

Senior Seminar

Syllabus

Mr. Divis

1 Credit

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Course Description

This is a course designed to give students both a background in and understanding of events and ideas which are critical to the knowledge of controversial social issues in the U.S. and the world today.

Major Units of Study

-Same-Sex Marriage

-some of the highlights being...

-historical and religious discussion

-current status and debate from Vermont, the U.S., Europe, and the world

-case study of DOMA, Vermont's civil union battle, and California's Proposition 8

-several films, possibly including *For the Bible Tells Me So, I Can't Marry You, In Sickness and in Health*, and *Tying the Knot*

-*A Jihad for Love* (Level 4)

-several U.S. Supreme Court cases, including *United States v. Windsor*

-Abortion

-some of the highlights being...

-historical and religious discussion

-current status and debate from Vermont, the U.S., Europe, and the world

-case study of Norma McCorvey and the murder of Dr. George Tiller

-several films, possibly including *From the Back-Alleys to the Supreme Court and Beyond: From Danger to Dignity, I Had An Abortion*, and *The Last Abortion Clinic*

-*Vera Drake* (Level 4)

-several U.S. Supreme Court cases, including *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*

-Capital Punishment

- some of the highlights being...
 - historical discussion
 - current status and debate from Vermont, the U.S., Europe, and the world
 - case study of former Illinois Gov. George Ryan, Sister Helen Prejean, and the method of lethal injection
 - several films, possibly including *Death by Fire*, *Deadline*, and *Dead Man Walking*
 - Pierrepoint: The Last Hangman* (Level 4)
 - several U.S. Supreme Court cases, including *Furman v. Georgia* and *Gregg v. Georgia*

-Marijuana Legalization

- some of the highlights being...
 - historical and medical discussion
 - current status and debate from Vermont, the U.S., Europe, and the world
 - case study of Vermont's decriminalization and recreational legalization in Washington and Colorado
 - several films, possibly including *Marijuana Nation*, *The Union: The Business Behind Getting High*, *Waiting to Inhale*, and *Marijuana: A Chronic History*
 - Reefer Madness* (Level 4)
 - several U.S. Supreme Court cases, including *Gonzales v. Raich*

-Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide

- some of the highlights being...
 - historical and religious discussion
 - current status and debate from Vermont, the U.S., Europe, and the world
 - case study of Germany and the Nazis, Dr. Jack Kevorkian, Terri Schiavo, Oregon's DWDA, and Dignitas
 - several films, possibly including *The Sea Inside*, *You Don't Know Jack*, and *The Suicide Tourist*
 - How to Die in Oregon* (Level 4)
 - several U.S. Supreme Court cases, including *Cruzan v. Missouri* and *Vacco v. Quill*

-Others units are up to student and teacher discretion

Resources

We do not have a textbook for this course, so most of our work will be with newspaper, magazine, and Internet articles, as well as films and documentaries. We will also be reading a number of US Supreme Court cases, as well as US and international laws, to see how law affects these social issues. Therefore it is imperative for you to be in attendance each and every day. If you miss a class or are tardy, it is YOUR responsibility to make up your work or get the notes either before class or after class; during class is not acceptable.

This is a challenging course that requires students put a lot of effort into the concepts and themes that we are studying. There is not an overwhelming amount of homework assigned, but it is necessary for success and understanding for the students to review their notes every night. This course also requires students to plan ahead and budget their time for the large projects, presentations, and papers that will be assigned.

What you need for this class

- 3-ring binder to keep ***all*** handouts, readings, past tests, etc. for the entire semester
- notebook for notes (loose leaf paper is ***not*** acceptable for notes)
- loose leaf paper for class work
- pen/pencil
- highlighters

Need Help?

I am always available for students who have questions or who need extra help. I typically am at school at 7am and will stay as late as needed. I strongly encourage students to take advantage of this and get help before it is too late. I can be reached at the school at either (802) 463-3944 ext. 263 or craig.divis@wnesu.com.

Classroom Expectations

The classroom expectations are as follows:

1. Follow directions
2. Be seated before the bell rings
3. No swearing, negative comments, put downs or bullying
4. Don't disrupt the learning process (ex. talking, off task, disrupting others)
5. Be prepared for class! (paper, pencil, book, homework)

Failure in meeting these expectations will result in the following action:

1. Warning
2. Time after class
3. 15 minutes after school and parent phone call
4. 45 minutes after school and parent phone call
5. Buddy room/Administration

Grading

Your grade will depend on your performance in the following areas:

1. class attendance, attention, and participation
2. on time and accurate completion of work assigned
3. Collins Writing assignments
4. long term research paper, presentations, and other related projects
5. performance on quizzes, tests, and exams

Homework:

All assignments, as well as their due dates, will be on Mr. Divis' webpage (<http://mrdivis.yolasite.com/>), which can be accessed through the BFUHS website, <http://www.bfuhs.org/>, clicking on the Social Studies department page, and then clicking on Mr. Divis. Besides homework information, you can also access course syllabi, Social Studies course descriptions, an MLA Writing Guide, Reading Recommendations, and other useful information for students and parents.

Make-up Work and Extra Credit:

It is your responsibility to find out what you have missed! If you are sick and miss a day of school, then you get one school day to make that work up. Any work turned in late will only be graded as 50% of the total worth of the assignment. Students will only have ***one week*** after the assignment was due to get 50% of the total grade; after that the student will receive a 0 for the assignment.

If a student had prior knowledge (ex. in class when it was assigned) of a test, homework assignment, or presentation, then the day they are back in class from an absence that assignment will be expected, whether it is taking a test, making a presentation, or turning in homework. If not turned in or ready, it will be considered late or will be a 0.

For essays and research papers, if a student is absent on the date a paper is due, the student must e-mail me the paper *as an attachment* on the due date. My e-mail address is: cdivis@wnesu.net or diviscm@hotmail.com. If not received in my e-mail inbox on the date due, it will be considered late and will be a 0.

Extra credit will only be given on a class-wide basis. No individual extra credit work will be given out.

Make-up Tests:

Students may re-take a test, regardless of their grade, if they schedule two (2) meetings with me to take place within one (1) week of receiving their returned test: a 45-min. after school study session with me and an after school meeting with me to take the re-take. All re-takes in this course are essay tests.

If a student received below a 70% on a test, then they are **required** to attend a 45-min. after school study session with me within one (1) week of receiving their returned test and are highly urged to take advantage of a re-take test. If a student does not attend this mandatory after school study session, then they will be referred to Mr. Broadley.

Make-up Essays:

In terms of re-writing essays, students are always allowed to re-write an essay. To take advantage of this, the student must schedule one (1) meeting with me to take place within one (1) week of receiving their returned essay: a 45-min. after school session with me to go over your essay and look at ways to improve it. Students have one (1) week to turn in the re-written essay. The new grade will be accepted as the student's grade on the essay.

If a student received below a 70% on an essay, then they are **required** to re-write the essay within one (1) week of receiving their returned essay. If a student does not turn in this newly re-written essay after one week, then they will be sent to after school Homework Lab daily until the essay is turned in.

No excuses will be accepted!

Participation:

You will start the class with 100 participation points each quarter. Points will be deducted for those students who fall asleep in class, are late for class, are disruptive in class, do not bring materials to class, and those students who refuse to answer questions or to read. There is a difference between not knowing an answer and giving a general response of "I don't know" when you are asked something in class. In order to learn, effort must be given and providing "I don't know" answers when asked questions in class shows a lack of effort. If you do not actually know the answer, you should look it up in your notes or textbook. I will use the school-wide Habits and Minds rubric to help me determine your behavior, attitude, and participation throughout the semester. Your total number of participation points will be entered in the grade book at the end of each quarter.

Substitute Policy

Students are expected to behave for a substitute teacher just as they would for Mr. Divis. If there is a substitute in class, they have the authority as any teacher would, and I have given them directions to leave a list of all student names who are disruptive, insubordinate, or rude to them or anyone in class. If the substitute writes down the entire class as being disruptive, insubordinate, or rude, then the entire class will have a 45-minute mandatory after school detention in my room. If one or a number of students have their names written up, then they will be served with a detention by Mr. Broadley, as well as a 45-minute mandatory after school detention in my room.

Cell phones and iPods:

Cell phones and/or other electronic devices are prohibited in class. The first time you are seen using one of these devices (i.e. texting, looking at the time, etc.) during class, it will be confiscated by the teacher and you will get it back at the end of class. If you are seen using it a second time, it will be confiscated by the teacher and will only be given back to the student's parent/guardian. If you refuse to turn it over to the teacher, you will be sent to the office immediately for insubordination. To prevent your property from ending up in the teacher's hands, DO NOT even bring it to class.

Restroom/Hall Pass:

You will ONLY be allowed to leave the class for any purpose after the first 20 minutes of class. Do not ask me to use the restroom or go to your cubby before class begins because you will not be given permission to be late to class. Without your agenda, you will not be allowed to leave the room.

Cheating and plagiarism:

Cheating and/or copying work from another student, book, website, etc. is a major offense. If caught cheating, the student will receive a 0 on the assignment; if copying off another student with the other student's knowledge, then both students receive a 0. Parents/guardians will be notified of these situations and consequences, as well.

Plagiarism is when a student does not give credit to an author or producer of a piece of work (i.e. music, books, magazines, encyclopedias, web sites, etc.). If a student is caught plagiarizing, the student will receive a 0 on the assignment and their parents will be notified. This is an easy punishment, as many universities and colleges expel students for plagiarism!

Grading:

Each quarter counts 45% towards the semester average, with the semester exam worth 10% of the semester grade.

Quarter -- 45%
Quarter -- 45%
Semester Exam -- 10%

Letter grades are assigned based on the following table:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
67-69	Not Yet (NY)
66 ↓	F

**In order to get credit for a class, you need to get a C- or better for your semester average.

I only tell students what their grades are outside of class hours. It is YOUR responsibility to stay up to date as to your grade, and I am more than willing to share this information with you before and after school or during snack time, but NOT during class.

Not Yet (NY) and/or Incomplete (I):

It is the student's responsibility to come see me if they received either a Not Yet (NY) or Incomplete (I) on their report card to get the assignment(s) necessary for them to improve

their grade. Students have one (1) week to come and see me after report cards are mailed out to get their assignment(s).

If students do not come and see me to get their assignment(s), or if they fail to complete the assignment satisfactorily, then their grade will become an F.

Senior Seminar Course Syllabus

After reading the syllabus for Senior Seminar, which includes the following:

- information about what we will be studying throughout the semester,
- the course goals,
- how each unit may/will be taught,
- the resources that we will use and those that students need for the class,
- Mr. Divis' contact information,
- the classroom expectations and consequences,
- the grading policy,
- the make-up work policy for homework, tests, and essays,
- the class participation requirement,
- the policy for when there is a substitute teacher in the class,
- the cell phones and iPods policy, and
- the cheating and plagiarism policy,

I fully understand the expectations for what this semester-long course will entail.

Student Name (printed)

Student signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature