

Name:

Block:

Date:

Assignment #

Welcome to 8th Grade Civics!

Ms. McWhorter

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Dear Class,

I am very excited to be your 8th grade Civics teacher this year! This year we explore the history of civic engagement and our place in the shaping of America today. We will explore the foundations of our democracy, how to be critical and informed citizens, and how we can enact positive change in our communities. Our units are organized around civic themes and issues that we will research and present upon. We will also learn many skills that will transfer with you to High School and beyond. Before we can get started on this journey, we must discuss the ways our class will run on a daily basis.

First, students should go to Google Classroom each class period. There you will find your do-now and that day's assignment (including all videos, readings, and student handouts). Students are expected to be on time to our class zoom meetings. The Zoom meeting link can be found in the stream, in the banner, and in the classwork tab. Work is expected to be turned in by or before the due dates. Please contact me in advance, if there is a health issue that precludes you from turning your work in on time. Without an excused extension, there will be a 10% penalty each day it is late, with no acceptance after the unit is over.

I believe that students learn best when they are learning from each other. With that in mind, we will do a lot of partner work and group work in our class. You will be

evaluated not only for the quality of your class work, but also on how well you work with others. Keep this in mind when you are working with others.

Last, but not least, I believe that learning is and should be FUN!!! I will do my best to make our time together as fun as I can and as a class we will celebrate each other's successes. We do this in many ways from displaying our work to giving each other a shout out at the end of class. I am available after school everyday, except Wednesdays, but please make an appointment if you need help that will take longer than 20 minutes.

Here is a zoom link to my office hour after school:

<https://mersd.zoom.us/j/94232160230>

This is going to be a great year! I know we will learn a lot together and leave with lasting memories!

Your Teacher,

Ms. McWhorter

Syllabus

8th Grade Civics

Course Overview

In this civics course, 8th graders develop critical thinking skills, a thorough understanding of the foundations and workings of government in the United States, and capacities for civic agency. Students continue to: develop their research skills; read and analyze primary and secondary sources; participate in interactive and collaborative work; and explore different points of view, motives and biases. Throughout the course, students study the past to better understand the present, so that they are equipped to engage in informed and authentic civic action and to create change.

To ground the development of authentic and informed civic agency, this course begins with an identity unit focusing on chosen and unchosen aspects of identity, systems of oppression, and individual values. Students then explore the political institutions and founding values of the United States, as expressed through grievances in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. In a case study on Prince Hall and the philosophical foundations of democracy, students consider participatory politics and the choices an individual has to remain loyal, express voice, or exit. A unit on justice in action explores additional case studies, including the Little Rock Nine, Constitutional Amendments, and Supreme Court cases, and investigates levers of change, including voting, constitutional amendments, and Supreme Court decisions. The year culminates in individually student-written research editorials and student-led non-partisan civic action projects.

Units

(For more details on the units, click [here](#).)

- Unit 1: Identity, Values, and Agency
- Unit 2: Revolutionary or Loyalists?
- Unit 3: Research Project: Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix of the National Book Award-winning Stamped from the Beginning
- Unit 4: Loyalty, Voice, or Exit: Philosophical Foundations of Democracy
- Unit 5: The Social Contract in Action: Levers of Change
- Unit 6: Civic Engagement in Our Democracy
- Unit 7: Civic Engagement in Our Democracy

Major Topics/Documents Covered

- internal / external identity; invisible/visible identity
- Social Constructs (race, gender, class, immigration status)
- Chosen aspects (values--personal and political; hobbies; preferences; religion)
- Privilege/Oppression/Power Mapping
- Civic Friendship: social equality
- Civic Friendship: direct speech
- The people; Social contract; Rights; Representation
- The purposes of government
- The branches of federal government (legislative, executive, judicial):
 - Executive - President, Vice President, Cabinet
 - Legislative - Congress, bicameral, Senate, House of Representatives
 - Judicial - Supreme Court, federal courts
- Separation of powers; Checks and balances
- Authority and legitimacy
- Federalism
- Social contract
- Natural equality
- Civic participation
- Civic action
- Voice
- Influence
- Participatory action
- Local government structures
 - Rank-choice voting
 - Participatory budget
- federal, state, local
- Civil rights
- Segregation
- Integration
- Equal protection

Little Rock cases:

- *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857)
- *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)
- *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946)
- *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)
- 13th Amendment, 14th Amendment (1868): citizenship rights, equal protection of laws, 15th Amendment
- 19th Amendment (1920)
- 26th Amendment (1971)

- Structure and functioning of Massachusetts State Government (legislative, executive and judicial branches)
- Declaration of Independence (1776)
- *The Massachusetts Constitution* (1780)
- Magna Carta (1215)
- John Locke's *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (1690)
- Aristotle, *Politics*
- The Iroquois Confederacy Constitution
- Constitution of the U.S. (1787)
- Bill of Rights (1791)

Year-long Transfer Goals

- Be critical consumers and producers of different sources of information.
- Read and analyze evidence and different perspectives to support arguments in writing, discussion, and decision-making.
- Apply knowledge of history and the social sciences to take informed, authentic action towards a more equitable world.

Year-long Essential Questions

- What is a just society?
- What are the sources of power, and how can they be organized and channeled?
- How can individuals and groups make a difference?
- What steps need to be taken in order to be anti-racist?
- How might learning about the source of racist ideas help you to understand the present? How might this help you understand yourself, and your own ideas?
- Why is hope so central to American political foundations and ideas?

Grading

30% Classwork

(After direct instruction, this is a time for you to practice the skills/content)

10% Homework

(this is practice and will help you to be successful on your assessments/projects)

20% Class Participation

(even if you get a 100% on HW/CW/Tests you can only get an A- , if you do not participate well in your independent/partner/teamwork and binder checks)

40% Assessments/Projects

(this includes any unit tests or major projects we do throughout the unit)

Work Expectations

- Unless otherwise stated, please complete work in full sentences.
- Please never share a doc with your classmate, nor copy and paste anyone's work and attempt to turn it in as your own. This will lead to disciplinary action and a 0 for the assignment. *Exception: you have been specifically told to share your doc with a partner, or your team/partnership has been told to turn in 1 document.
- Work should be completed on time. Please contact me if there is a substantial reason you need to turn in work late (health or life stuff). If work is late without an excused extension, the penalty will be 10% deduction a day (with 50% being the highest grade you can receive after a week), with no work being accepted after the unit ends.

Notebook organization

We will complete our notebook Table of Contents at the beginning of class each day.

You should label the top of each page with the following information:

Date	Title of Material	Total Points Possible
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Student/Parent Signatures

I have read and understood the expectations of our 8th grade civics class.

Please go to the google form and electronically sign that you and your parents have read and understood the Syllabus: <https://forms.gle/W3urNFbcc2naRa4j9>