

## Contemporary American Problems

**Course Description:** An introduction to the basic concepts of sociology, the inquiry process used to examine social problems, and a look at specific social issues facing American Society. The class will provide a forum for students to engage in thoughtful discussion on social issues, gain insight into their personal views and views of other students, and research a particular social issue of a particular interest to the student as a culminating project.

### Topics:

#### **Introduction of the basic concepts of sociology:**

- History of Sociology as a science
- Define Social Problems
  - Objective reality of social problems
  - Subjective nature of social problems
  - Paradox of bias of social problems
- Different approaches to understand social problems
  - Person blame approach
  - System blame approach
  - Combined approach (Person and System)

#### **Use the inquiry process to examine social problems**

- Difference between quantitative and qualitative research
- Research Methodology Terms
  - Bias
  - Reliability
  - Validity
  - Demographics
  - Sampling
  - Data Collection

#### **Examine specific social issues facing American Society**

- Likely topics might include but are not limited to the following:
  - Abortion
  - Affirmative Action
  - Homosexuality in American Society
  - Capital Punishment
  - Stem cell research/cloning
  - Teen Issues
  - Gender Issues
  - Abuse Issues (i.e. child, substance, spousal)
  - Environmental
  - Poverty Issues

### **Content Standards and Benchmarks:**

- CS 1.1 Analyze and adapt an inquiry process (i.e. Identify question or problem, locate and evaluate potential resources, gather and synthesize information, create a new product and evaluate product and process)
- CS 1.2 Apply criteria to evaluate information (e.g. Origin, authority, accuracy, bias, and distortion of information and ideas)
- CS 1.3 Synthesize and apply information to formulate and support reasoned personal convictions within groups and participate in negotiations to arrive at solutions to differences
- CS 2.6 Analyze and evaluate conditions, actions and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among groups
- CS 2.7 Analyze laws and policies governing technology and evaluate the ethical issues and the impacts of technology on society
- CS 3.4 Analyze how human settlement patterns create cooperation and conflict which influence the division and control of domestic policy
- CS 3.7 Describe and compare how people create places that reflect culture, human needs, government policy, and current values and ideas as they design and build
- CS 4.3 Apply ideas, theories, and methods of inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary developments, and to formulate and defend reasoned decisions on public policy issues
- CS 4.6 Investigate, interpret, and analyze the impact of multiple historical and contemporary view points concerning events across the United States (e.g. values, beliefs, conflicts)
- CS 5.3 Assess the costs and benefits to society of allocating goods and services in different economic systems
- CS 5.6 Explain and evaluate the effects of new technology, global economic interdependence and competition on the development of national policies (e.g. social security, medicare and other entitlement programs) and on the lives of the individuals and families in Montana, the United States, and the World.
- CS 6.1 Analyze and evaluate the ways various groups (e.g. social, political, cultural) meet human needs and concerns (e.g. individual needs, common good) and contribute to personal identity
- CS. 6.3 Analyze the impact of ethnic, national, and global influences of specific situations or events
- CS 6.6 Analyze the interactions of individuals, groups and institution in society (e.g. social mobility, class conflict, globalization)