

STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges

Political Studies: ELA

Ms. Buske

Email: buskeali@orange.k12.nj.us

Website: www.orange.k12.nj.us

“Education is the most powerful weapon with which you can use to change the world.”

(Nelson Mandela)

Course Description

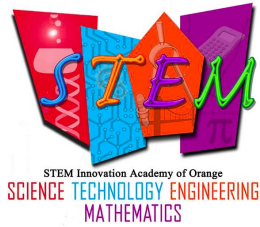
The Political Studies (ELA) course integrates the study of various political systems, both nationally and internationally. It maintains a concentrated focus on the development of the state of the nation, political parties and use of power. Also discussed will be the importance of the use of power as an influential tool, and its impact on political figures throughout history and current world politics. Students use literary interpretation, analysis, comparisons, and evaluations to read and respond to representative works of historical and cultural significance appropriate for the grade. This course is truly interdisciplinary in that students are enriched by an analysis of the Political experience from the perspective of both literature and history.

Activities included are guest speakers from government, field trips to the Local Court House(s) as well as congresses on current hot topics issues. Current political issues are rarely one-sided and the exploration of multiple points of view increases understanding and critical thinking. Students will produce and present a digital portfolio tracking bias of the media concerning a specific hot topics or persons in present-day news. The major focus will be on national issues and their impact locally. The strength of the Honors course of study lies in the extensions of research and tasks related to the analysis of substantive texts and includes real life projects incorporated into each marking cycle. This course satisfies the requirements for English II and U.S. History II.

Instructor

Alison Buske, B.A.

Alison Buske received her B.A. in English and Secondary Education from The College of New Jersey and is currently enrolled in a Master's in Educational Leadership: Instruction program at The College of New Jersey.



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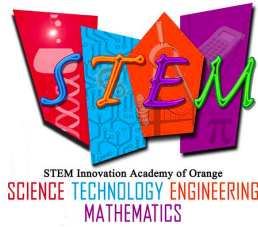
Course Objectives

This course is designed to improve your ability to analyze complex texts, to use those texts to build upon your ideas and the ideas of others, to examine the power of stories in shaping political movements, and to create and refine writing pieces in which you analyze works of literature and nonfiction, use those texts to make persuasive arguments, and write creative works that explore, and may help shape your community's understanding, of current political issues. It is crucial that you engage in the classroom community as a concerned, informed citizen, capable of examining the logical and philosophical dimensions of national and international politics. The combination of literature and the historical frames that contextualize the literary works will help you to closely, and thoughtfully, consider the foundation of political systems and how those systems can be changed to ensure a better future. We intend to focus on critically evaluating sources and literary works, applying our understanding of historical contexts to inform our interpretations of class texts, communicating our ideas effectively, responding to the ideas of our peers with logical, specific evidence, and encouraging purposeful, informed action in our school community, as well as our broader Orange community. As leaders, we will use our ability to carefully examine multiple perspectives (including how our own experiences shape our political values and views), to apply our understanding of language and the influence of language to objectively inquire into an issue, to communicate with others who may have a different experience than us, to collaboratively problem solve based upon extensive research and collaboration with peers and outside members of the community, and to reflect upon our efforts and actions in order to improve.

Skills and Proficiencies

Literacy skills will allow you to examine current political issues through an informed, critical lens and to communicate with others when developing change. You will be able to examine how a literary text and how a nonfiction text are shaped, including the author's purpose behind writing the text, the major ideas that the author is trying to communicate through the text, and how the author's language shapes the reader's interpretation of that text.

Based upon your objective analyses of these texts, you will be able to form reasoned, well-developed arguments and analyses that offer new insights into the texts we explore in class. The analytical skills you practice over the course of the year will allow you to draw connections and conclusions between texts written across history and across the globe. You will be able to identify consistent patterns in the texts you examine, and you will be able to apply and consider



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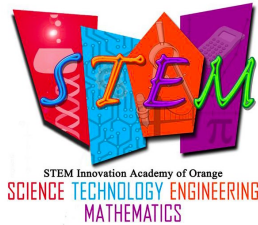
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recurring themes for their relevance in today's world. Furthermore, you will be able to distinguish between biased and factual arguments, and your exposure to multiple perspectives will ensure that your own perspective is well-reasoned and rooted in research. You will be able to offer logical solutions to controversial issues in our national and international societies. These skills will ensure that you can evaluate the ideas presented by your peers, and understand how to respectfully challenge, question, or build upon the opinions, interpretations, and insights of others.

Communication is an integral part of this class. The ability to carefully and purposefully listen to the thoughts and ideas of others and respond using evidence and logical reasoning are imperative if you are to succeed in this class, in college, and in your future career. As an informed citizen, your responsibilities will include objectively listening to and evaluating conflicting viewpoints and creating solutions that honor each perspective. You will engage with your classmates on a myriad of issues, and it is essential that you come to each discussion prepared to support your ideas with a foundation of evidence and logic and respectfully address your classmates when responding to opposing ideas.

Literacy in the digital age is paramount to your success in college and career. You will be immersed in a variety of extension projects that ask you to assume the role of the author in exploring, challenging, and shaping the political issues of our time. You will be able to use digital forums as a means of exploring and evaluating all dimensions of a political issue or structure, using both literary and nonfiction avenues of inquiry. The practice of these skills requires the ability to conduct research, obtain information through a variety of technologies, and to interpret, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. You will create multimodal methods of representing your own literary pieces or your scholarly research that engage and audience and inspire dialogue/action on behalf of your audience. In this context, you will acquire the skills and knowledge to develop a digital forum that presents research in an organized, structured way, and that combines an unbiased review of gathered content and builds upon the ideas explored.

Complicating the transmission of our shared political history will be at the forefront of your studies and discussions. By exploring a broader canon of authors, nationally and internationally, you will be able to explore the degree of power held in the form of literature, including journal articles, novels, literature, speeches, to poetry. You will examine the effects of literature and view texts as both primary sources that help contextualize events but also as forms of propaganda that help shape events. From this research, you will be able to develop a narrow, specific, relevant point of inquiry that is politically significant for local, national, and international communities.



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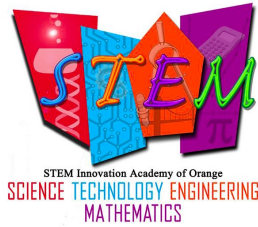
Learning skills and strategies that you will employ include: Decision-making (identifying situations, securing information, defining criteria, making decisions, taking action to implement the decisions, and examining and evaluating the consequences of those decisions); inquiry learning (being curious, asking powerful and complex questions, observing, investigating, and exploring to develop understanding, discussing and comparing with other works, and self-evaluating and reflecting to monitor progress); issue analysis (defining issues and identifying key opposing positions, determining conflicting values or beliefs, summarizing opposing positions, and stating ways to persuade others to adopt your position); and, problem-based learning (introducing and discussing a real world problem, collaboratively determining what is known and what must be learned, developing and articulating a problem statement, identifying possible solutions, researching, analyzing and resolving potential solutions; and, presenting solutions with supporting documentation).

Progression of Topics

Horror and Politics: Horror as a genre is reflective of the political climate and, in contemporary literature and media, is used to challenge social and political structures. This first unit will examine the vampire motif in several literary texts using the foundational text Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as an anchor text. This examination is important because it encourages the objective analysis of literature as a source for understanding political structures and it frames the author as a voice of protest and/or a mirror of a time period's values and ideas. The unit will also encourage examination of the critical connection between fiction and nonfiction.

Political Perspectives--Opening a Dialogue: Poetry and journalism are guided by distinct styles and structures, but both can be used to examine controversial historical and contemporary issues. Poets, journalists, and audiences alike can examine the array of stories that can be told about a specific person, event, or place. The second unit will focus on the intertextual nature of poetry and journalism, and throughout the unit, we will examine authors like Tagore, Neruda, and Langston Hughes and will develop a conversation between these renowned individuals and the most reputable news sources in society. We will create our own "found" poems that demonstrate our interpretation of the most pressing political issues, and will subsequently open a dialogue with our class community and the outside community of Orange.

Drama and Democracy: Theater has been used since the birth of democracy as a way to open a dialogue about the most tempestuous political issues. Julius Caesar, a historical figurehead and subject of one of Shakespeare's most reproduced works, will be examined as a politically charged play ripe for adaptation. In this unit, we will focus on the ways playwrights have



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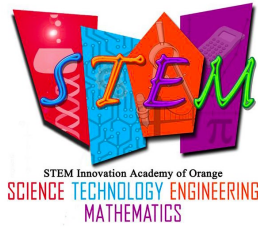
interpreted William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and have manipulated the characters, plot design and structure, as well as the setting to make controversial statements related to the political climate of the place and time. We will examine the limits of artistic expression and the gray space between art and propaganda to assess the value of these various adaptations.

Dystopia: Challenging Power and Offering Solutions: Dystopian texts have been used for decades by authors as a subversive genre that closely, critically dissects the political and social structures of their time. By creating a perfect world founded upon devastatingly imperfect morals, values, and beliefs, dystopian texts issue a clear warning to future generations and present a challenge to change. We will examine Fahrenheit 451 and explore the implications of censorship and the power of stories in shaping the fate of human society. Paired with shorts stories by Vonnegut, Ovid, and Le Guinn, as well as nonfiction articles linked to the ethics of control in North Korea, the impact of technology and media on today's society, and historical trends linked to censorship, this text will open a gateway to a larger research project that will ask us to answer the question: What kind of society would we build if we had to start from scratch?

Our Routine

Our Political Studies course is the foundation for the ways in which we think, look at the world, and react to challenges. Therefore, it is imperative that we are physically and mentally present in our class meetings. In order to succeed and grow as individuals and as a collective whole, we must all come to class ready to work, willing to push our creative boundaries, and prepared to keep a positive attitude no matter the challenges because we are all capable of designing outcomes that are new and different. It is important to keep in mind that our work in the classroom extends beyond our classroom walls. We are an integral part of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math because we examine the ways in which we have a responsibility to ourselves and society. We will be taking many risks in our class when we collaborate, share ideas, participate in the brainstorming process, provide feedback to one another, and try new skills. Throughout our journey together, "it is not about trial and error. It is trying, learning, and trying again."

With these ideas in mind, there are important expectations for each of us. We meet for 80 minutes on Monday, and 160 minutes on either Tuesday and Thursday or Wednesday and Friday, depending on individual schedules. Because we will be spending a considerable amount of time together, any absence will significantly impact your progress. However, I recognize that there may be times over the course of the year that you may be absent. If your absence is excused, you will be allowed two school days to complete missing work/tests for each day absent



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to receive full credit. You will not be entitled to make up work or tests missed during an unauthorized absence. Each assignment is provided online through our website and may be submitted electronically via Google classroom or as a shared Google doc. Teachers should be notified if you are going to be absent. Please contact me at buskeali@orange.k12.nj.us with any absences so that I may provide you with direction for the work that took place.

As scholars, we understand that even though we do work together in class, our projects often require work outside of the school day. Therefore, homework is mandatory. Homework will be posted online through our website. Further, I expect you to be honest in all of your academic work in order to learn and grow as responsible, ethical citizens. Any breach of this standard endangers the learning process and impugns the integrity of the entire school community. Our purpose is to prepare you to become lifelong learners, and dishonesty inhibits that process. No forms of personal and/or academic misrepresentation are permitted. Anyone, whether cheating alone or helping someone else to cheat, will be subject to disciplinary procedures. If you are in doubt about whether your work is academically honest, ask for guidance before turning in the assignment. For further information, please refer to the section on Academic Integrity in the STEM Innovation Academy of Orange Student/Parent Handbook.

Technology

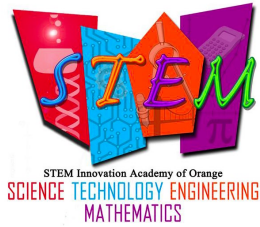
Google classroom: Links to handouts, powerpoints, readings and other class materials will be posted here and/or on the website. This, and Google docs, is also where you will upload assignments for submission and view teacher feedback.

Genesis: Grades will be available to students and parents through the Genesis portal. You are responsible for reviewing your grades at least weekly.

Videos and Podcasts: We will be listening to/watching a variety of videos and podcasts to expand and enhance the content we cover in class. Videos and podcasts can be accessed using Google Classroom.

Flipgrid: Students can record themselves presenting for specific assignments and can adjust/give and receive feedback from peers accordingly

Seesaw: This program allows students to save online tools and resources (videos, sites for research, etc) and organize them according to the specific unit



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Assessments

Our curriculum is guided by Project Based Learning, which is a teaching method in which we gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge. You will be working on projects throughout the year. Your grade will be based on the work that you do in class, homework, attendance, quizzes, tests and authentic assessments. Your grade will be weighted in accordance with the District policy:

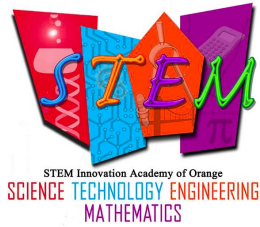
- 10% Homework
- 20% Formative Assessments (quizzes, anecdotal notes, etc.)
- 20% Class Work (class participation, journals, logs, assignments, tasks, demonstrations, skill applications)
- 25% Summative Evaluations (tests, district assessments, unit assessments, etc.)
- 25% Authentic Assessments (portfolios, projects, performance assessments, 21st Century real world experiences)

Teacher Availability

- Each day during Advisory (Tuesday through Friday)
- Lunch
- After school from 3:30-4:00 p.m. (except Mondays when we will not be available after school).
- I will be available after 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday by appointment.

Other Things to Know

If you arrive at class and the door is closed, that means that attendance has already been taken and you need to sign in on the sheet taped to the outside of the door to make sure Ms. Buske corrects the attendance. Missing and incomplete assignments can be viewed on genesis. I expect missing assignments require a mandatory conference. When you arrive at this mandatory conference, bring a printed copy of your grades from Genesis. A plan of action will be required, signed by parent, and returned.



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We, the undersigned student and parent/guardian, have reviewed the expectations of the Political Studies class as outlined in the syllabus and accept the terms and expectations as laid out.

I, as the student, further understand that my parent may be contacted if I am found to be in default of my expectations, solely for the purpose of correcting the problem before my grades are put in jeopardy.

(Student signature)

(Name)

(Date)

(Parent signature)

(Contact email)

(Contact phone)

Do you have internet access at home (Yes or No)? _____