contribute frequently and substantively to class discussion.

### I. Grading Policy

- All assignments are due in class on the assigned due date. Late homework can be handed in for half credit no more than 2 days after the due date. After two days, late work will not be accepted. Essays and Projects are penalized 10% every day that they are late.

- Assignments will be graded through a points system, as follows:

Homework/Classwork: 10

Quizzes – Varies by the quiz

Tests/Projects/Essays – 90-100 points each.

\*Any additions or modifications to the grading/points system will be identified on the specific assignment.

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### **Academic Integrity Statement**

The faculty and administration of Wheeler Middle/High School demand high standards of academic performance and academic honesty. Anything less would jeopardize quality education and allow our students to deny themselves needed skills and knowledge. For this reason students who cheat on their assigned work, reports, research papers, quizzes, tests or examination risk prompt and punitive action by both their teacher and the school. Examples of violations may include, but are not limited to:

- Giving or receiving aid on tests and graded assignments
- Unauthorized talking during tests
- Copying regular homework/exercises
- Unapproved discussion of examinations/assignments contents
- Cheating on peer reviews of student work
- Misuse of technology

Documentation of all sources is important to avoid plagiarism, which is the stealing of another's ideas, words, writing, or academic work, and implying that it is original. Both quoting and paraphrasing information from an outside source, including any technology without crediting that source is a form of plagiarism. Students who are found cheating or plagiarizing will be subject to the following guidelines:

#### First offense:

- Academic penalty up to and including zero.
- Parent contacted.
- Administration notified (by teachers completing a discipline form).

#### Subsequent offenses:

- Academic penalty up to and including zero.

- Parent contacted.
- Disciplinary action by administration which may include office detention or suspension

### **Teacher Availability**

**Mondays:** Pers. 2,8

**Tuesday:** Pers. 2,5

**Wednesday:** Pers. 2,8

**Thursday:** Pers. 2,8

**Friday:** Per. 8