**

2023-2024 COURSE SYLLABUS

**CURRENT ISSUES & SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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| Teacher: **James Sullivan** (he/him) | Period: **2-B** (Mon./Wed./Fri.)  Time: 10:21am – 11:44am |
| Room Number: **C-223** | Email:***james.sullivan@atlanta.k12.ga.us*** |
| Semester: ***Fall 2023*** | Tutorial: Days, Hours & Location:  Thursdays (& By App’t.); 3:50pm-4:50pm; Location: C-223 |
| Textbook(s): None. |  |
| Website: <http://jhsgradysite.weebly.com>  Schoology & Google Classroom info provided in class |  |

Zoom Link: (will post in Google Classroom/Schoology, if virtual learning is necessary)

**Course Description:**

**CURRENT ISSUES // SOCIAL JUSTICE**: The purpose of this elective course is to provide students with an opportunity to research, discuss, explore and understand a wide variety of social and political issues currently making news on a local, national and/or international level. It also builds, integrates and reinforces social studies skills and SEL (Social Emotional Learning) skills.  Students should be prepared to read a variety of primary news sources related to these topics and to discuss and defend different perspectives in class through discussions, journal entries, and class projects. Given that current issues are transient, topics covered are subject to change.

**\*\*NOTE**\*\*: It is expected that we will be discussing issues in this class that are controversial. You may have strong opinions on some subjects. The aim of the class is to create and encourage a classroom atmosphere of respect and tolerance. To that end, students are reminded that their own strong opinions on a topic may not be the only views on that topic expressed in the class. Be cool. Everyone is welcome. All will have a chance to speak and be heard. Especially since the goal of the class is to have students participate on a daily basis.

**Course Content Standard**: Please refer to: [https://www.georgiastandards.org/standards/ GPS%20Support%20Docs/QCC%20Social%20Studies%209-12.pdf](https://www.georgiastandards.org/standards/%20GPS%20Support%20Docs/QCC%20Social%20Studies%209-12.pdf)

**Course Outline: (Subject to change, as Current Events change!)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Weeks 1-2: | **Introduction and Research Skills** – Media Literacy and Evaluation of Sources for Accuracy and Objectivity or Bias (Avoiding “Fake” News) |
| Weeks 3-7: | **Teen Issues** - - Anxiety; Empathy; Bullying; Social Media & Screen Time; Gender & Identity; College; Future Tech Advances (A.I.; CRISPR, etc.) |
| Weeks 8-10: | **Atlanta & GA (Local) Issues** - - Civil Rights Legacy; Redlining Effects; Income & Wealth Inequality; Gentrification, Affordable Housing & Beltline Development; Local Elections & Voting Rights; Transportation; Safety & Policing Issues |
| Weeks 11-14: | **National (U.S.) Issues** - - National Politics (including impact of changing from Trump to Biden presidencies) & Impact of 2020/2022 & 2024 Elections; Abortion laws; #MeToo Movement; Black Lives Matter movement; Gun Violence; Health Care; Immigration; Mass Incarceration; Urban vs. Rural Divide; Jan. 6th Investigations; Gerrymandering & Voting Law changes; Opioid Addiction; rise of nationalism; growth of conspiracy theories |
| Weeks 15-18: | **Global (International) Issues** - - Climate Change & Its Impact Globally; Species Extinction; Resource Shortage; Overpopulation; COVID-19 impacts; Women’s/Girls’ Education; Refugee Crises; U.S. & The World (Russia, North Korea, China, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan; India, et. al.); Global Conflicts (Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, Israeli/Palestinian, Ethiopia, Haiti, etc.); Inflation |

**Evaluation and Grading:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Course Components** | **Weights** | **Grading Scale** | |
| Classwork (grading floor of 50) | 40% | 100-90 | **A** |
| Summative (projects) | 60% | 89-80 | **B** |
| **TOTAL** | **100%** | 79-70 | **C** |
|  |  | 69-0 | **F** |
| \*Not Evaluated | **\*NE** |

*\*NE (not evaluated): Tasks may be entered into the “Classwork” category as not evaluated/not graded/unweighted in order to record formative tasks included in instruction.*

* **Grading**:
  + **Classwork category** (classwork assignments and journal entries; class participation): Grading floor of 50
    - “Missing” calculated as 50
    - Graded tasks with earned scores of 50 or below are entered as 50.
  + **Summative category** (Unit projects (Slideshow & Oral Presentation)):
    - Students’ grades are entered as earned.
    - Reassessment opportunities are required for all students on summative tasks (including tests and quizzes) when they score 69% or below. This reassessment will be a newly generated teacher assessment and the reassessment score will replace the original score if higher. Students have two opportunities for reassessment; if students do not demonstrate mastery after the second reassessment, the teacher will refer the student for additional support.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS:** A late assignment is defined as work submitted after the teacher collected the assignment. Students who submit late work by the late work deadlines (see below) will receive full credit for the late assignments. Teachers should enter an "M" into IC if an assignment is missing. If the student turns the assignment in prior to the late work deadline, the assignment will be scored based on mastery of the standard(s) and entered into the grade book.

Students with late assignments must submit work by the deadlines below:

**Makeup Work/Reassessment Deadlines 2023-2024 School Year**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **First semester**  August 1-December 15, 2023 | Midpoint: 10/6 | Deadline 9/25 for assignments 8/1—9/22 |
|  | Deadline 12/4 for assignments from 9/25-12/1 |
| **Second semester**  January 3-May 24, 2024 | Midpoint: 3/15 | Deadline 3/4 for assignments from 1/3-3/1 |
|  | Deadline 5/13 for assignments from 3/4-5/10 |

# **Campus Portal for Parents and Guardians (**class schedules, attendance records, grades):

# <https://ic.apsk12.org/campus/portal/atlanta.jsp>

# To activate your account/receive your login activation key, please contact Mr. Montero at [bmontero@atlanta.k12.ga.us](mailto:bmontero@atlanta.k12.ga.us).

**Schoology** is a K-12 educational learning management system and an all-in-one platform for teaching, learning, assessing, and reporting grades and data. The goal for an LMS is to allow a school to have a central piece of technology to be the platform for communicating with students, teachers, families, and administration. Students access Schoology through MyBackpack.

**Gifted/Honors addendum:**

The course will also follow the Georgia Program Standards for Gifted and High Ability Learners as outlined by the GA DOE Board Rule 160-4-2-.38 and listed below.

• *Advanced Communication Skills*: Learners will engage in diverse and authentic learning experiences which will allow them to develop and apply innovative oral, written, visual, and nonverbal communication skills across disciplines.

• *Advanced Research Skills*: Learners will gather, decipher, and determine credibility of information from a variety of sources and integrate information through analysis of content.

• *Creative Thinking & Problem Solving*: Learners will insightfully evaluate a variety of problems and arrive at innovative conclusions.

• *Higher Order & Critical Thinking Skills*: Learners will analytically critique a system or set of complex ideas, utilizing logic and reasoning skills in novel ways, to create and/or modify knowledge.

**PEC/Special Needs addendum:**

Students will receive modifications as per their Individual Education Plan (IEP) to help them be successful in this class. Multiple strategies will be utilized as well as tutorials, activities and pullouts. Students are expected to meet due dates for assignments (don’t wait until the assignment is due to start) and to pass content assessments throughout the semester. Students with special needs are held to the same End of Course Test (Milestone) standard as all other students by the state of Georgia and must pass it to graduate with a high school diploma. Students are responsible for putting their best foot forward, for doing their own work, and for seeking out assistance in class or after class if anything is unclear or needs reiteration or modeling.  Remember that you’re your parents/guardians, the school and your teachers are a team with the same goal--so let’s work together.

# **Required Materials:**

**Notebook/Journal**: composition book or binder (NOTE for 2023-24: These journals may be done & kept on Schoology/Google Classroom. BUT, if you prefer, I am happy to give you (to keep) a physical notebook/composition book.)  
Pen/Pencils

Email address

Chromebook & Internet access

Presentation Software/App Access: Google Classroom; Google Slides & Docs

**Online materials:**    
  
<http://www.snopes.com/> - - GREAT website to check, confirm or research the truthfulness/accuracy of a news story, headline, rumor, gossip, etc.

<http://www.nytimes.com/> newspaper

<http://www.washingtonpost.com>  newspaper

<http://www.npr.org/> nonprofit radio/print

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/> News

<http://www.ajc.com/> (Local News)  
<http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/domain/3104> Midtown Media Center (research)  
T.E.D. Talks – An N.P.R. podcast & website with presentations

Fresh Air – An N.P.R. podcast/broadcast  
Radiolab – An N.P.R. podcast

CodeSwitch: An N.P.R. podcast

Stuff You Should Know: podcast (originating from Atlanta)

## School-wide Behavioral Expectations: be present; be respectful; be responsible; be on task and on time; be peaceful, productive problem solvers.

**Classroom Expectations**:

CLASS “CONTRACT”   
ROOM PROCEDURES AND CONDUCT RULES

EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS FOR STUDENT BEHAVIOR

1. Be on time to class.  Be an active listener:  in your seat, engaged and ready to learn.
2. Use the restroom **BEFORE** coming to class.
3. After the tardy bell rings, the door will be locked and you must bring an admit pass.
4. **IMPORTANT:  There is a Zero Tolerance Policy for Electronic Devices**.  **ALL** electronic devices (including phones, computers, ear buds, headphones, etc.) **MUST** be put away and out of sight (yours and mine).  There will be charging stations at the rear of the classroom, and you can plug in your charger there.  **Failure to comply with the no-phone rule will result in confiscation of the device(s).  Failure to immediately surrender the device to the teacher upon request or repeated violations of the Policy will result in a Discipline Referral.**  If you know that you are expecting a truly important call or message during our class period (i.e., parent, doctor, college), then you **MUST let me know before class** and we will work out a solution.  On those occasions when phone/computers are to be used in a classroom assignment or research, then the electronic device should only be used for such directed research purposes.
5. **Classwork**:  Throughout the course of this class, we will be using a mix of lectures, discussions, advocacy exercises (written and oral), debates, audio and visual presentations, guest speakers and other types of lessons.  I think you’ll find it interesting and fun.  As in college (and life), what you get out of the class mirrors the effort you put into the class.  Therefore, you should take great notes and keep a well-organized notebook of these lessons.  Your notebook/binder should be complete, updated and available for grading on a weekly basis.  During class discussions, if you have a point to make but the time is not right for an interruption, then write down the point you want to discuss in your notebook while your classmate/teacher is speaking.  This is excellent practice for your future career (whether as a lawyer in a courtroom or workplace meeting or anywhere else) and is a great active listening skill.
6. **Academic Integrity Pledge**: It is the responsibility of every student and employee to exhibit honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in academic work always to support a positive learning environment in the school. Cheating, plagiarism, and other acts of academic dishonesty are strictly prohibited.  Students who cheat on standardized testing or are repeatedly dishonest can face expulsion or increased consequences. Examples of violations of this rule include but are not limited to: copying or "borrowing" from another person or source (including artificial intelligence sources) and submitting it as one's own work; seeking or accepting unauthorized assistance on tests, projects or other assignments; fabricating data or resources; providing or receiving test questions in advance without permission; or working collaboratively with other students when individual work is expected. **In other words, your answers must be yours and yours alone.** Written assignments should be completely and independently written by you to reflect your thoughts and views on the topic. **Academic Dishonesty with a Device:**Use of a cellular phone without the consent of a school administrator or school staff during a test, quiz, or completion of a graded assignment is considered cheating and is strictly prohibited.  (See APS Student Handbook, pp. 40-41.)
7. **Atmosphere of Mutual Respect**:  I will respect you and I ask that you provide the same respect to me.  During Lectures, Class Presentations or Guest Speaker Presentations, please do not engage in conversations with classmates.  I am an old man, and I lose my train of thought easily during interruptions.  ;)  Please pay attention and be respectful!  If you’d like to make a comment or ask a question, please raise your hand and wait to be called on to speak.  When it’s your turn to speak, I promise to be equally respectful of your views or questions.  I truly want us to engage in great discussions in this class, but we have to be able to hear each other in order to actually listen to and learn from each other.

1. You must request and be given a **Hall Pass** for bathroom/water/nurse/counselor/ teacher passes. To receive the Hall Pass, you need to **leave your cell phone with me**. (I’ll keep it on my desk during your absence.) **Violations of this privilege will result in loss of the privilege.** (Examples of violations include: excessive trips; taking too long to return; not being where you told me you were going; going to a distant restroom; visiting friends or using your phone; etc.)**.**
2. Appropriate dress is expected in class. (See APS & MHS Student Handbook.)
3. Appropriate language is expected in class. (See same.)
4. Early dismissal is granted only by approved procedure.
5. No eating or drinking during class! (Water bottles (with lid) are allowed.)

**School-wide Expectations**:

**MASTERY LEARNING:** With mastery learning, a unit of material is taught, and student understanding is evaluated before students are able to move on to the next unit. Students who have not shown mastery for a particular unit will receive feedback and support in reaching mastery. They may be given practice exercises, study guides, group work or complementary resources to help them improve and achieve mastery.  Students who demonstrate mastery of the content for a particular unit are given enrichment tasks like special projects or academic games to further or broaden their knowledge of the material.

**For additional help, Tutor ATL info:** <https://tutoratl.org>

**PROGRESS REPORTS:** Parents and guardians are informed when students are making unsatisfactory progress in classes.  Poor performance will be reported to parents and guardians as soon as problems are evident.  Progress reports with plans for remediation will be provided for all students making unsatisfactory progress, and parent-guardians conferences must be scheduled.  Unsatisfactory grades should never come as a surprise to parents, guardians, or students.  Also, see Board Policy Administrative Regulation IHA-R(1) under “Students in danger of not meeting academic expectations” for further information.  Teachers will:

* Contact parents/guardians early in the semester if academic, attendance, or behavioral difficulties are apparent.
* Notify the counselor, Student Support Team (SST)/Response to Intervention (RTI) Chair, and/or an assistant principal of serious problems that are affecting classroom performance.
* Set up parent conferences as necessary.

**ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY:**  Students wanting to participate in athletic programs governed by the GHSA and extracurricular activities must meet eligibility requirements to participate.  The Athletic Director (and the Extracurricular Activities sponsors) will collaborate with teachers to monitor and to identify students in danger of failing courses.  A master list of students participating in extracurricular activities and athletics under the auspices of the GHSA will be available to all staff.

**Our Vision**: A high-performing school where educators inspire, families engage and students love to learn.

**Our Mission**: Every student will graduate college and career ready with a dedication to community involvement and service.

**Midtown Graduate Profile (5 Cs)**: Creative, collaborative, critical thinker, communicative, and a good citizen.

[Midtown Community Resource Guide](https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/cms/lib/GA01000924/Centricity/domain/11155/2022/Midtown%20Resource%20Guide.pdf): https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/domain/11155

**For Mental Health Crisis you may call the Georgia Crisis & Access Line at 1-800-715-4225.**

**Resources:**

**https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/**

**https://namiga.org/georgia-crisis-and-access-line/**

**https://www.crisistextline.org**

**See Something Say Something Anonymous Line: 1-844-5-SAYNOW**

**School Counseling Site for Resources/Documents:** <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/46013>

Current Issues & Social Justice Project Reports

This semester, you will give Current Issues Project Reports to the class (on a topic of your choice within Two (2) to Four (4) of the General Categories listed below :

1. **Teen Issues** (Examples: Empathy; Anxiety; Bullying; Social Media & Screen Time (Phones (!)); Gender & Identity Issues; College; Teen Pregnancy; Forthcoming Technology Advances (A.I.; CRISPR, etc.))
2. **Atlanta/Georgia Issues** (Examples: Atlanta/Georgia History & the Civil Rights Legacy; Redlining Effects; Income & Wealth Inequality; Gentrification, Affordable Housing & Beltline Development; Local Elections & Voting Rights; Transportation; Safety & Policing Issues)
3. **National Issues** (National Politics (including impact of changing from Trump to Biden presidencies) & Impact of 2020/2022 & 2024 Elections; Abortion laws; #MeToo Movement; Black Lives Matter movement; Gun Violence; Health Care; Immigration; Mass Incarceration; Urban vs. Rural Divide; Jan. 6th Investigations; Gerrymandering & Voting Law changes; Opioid Addiction; rise of nationalism; growth of conspiracy theories)
4. **Global Issues** (Climate Change & Its Impact Globally; Species Extinction; Resource Shortage; Overpopulation; COVID-19 impacts; Women’s/Girls’ Education; Refugee Crises; U.S. & The World (Russia, North Korea, China, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan; India, et. al.); Global Conflicts (Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, Israeli/Palestinian, Ethiopia, Haiti, etc.); Inflation.)

This Current Issues Project will be an oral presentation accompanied by a Google Slides presentation (i.e., must be a program compatible with GC & the classroom Boxlight computer). A.I. sources should not be used to create the slideshow. Your oral report will give a general overview of the topic and reveal the differing opinions about the topic. Your oral report will also reflect your own reading on the topic and show command of the issue (i.e., be able to answer Qs on the topic). Your accompanying slides (8-10 minimum) must have pictures to illustrate the topic, with little or no text. The entire Report should last about 10-15 minutes and the final slide must include a bibliography/list of sources. You may bring note cards to refresh your memory, but may not read directly during the presentation from your phone or a paper. YOU are the teacher on your topic.

Please look for articles/videos/podcasts/etc. related to each chosen topic. (I can also help with this.) Make sure you explain how the sources you found relate to the discussion. (You should feel free to choose a presentation topic other than those listed above, as long as it relates to a Current Issue and I give pre-approval.)

Current Issues Projects will be presented on assigned days. Good luck and let me know if you have any questions.



**Receipt of Syllabus**

**Course Name:** Current Issues & Social Justice

**Teacher Name:**  Sullivan – 3-A

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*Student Signature**Parent/Guardian Signature*

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*Date**Date*