

EAST HADDAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES CURRICULUM

Approved by the  
East Haddam Board of Education

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## Table of Contents

	<u>Page Number</u>
Course Description.....	i
Curriculum Contents.....	ii
Content and Performance Standards.....	iii
Contemporary Issues Curriculum Framework .....	1
Additional Resources .....	2

## Course Description

The Contemporary Issues class is a Social Studies elective course designed to provide students with an up-to-date view of the world around them. Emphasis will be placed on an analysis of real-world issues, which have a direct impact on students' lives. The students will also focus on improving reading, writing, and vocabulary skills as a means to understand important issues and communicating their ideas and opinions to others.

## Curriculum Contents

The curriculum framework contained in this document identifies learner outcomes, suggested classroom illustrations, and suggested evaluation/assessment activities. Each of these is tied to the Connecticut Social Studies Content and Performance Standards.

## Content and Performance Standards

The Connecticut Social Studies Curriculum Framework contains six content standards related to the study of Contemporary Issues. The six standards numbered one, three, four, six, eight, eleven, thirteen, and fourteen. The corresponding performance standards are listed below:

### Content Standard #1 – Historical Thinking

Students will develop historical thinking skills, including chronological thinking and recognizing change over time, contextualizing, comprehending and analyzing historical literature, researching historical sources, understanding the concept of historical causation, understanding competing narratives and interpretation, and constructing narratives and interpretation.

Educational experiences will assure that students:

- formulate historical questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources;
- evaluate data within the historical, social, political, and economic context in which it was created, testing the credibility and evaluating bias; and
- describe the multiple intersecting causes of events.

### Content Standard #3 – Historical Themes

Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions, conflict and conflict resolution, human movement and interaction, and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

Educational experiences will assure that students:

- demonstrate an understanding of the ways that cultural encounters and the interaction of people of different cultures in pre-modern as well as modern times have shaped new identities and ways of life;
- identify various parties and analyze their interest in conflicts from selected historical periods;
- describe, explain, and analyze political, economic, and social consequences that come about as a result of resolution of conflict; and
- explain the multiple forces and developments that have helped to connect the peoples of the world.

## Content and Performance Standards (Cont'd)

### Content Standard #4 – Applying History

Students will recognize the continuing importance of historical thinking and historical knowledge in their own lives and in the world in which they live.

Educational experiences in Grades 9-12 will assure that students will:

- describe and analyze, using historical data and understandings, the options which are available to parties involved in contemporary conflicts or decision-making; and
- describe relationships between historical subject matter and other subjects they study, current issues and personal concerns.

### Content Standard #6 – Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of citizens to participate in and shape public policy, and contribute to the maintenance of our democratic way of life.

Educational experiences will assure that students:

- establish, explain and apply criteria to evaluate rules and laws; and
- take a position on a current policy issue and attempt to influence its formation, development and implementation.

### Content Standard #8 – International Relations

Students will demonstrate an understanding of how the major elements of international relations and world affairs affect their lives and the security and well being of their community, state and nation.

Educational experiences in Grades 9-12 will assure that students will:

- analyze and evaluate the significance of major U.S. foreign policies and major international events and conditions over time;
- identify and analyze the various domestic, political, economic and social interests which play roles in the development of foreign policy; and
- describe and analyze the process by which foreign policy decisions are developed and executed.

## Content and Performance Standards (Cont'd)

### Content Standard #14 – Economic Systems

Students will demonstrate that various economic systems coexist, and that economic decisions are made by individuals and/or governments, influenced by markets, cultural traditions, individuals, and governments in the allocation of goods and services.

Educational experiences will assure that students:

- interpret important statistics about the national economy: the inflation rate, unemployment rate, gross domestic product and its growth rate;
- analyze the impact of specific government actions in the economy on different groups, including consumers, employees, and businesses; and
- explain the reasons for government action in the economy, including providing public goods and services, maintaining competition, redistributing income, and promoting employment, stabilizing prices and sustaining reasonable rates of economic growth.

# CONTEMPORARY ISSUES CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

*Content Standards 1,3,4,6,8,14*

## **Learner Outcomes**

The students will:

- define the causes of world events utilizing multiple sources of information;
- describe a historical event identifying facts and opinions;
- present information to classmates on historical events;
- identify the historical context of current events;
- explain the political, social and human consequences of conflict in society;
- describe the variety of options available to parties involved in a current conflict;
- take positions on controversial issues;
- discuss the implications of law and justice on current events;
- define the process of the development of American foreign policy; and
- identify and interpret economic statistics as they relate to particular current events.

## **Suggested Classroom Illustrations**

- Students will participate in reading groups to review current events.
- Students will prepare presentations for the class relating to areas of study.
- Students will write essays on selected questions relating to areas being studied.
- Students will participate in debates on topics that are of current interest.
- Students will perform research on general topics such as Civil Rights, Constitutional Protections, Poverty in America, and others.
- Students will write research papers on assigned topics.
- Students will use computer technology to perform research activities and to aid in class presentations.
- Students will visit government agencies such as the state capital, local courthouses, town offices, and town meetings to view first-hand the activities of state and local government.

## **Suggested Evaluation/Assessment Activities**

- Essays on questions related to current events.
- Research papers on selected topics.
- Debates.
- Class presentations.
- Examinations related to specific areas of study.

## Additional Resources

### **Programs:**

Newsweek Education Program  
Time Magazine Education Program  
Hartford Courant Education Program  
USA Today Education Program

### **Websites:**

- [Current Events](http://www.eduplace.com/ss/current/) - Education Place. ...  
<http://www.eduplace.com/ss/current/>
- [Google Directory - News > Current Events](http://directory.google.com/Top/News/Current_Events/) - Google, Directory Help Search only in **Current Events** Search the Web. **Current Events**, News > **Current Events**, Go to Directory Home. Categories. ...  
[http://directory.google.com/Top/News/Current\\_Events/](http://directory.google.com/Top/News/Current_Events/)
- [World-Wide Web Resources - Current Events](http://www.uky.edu/Subject/current.html) - **Current Events**. Index of **Current Events** Resources. New Sites. Terrorism Resources. Iraq. ... View entire **Current Events** Resources List (this is a large file). ...  
<http://www.uky.edu/Subject/current.html>
- [Current Events](http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/cevents.html) - ... Also included is an archive of previous articles. AskERIC Lesson Plans: **Current Events**. **Current events** lesson plans for grades 3-12. Brain Bowl. ...  
<http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/cevents.html>
- [Current Events: Focus on Human Rights \(Human Rights Watch 2003\)](http://www.hrw.org/events/) - WATCH, **Current Events**, Portugues Francais Russian Espanol Chinese Arabic. Home Contribute Community News **Current Events** Publications About HRW Regions, Africa. ...  
<http://www.hrw.org/events/>
- [Daypop - a current events/weblog/news search engine](http://www.daypop.com/) - DAYPOP News & Weblogs. Search 17000 News Sites, Weblogs and RSS feeds for **Current Events** and Breaking News. ...  
<http://www.daypop.com/>
- [US Politics - About.com](http://uspolitics.about.com/) - Web Hosting. Hi, I'm Apply Now, your Guide to US Politics: **Current Events**. ... US Politics: **Current Events**. with Apply Now Your Guide to one of hundreds of sites, ...  
<http://uspolitics.about.com/>
- [Law and Legal Issues About Current Lawsuits and Lawyers](http://law.about.com/) - Web Hosting. Hi, I'm Apply Now, your Guide to **Current Events**: Law. I can help you find what you need to know about **Current Events**: Law. **Current Events**: Law. ...  
<http://law.about.com/>