

LAW SYLLABUS

BEDFORD HIGH SCHOOL

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a survey course where the primary focus is to promote an understanding of the Constitutional framework of law that guides our daily lives. The course material is designed to actively engage students in thought and personal reflection in numerous areas of American law, with a particular focus on constitutional and criminal law. Students will read, analyze, evaluate, debate, and write critically about concepts in American law. Discussion and arguing cases are major components of the course.

CREDIT HOUR POLICY: Middlesex Community College follows the Carnegie Unit for credit. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 45 hours of work for each credit. The most common breakdown for one credit is one hour of class instruction and two hours of homework for 15 weeks each semester. A three credit course demands nine hours each week.

CONTENT UNITS

September

The Constitution and the Courts

October and November

Fundamental Rights: Speech, Religion, Equal Protection, and Other Rights

December

Do the Crime, Do the Time: Criminal Law

January and February

Due Process of Law: Criminal Procedure

March

Ambulance Chasing 101: Civil Procedure and Tort Law

April

Deal or No Deal? Contract and Property Law

May

Family Law: Marriage, Divorce, Adoption

THEMES AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Separation of Powers. Who should make decisions in our legal system? How are responsibilities divided between citizens, police, judges, juries, and branches of the government?

Rights. What fundamental rights should be protected? How should those rights be balanced with other interests and the rights of others?

Dispute Resolution. How should the law regulate personal, business and other relationships and disagreements?

Justice. What are the purposes and effects of various kinds of punishment? What are the alternatives?
Law and Values. What makes a good law? How does American law reflect and protect political values?
(see page 2)

POLITICAL VALUES AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Liberty and Order

What is the meaning of freedom? How have historical movements challenged and changed the understanding of freedom? To what extent has liberty been limited by other important values including stability and security?

Equality and Hierarchy

Has the premise of the Declaration of Independence – that “all men are created equal” – been a defining value? Or has it been compromised in favor of other goals – liberty, democracy, safety, or prosperity? What are legitimate sources of hierarchy?

Democracy and Authority

To what extent has the United States truly been based upon majority rule? What are legitimate forms of authority in American life and culture? Does representative democracy safeguard or endanger individual rights?

Capitalism and Centralization

Is America a land of opportunity? How have individual property rights and free markets shaped American history? How should they be limited?

Individualism and Collectivism

How are rights and responsibilities distributed between individuals and groups? How have social movements changed that distribution?

UNIT OUTLINES

Unit Outline - The System: The Constitution and the Courts

Themes and Essential Questions

Law and Values. What makes a good law?

Separation of Powers. Who should make decisions in our system?

Content Questions

1. What is law? What types of law exist? What makes good law?
2. What is Constitutional Law and what is its purpose? What is the structure of the US Constitution?
3. How does the Supreme Court decide what the Constitution means?
4. What powers do the courts have under our constitutional system? Describe and explain elements of the legal system.
5. What powers do the other branches of the federal government have under the Constitution?
6. What powers are reserved to the states?
7. Identify and describe legal approaches of current members of the Supreme Court.

Law Unit Outline: Fundamental Rights

Themes

Rights. What fundamental rights should be protected? How should those rights be protected?

Law and Values. What makes good law? How does American law draw upon core political values?

Content Questions

1. What rights does Constitutional Law protect? How else are rights protected in our system?
2. How and to what extent does the First Amendment protect freedom of expression and association?
3. How does the Constitution protect freedom of religion?
4. To what extent and how do the US Constitution and American law protect equality?
5. How does the Constitution protect other rights—to bear arms, vote, privacy, education and the right to die?

Do the Crime, Do the Time: Criminal Law Unit Outline

Themes

Justice. What is the meaning of justice? What is the purpose of punishment?

Rights. What fundamental rights should be protected?

Content Questions

1. What are the causes of crime and the purposes of criminal law? How can crime be reduced?
2. What are the elements of criminal conduct?
3. What are the categories and definitions of criminal offenses?
4. Explain the criminal defenses.

Due Process: Criminal Procedure Unit Outline

Themes

Justice. What is the meaning of justice? What is the purpose of punishment?

Rights. What fundamental rights should be protected?

Content Questions

1. Describe and evaluate the constitutional limits on **police** investigations, search and seizure, and interrogation of suspects.
2. What is the role of **attorneys** in criminal procedure? What are the arguments for and against the right to a defense attorney? Evaluate the role of plea bargaining in the criminal justice system.
3. Describe and evaluate the process by which a **criminal case** proceeds. Compare the roles of **judge and jury** in the trial process.
4. What are the processes and procedures related to **sentencing and corrections**? Is the death penalty cruel and unusual punishment?
5. What are the differences between the adult and **juvenile justice** systems?

Ambulance Chasing 101: Civil Procedure and Tort Law Unit Outline

Themes

Dispute Resolution. How should the law regulate personal, business and other relationships and disagreements?

Separation of Powers. Who should make decisions in our legal system? How are responsibilities divided between citizens, police, judges, juries, and branches of the government?

Content Questions

1. What are the underlying purposes of Civil Procedure? To what extent does our legal system serve those goals?
2. What are the most important parts of the civil litigation process before, during and after trial?
3. Describe and evaluate the roles of participants in the civil litigation process.
4. What is a tort and what kinds of torts are there? How are tort claims decided? How are damages awarded?

Deal or No Deal: Contract and Property Law Unit Outline

Themes

Dispute Resolution. How should the law regulate relationships and disagreements?

Capitalism and Centralization Is America a land of opportunity? How have individual property rights and free markets shaped American law? How should they be limited?

Content Questions

1. What are the purposes of contract law?
2. What are the elements of a contract?
3. When are agreements unenforceable?
4. What are warranties and how do they operate?
5. How are contract cases resolved?
6. What are the purposes and effects of property law and rights? What kinds of property are there?
7. What are the rights of landlords and tenants?
8. How are property rights transferred and divided?

Family Law Unit Outline

Theme: *Dispute Resolution.* How should the law regulate relationships and disagreements?

Content Questions

1. What is a **family**? How has the American family changed and how does the structure of American families compare to those of other cultures? What legal consequences are there for the definition of a family and how has the law responded to changes in the understanding of American families?

2. What are the legal requirements rights and obligations of **marriage**?
3. How does the law deal with responsibility for **children**?
4. Describe the social and legal processes related to **foster care** and **adoption**.
5. How does the law regulate **separation**, **divorce** and **custody**?

Schedule. Law meets two out of three days in a rotating day schedule for 70-minute blocks throughout the school year -- so (given exam weeks) approximately 100+ 70 minute classes.

Materials. Materials include numerous primary and secondary readings from a variety of sources, and feature-length documentaries and clips.

Assessments. Participation, classwork, homework, and papers are assessed. Grades are calculated on a total points system.

Materials for the course and unit outlines are available at this [link](#).

EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

1. **Expectations.** In this class, we will be studying ourselves and our ideas as well as the course material, so it is very important that people feel comfortable sharing about themselves and their opinions, some very personal, in class discussions. Members of the class will treat each other with integrity, respect, dignity and humanity. We will listen to each other; respect opinions and views that we may not agree with, share with the class and allow the rest of the class to share as well. The course expects members to work independently and cooperatively. We will behave like we want to be here and want to learn.
2. **Learning Experiences.** I have been working on what I hope will be interesting, challenging, entertaining, creative and humorous opportunities for all of us to learn, explore, understand, apply, and evaluate. You will work by yourself and with others on projects, presentations, reading, papers, posters, debates, simulations, discussions, experiments and videos. Students will rely on each other to learn from each other, so it is important that you take your responsibilities seriously.
3. **Grades.** All of this will “count” in one way or another. Grades will be calculated under a point system. Each assignment, of whatever type, will be assigned a maximum point value. All written work will be graded under rubrics with the following categories: *Active Learning: Effort and Initiative; Resourceful Thinking: Knowledge and Comprehension; Analysis and Application. Synthesis and Evaluation; and Effective Communication: Writing and Creativity.* Term Grades at Bedford High are calculated on a 100-point scale. At the end of the term, grades will be calculated based on each student’s earned percentage of the total points for the term. Anything that is not specifically awarded a point value will be assessed as part of class participation, which will be assessed most days on a 10-point scale.
4. **Leveling.** This is a split Honors / High Honors course, meaning that students can choose to take the course as either Honors or High Honors. Students in the High Honors course will complete additional (or different) homework assignments, writing, and tests (including more writing and more difficult vocabulary). Students taking High Honors should possess the academic skills and commitment to do substantial independent reading, research and study. High Honors work will be assessed with higher expectations.
5. **Late work.** The policy is simple: generally, late work will not be accepted.
6. **Preparation, Beginnings and Endings.** Students will come to class on time prepared to work and will focus from bell to bell. There is a reason for this: Research shows that, in learning new things, beginnings and endings are the most important time. If those are lost in yammering, you will learn less easily and less efficiently. At the beginning of class we will warm up and introduce, and at the end of class we will sum up, organize, and synthesize. Also – you are in this class because you chose to be in this class. In many cases, that prevented others from taking it. Act like you want to be here and want to learn.

7. **Absences.** When you are absent it is your responsibility to attempt to find out what the class covered, assignments, and expectations for the next class. Use google drive and/or the class website.

- If you are absent unexcused (no parent call-in), assignments due that day are 0s (including class participation).
- If you are absent after a long-term assignment is given and before it is due, the due date does not change.
- If you are absent on the date an assignment is due, get the assignment to me when you return.
- If you miss a test or quiz it must be made up by the end of the next week, during an X-block or after school.

8. **Notebook and iPad.** While we are moving towards a paperless world, there will be some pencil and paper used in this class. You will need a small binder to store current work, tests, and other things done on paper. “Your” iPad will be used in class productively for school-related purposes. You will shut down non-school apps and notifications. Nearly everything will be distributed and collected through Google Drive (and Docs, etc.), so make sure those apps are working properly.

9. **Writing.** You will do a lot of writing in this course, all of which will be typed in single-spaced 12-point Times font in Google Drive. That will save you the hassle of figuring out how to format your stuff and will save me from reading anything in **14-point Monotype Corsiva Bold Italic**. Individual writing will be added to your writing journal in google drive. All group work will be produced in Google Drive so that I can track changes.

10. **Student Handbook.** You must comply with all laws, rules, policies, regulations, details, schedules, calendars, included in the Bedford High School Student Handbook™, including tardy and class cut policies.