

SENIOR FOCUS SEMINAR – FALL 2015

Ms. Madison Leverich, A202

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Blendspace & Google Classroom

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

Welcome to Senior Focus Seminar! The goal of this semester long course is to examine issues and injustices that impact the world today. We will do this by analyzing and discussing topics including poverty, race, education, women's rights, governments and elections, the war on terror and more. Most of these topics are written about in newspapers or discussed in the media each and every day. Therefore, current events (local and international) will play a very important role in this class. Essential questions will guide our thinking throughout the semester. Examples of these thematic questions include: what is social justice? To what extent does power or the lack of power affect individuals? What is oppression and what are the root causes? How are prejudice and bias created? How do we overcome them?

Students will work independently and in small groups on a variety of different projects to explore and examine important injustices that affect the world today. A secondary goal of this course is to go beyond examining the issues and apply our knowledge of the topics to a real life setting. Students will participate in volunteer activities to gain firsthand insight into some of the social issues that are prevalent today. Volunteering will be a required part of this course. We will discuss this in detail in class. My hope is that through thoughtful analysis we will delve into some of the more controversial topics in the news and media today and generate much needed conversation and debate about these issues.

Note: Because this course pays special attention to current events, we may shift our area of focus or the order of the units depending on what is relevant at the time.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- ❖ Be on time to every class and have all of your materials with you.
- ❖ Be respectful of your teacher and classmates. Our classroom should be a place where everyone feels comfortable sharing their opinions and asking questions. In this class we will discuss and debate very controversial topics. Make sure you are always conscientious and respectful when listening and sharing.
- ❖ Be honest – don't shortchange yourself by cheating or plagiarizing. If you are caught cheating, you will receive a zero on the assignment/test – no exceptions.
- ❖ I have high expectations of each and every one of you. Because this is a senior seminar there will be more of a burden on you to stay up to date on homework and long term projects. Be proactive about coming to see me with questions or for help.
- ❖ You will need frequent access to the internet to post on our class blog and to a printer.

SUPPLIES:

- No text book required
- Access to computer/internet
- Access to printer
- Notebook & pencils
- Folder

The high school library has computers and printers that can be used when needed. You will need to print off news articles as well as use the internet for posting on the class blog multiple times per week so make sure to prepare accordingly. Please see me immediately if you anticipate this being a problem or have any questions.

GRADING & HOMEWORK

Current Events Quizzes/Presentations/Reflections – 30%

Midterm paper (end Oct/early Nov) – 20%

Final Research Project (January 2015) – 20%

Class work/Participation to be determined at the end of each grading period – 20%

Volunteer Activity – 10%

Notes to keep in mind:

- These percentages are approximate and may change depending on time permitted for assignments and units
- Consistent and positive in-class participation will bump a grade up while unexcused tardies/absences or little to no in-class participation will hurt your grade.
- I will post grades to Edline at the middle and end of each quarter. If you would like to discuss your grade at any point throughout the semester, please feel free to set up a time to meet with me.

You will be responsible for nightly homework assignments for this class. Please stay on top of your work. If you find yourself falling behind, please see me. I encourage everyone to keep an assignment notebook to keep track of homework and test dates. I will always write the assignment on the whiteboard as well as post it on the blog. There is no excuse for not completing your work! Keeping up to date with your homework will allow for easier test prep. Additionally, you will have several homework quizzes throughout the year.

Please plan ahead when you have an upcoming test – do not wait until the night before to study. Allow yourself time to review the material, come to me with any questions, and plan around your other activities. Prep for a test & making up late work comes before sports.

LATE HOMEWORK POLICY: I will accept homework for partial credit up until three days after the due date. After three days, the assignment will be marked a 0. I will not accept homework that is finished during class while I'm doing the homework check (unless it is something we are reviewing or correcting as a class).

HONORS: If you are taking this course as an Honors student you will be expected to complete additional and/or differentiated assignments throughout the semester. More details will be given with each assignment.

PLEASE REMEMBER: If you are absent on a day that our class does not meet (due to the block schedule) you are still responsible for contacting me and getting any assignments the day you return to school. DO NOT wait until our class meets again to get caught up!

CHEATING:

Cheating of any kind will not be tolerated. Cheating includes copying someone else's work (including homework, class work, projects, and tests), allowing your work to be copied, using cheat sheets, or talking during a test. Plagiarizing is also unacceptable. If any of these occur, all assignments involved will receive a zero and a parent/teacher conference may be requested. Please see Winchester's Handbook for additional information on school policy regarding cheating and plagiarizing.

ABSENCES:

If you are absent, it is your responsibility to complete the assignments you missed. The assignments will always be posted on the blog.

The N Rule: 5 absences (excused or unexcused) per quarter equal an "N" on your report card. 3 tardies in one class per quarter = 1 absence, which counts toward the 5 absences.

- Please be aware of this rule, see the Student Handbook for a detailed explanation
- Any assignments missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up and will result in a zero.

Please see the 2015-2016 Winchester Student Handbook for any specific questions regarding policies.

Feel free to set up a meeting with me to ask questions, review material, check your grade, etc. Please do not wait to come see me if you are struggling with the material or if you have any questions – the sooner we address the issue, the better. And remember, that's what I'm here for! Swing by the history office or email me to set up a time to meet.

FINAL REMINDERS:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- NO CELL PHONES! I will take them away if I see/hear them- NO FOOD- NO SENIORITIS ☺- Use the restroom during lunch & in between classes |
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FINALLY, I WANT TO WELCOME YOU! I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO A VERY REWARDING SCHOOL YEAR!

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MS. LEVERICH

Please fill out and return this page by **Tuesday September 15th**.

I have read and understand the course expectations for Senior Focus. If I have any questions or concerns about these policies, I will speak to or email Ms. Leverich.

Student Name (Print)

Student Signature

Parent Signature