

Senior Current Issues - Syllabus

Guidelines for Mr. Wood's 2017/18 Senior Current Issues Course

This course provides a three fold concentration for graduating seniors. #1 we survey cultures, societies, and geographical regions of the world. In the process we will look closely at the continent of Africa. Teams of two will research the history of one African nation for a semester, and follow it in regards to the current news and take on specific assignments that will broaden their awareness of the country and the continent. These groups will share their knowledge with the rest of the class.

A second focus of the course will be to study current domestic and international events in the news. Since these events are by their very nature "Current Issues" we have the luxury in our studies to choose incidents that are current, and at the same time compelling. Consequently, we (you and I together) have the opportunity to shape the curriculum. We will supplement our studies with independent film, documentaries, and assigned readings to help students better appreciate the diversity of world cultures and immediacy of current events. *Special note: some of the movies will be R-rated and controversial by their subject selection; they will however remain pertinent to our focus of study and consequently useful for learning. Parent permission will be secured before watching such movies.*

Finally and maybe most significantly, in Part III, students will be asked to look at their life after high school. The major focus here will be to concentrate on searching for colleges, apprenticeships, and scholarships. Students will be encouraged to organize themselves in all aspects of post high school education. We can spend a substantial amount of class time working on scholarship searches; that is up to you. We also lay out five and ten year plan goals in an effort to help seniors leave Oakridge on a positive footing.

By looking within and setting short and long term goals, and by taking an in-depth view at the world around us, it is my hope that this course will help to prepare Oakridge Students for success in an interdependent global society.

Specific Focus of Study for 2017/18

I have four things that I would like us to touch on this school year. It will be up to we as a class to decide the amount of time spent on focus of these issues. We will talk the first week and we will set some goals, then recalibrate them on a regular basis. So, if you have ideas - speak up.

1 - Africa - we will study the continent, current and past of Africa in the second semester.

2 - Stay Woke with SCI - Last year our class created a foundation for this organization, which is now also an official organization at OHS. Stay Woke with SCI - is all about sharing an awareness of events that stir the imagination in the Muskegon, Grand Rapids area. Early on, we will look at the progress made last year with this fledgling club, and plan how we can build on that success. The organization mimics like minded Student Organizations at the collegiate level. My hope is that its even better this year.

3 - Refugee One in Chicago - This has become an overnight Chicago Tradition with Senior Current Issues. We leave on a Friday morning, car pool to Andersonville, a Northside Chicago neighborhood to volunteer with Refugee One. RefugeeOne (Mission) creates opportunity for refugees fleeing war, terror, and persecution to build new lives of safety, dignity, and self-reliance. Every year, RefugeeOne serves more than 2,500 refugees and immigrants of all ages, ethnic groups, faiths, and backgrounds. Our primary focus is to assist these resilient individuals in becoming an independent, self-supporting member of their new community.

RefugeeOne kids - seven to sixteen year olds - spend two hours a day after school at Unity Lutheran Church in Andersonville, studying, bonding, and playing with refugee kids of similar backgrounds. We are there to volunteer - whether that be tutoring with Math or English, or playing soccer in the upstairs gym. The experience is eye opening and significant, not only for the kids but for us. After the kids go home - we go out on the town. We roam the northern neighborhoods on Friday and sleep at the church for ten bucks. Saturday, if the weather cooperates you may head downtown to the Loop or stay up North with Mr Wood - either way we'll be home early Saturday evening.

For two years we have raised money for RefugeeOne. We have promised to purchase back packs and deliver them by Spring time. And we have nearly \$1500 to do so. The problem is we keep procrastinating the purchase. This year - after we go and volunteer - and maybe do a little more fundraising we will fulfill the promise. So stay tuned for more info.

Early open dates for the overnight are - Sept 15 & 16. Oct 20 & 21. Nov 3 & 4. We need to make a decision soon.

4 - College Scholarships - How much time we dedicate to this is fully up to you as a class.

HOMEWORK / PROJECTS - 50%

Homework assignments will vary in Senior Current Issues between the study of individual events as well as ongoing issues. Some of these topics will be a short study; others will deal with in-depth longer term issues. The main criteria for determining whether your assignment will be categorized for grading purposes as a "Project" or "Homework" will be the amount of time dedicated to that topic. Any topic that is addressed, discussed, and provided homework assignments for within a one week time window - will be classified for grading purposes as "Homework." Continuing long-term assignments will fall under "Projects."

COMMON ASSESSMENT - 50%

We may or may not have a Common Assessment during a semester. All this means is that the project under consideration has added significance. You'll know way ahead of time if this is the case. If the semester doesn't feature a Common Assessment, then the Homework / Project Grade counts 100%.

THERE ARE NO TESTS IN SENIOR CURRENT ISSUES

The First Semester Final is a take home reading and writing assignment. As for the Second Semester, if you are required to take the Exam, it usually doubles as some portion of the Africa project. We will not take tests during the course of the class. We will not do many assignments in SCI; they will however require some thinking and effort.

A FINAL THOUGHT ON 2017/18 CURRICULUM

We have the opportunity each year in SCI to shape the curriculum. With that in mind all of the above may change - and you all have the power to change it. In this highly structured "teach to the test" Standardized Test dominated world of study - being able to go where the winds take us - is a pretty cool opportunity. You dig in to what you want to learn. So, get involved. Shape your senior year.

And above all prepare for the Fall of 2018...that's what really matters for you!