

Program of Studies Changes 2014-2015

SOCIAL STUDIES

The following course changes are being proposed by the Social Studies Department for the 2014 - 2015 school year. The changes we are proposing are part of the realignment process in the Social Studies Department that began three years ago.

When the decision was made to move Civics & Government to ninth grade it was also agreed that the senior year Government/Economics requirement should be dropped due to redundancy. Our objective became to provide senior year students with an opportunity to study issues that were more current in nature and both national and global in scope. With that in mind the department generated several course frameworks as possible options and then conducted student surveys to gauge interest. This has resulted in the development of two semester course descriptions that we would like to use as a framework to build complete courses. Senior students will be required to take at least one of these semester courses but may take both if they wish. Our thought behind giving students the option of one or both was that we believe students have varying degrees of interest in current issues. This will allow students to decide if they want to examine current issues for the entire year as their social studies requirement or give them the opportunity to study another area of the social sciences for half of their senior year.

The two semester senior current issues courses are as follows:

Contemporary Issues in Education, Immigration, Terrorism & the Environment

Contemporary Issues is a semester course that explores how the United States and the International Community address the issues of Education, Immigration, Terrorism and the Environment. Students will examine the current challenges these issues present to the United States and other nations along with analyzing the government policies that are in place to manage them. The goal of the seminar structure will be to facilitate student-centered investigation, discussion and problem solving in the 21st Century.

Contemporary Issues in Race, Poverty, Health Care & Crime

Contemporary Issues is a semester course that explores how the United States and the International Community address the issues of Race, Poverty, Health Care and Crime. Students will examine the current challenges these issues present to the United States and other nations along with analyzing the government policies that are in place to manage them. The goal of the seminar structure will be to facilitate student-centered investigation, discussion and problem solving in the 21st Century.

For those seniors who choose to take only one of the current issues courses offered we propose that they be allowed to choose from the two following course options to fulfill the rest of their senior year social studies requirement. These are two courses that already exist in the Program of Studies. We have made adjustments to the course descriptions with the intent of also making changes to the curriculum in order to make the courses more engaging and relevant for students. We would like to make these courses senior only electives so that course content and expectations can be tailored to that grade level.

Sociology

Sociology is a semester course that studies human society and social behavior. This course deals with the social atmosphere that helps to make us who we are and how we behave. The key component of this course is to study who we are and the society that influences our behavior, with an emphasis placed on how the socialization process has been affected by various technologies over the last 100 years and how the continuing evolution of technology will impact our socialization in the future.

Economics

Economics is a semester course, which investigates the decisions people and communities make each day about the use of resources. This course examines the basic theory of capitalism, real world consumer economics, a comparison of global systems, globalization, and personal economics. We will analyze national prosperity and economic growth, and government involvement in our economy. Some classes are project based and specific topics are student driven.

We would like to maintain the current social studies elective-courses, as they exist now open to both Juniors and Seniors: AP Psychology – Full Year, Psychology – Semester

We would also like to propose the creation of a new semester elective course open to both Juniors and Seniors. The objectives of the course would be to facilitate student awareness of both challenges and needs within the greater Southern Lehigh community along with becoming active participants in addressing those needs and challenges. We believe this course would provide our students the opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to become dynamic agents of change in our community.

Social Engagement through Research & Action

Social Engagement through Research & Action is a one-semester course focused on providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become active participants in community service projects and organizations. Students will learn how nonprofit organizations are structured and operate through research, guest speakers, online interviews, surveys and field experiences. Students will apply what they have learned by identifying and then working with nonprofit organizations in a variety of ways such as developing fundraising campaigns, raising community awareness and volunteerism. Animal shelters, food banks, homeless shelters, elderly organizations, disaster relief, humanitarian, historical societies and veterans groups are just several of the possible types of organizations student will look to partner with through this course. Students may be asked to participate in off-campus activities outside of the regular school day for approximately 2 hours per month. Students will be required to provide their own transportation both to and from these off-campus events. Those who are unable to attend these activities will be given alternative assignments. Students who have signed up for this course will be required to attend an informational meeting at the end of the preceding school year so they have a clear understanding of the course expectations and requirements.

The course additions and changes that we have proposed represent a significant shift in the social studies department offerings from what we have done in the past. Our goal is to provide our senior students with learning opportunities that raise both domestic and global awareness while at the same time being engaging and relevant to their lives.

ENGLISH

For many years, we have offered three separate media type courses: news journalism (newspaper), mass media (broadcast/video), and yearbook. The three co-curricular courses exist separately from one another, and are instructed by three different teachers. In the past several years, there has been some collaboration and overlap among students in the three courses. The yearbook and mass media courses have traditionally been popular, and journalism has grown significantly this year. In the current model, students are allowed to take all three courses for credit more than once.

This mix results in a bit of a "one-room schoolhouse" effect each year as students within each class range in experience and ability levels. The results affect all students and the teachers of each course: 1) returning students are often bored with the repeated instruction of basics with the new students, 2) new students are rushed into producing work they may not be ready for because of the need for the experienced students to begin working on production/publication, 3) returning students who are ready to learn more advanced skills are often left unchallenged because the teacher may need to focus more attention on getting new students up to standard, 4) there is much instruction that could be provided on topics appropriate for multiple levels, but this is difficult to do in the current environment, so many of the journalism basics that students should know before tackling newspaper, yearbook, or broadcast production are glossed over, rushed, or perhaps missed altogether.

In order to establish a consistency and increase the quality of instruction for students, as well as the quality of our resulting publications, we are proposing the addition of a new Introduction to Journalism course to be added to the program of studies for next year. This course would serve as a prerequisite for students before they can take newspaper journalism, yearbook, or mass media.

The objective of the half-year Introduction to Journalism course is to provide instruction to students in the basics of journalism and also afford them the opportunity to try their hand at writing, designing, and producing all three types of publication/production before choosing one or more advanced course paths (newspaper, yearbook, media) the following year.

Introduction to Journalism

In this half-year introductory level course, students will learn journalism and media basics including reporting/interviewing, writing in all journalistic styles, editing in AP style, first amendment law, ethics in journalism, fair use & copyright, photography, layout design, and video shooting/editing. Students will use technology on a regular basis to research, write, revise, edit, and publish. Those who have a strong interest in writing and multimedia are well suited for this course. Introduction to Journalism is a prerequisite for those who wish to take newspaper journalism, yearbook, or mass media. Prerequisite: Final grade of a B- or better in a college prep or honors level English course.

English Prerequisite Updates:

Honors English 9 – Prerequisite of a B+ in English 8.

English 10, English 11 and English 12 – Prerequisite of an A- in Applied.

AP English – Prerequisite of an A in English 11.

These are based upon data collected on student's success in the course. We have students in Applied courses who have demonstrated significant success in Applied courses and are ready to move on to a College Prep class with the skills they have developed.

MATH

Math Prerequisite Updates:

Algebra II – Prerequisite of a B in Applied Algebra.

Previously it was a C and counselors and teachers feel that we are setting students up for failure using this indicator because Algebra II is a very difficult course for an average and above average student.

**Prerequisites are a guide for students, parents and counselors. When looking at students' individual circumstances and academic performance, the Principal is able to place students appropriately.*

BUSINESS

The following courses will be dropped:

Senior Internship
Entrepreneurship
Advanced Computer Applications
Global Business and E-Commerce

Smart Student: Smart Money course name will be changed to **Financial Literacy.**

College bound or career oriented students will find this course helpful in controlling their own finances both now and in the future. Topics like debit cards, credit cards, credit reporting agencies, calculating costs for college, personal budgeting, banking, buying a car, taxes, insurance and investments will be discussed. Business ethics, leadership skills, financial policy, stock market and current economic and financial events will be incorporated throughout the course.

Keystone Remediation – Algebra 1/ Biology

Keystone Remediation: This is a semester course designed for students who have not yet achieved a score of Proficient on one or more of the required Keystone Exams. These exams are administered to students at the end of the year in which they take the course. For many students the Algebra 1 and Biology Keystone Exam will be administered at the end of their 9th grade year and Literature will be administered at the end of their 10th grade year. After remediation, students will be expected to retest the exam(s) in which they did not score proficient. Beginning with the class of 2017, the State of Pennsylvania requires passing grades on the Algebra, Biology and Literature exams as a requirement of graduation.

Submitted By: Christine Siegfried, High School Principal