

**Current Issues/Close Up (Grades: 10, 11, & 12)**

**Prerequisite:** Instructor approval.

**Credit:** 1 semester, ½ credit, elective  
2 semesters, 1 credit, elective

**Course Overview:**

This course examines the process of making public policy at the federal level of government, as well as current issues confronting the nation and the world. Specific problems such as poverty, crime, health care, and immigration are studied and discussed as domestic policy issues. Foreign policy issues such as nuclear proliferation, national security, and world poverty are examined through the “global village” concept. This course prepares the students to actively participate in the Washington, DC Close Up experience, as well as emphasizing the development of critical thinking skills. Newsweek will be used as a resource on a weekly basis. Each student will receive a copy in order to facilitate current issues discussion and oral presentations.

**Social Studies Content Strands**

The following strands contain instructional elements integrated throughout the social studies grade and subject level content standards and benchmarks. Focus areas for integrated elements are 1) participation and application skills and 2) citizenship skills. The depth of implementation in each strand area varies with grade/subject and developmental levels of students. The outlined elements will also help students understand the use of communication skills in learning information in all content areas.

**I. Participation and Application Skills**

A. Study and Organization Skills

1. Notetaking and Outlining

- As detailed by instructor in aiding comprehension of specific current event areas and issues.

2. Demonstrating a Sense of Chronology

- As related to subject matter
- Timeline activities

3. Identifying, Classifying and Summarizing Ideas

- Oral class presentations as they apply
- Determining the order of significance of historical, geographic, economic, political, cultural, national, and international events
- Political cartoons

B. Communication Skills

1. Writing and Research

***(Content Strands cont.)***

- Written reports on current event topics
- Library skills in obtaining background information and relevant data
- Political cartoons
- 2. Listening and Oral
  - Active participation in current event discussion
  - Group and individual oral presentations
  - Group discussion
  - Analysis and interpretation of audio-visual material presented in class
- 3. Reading and Vocabulary
  - Comprehension and evaluation of periodicals
  - Associated terms/concepts
  - Supplementary reading material
- C. Map and Globe Skills
  - Specific map assignments related to current event topics
  - Identify geographical areas in the news
- D. Group Participation Skills
  - 1. Conflict Resolution
    - Through a historical perspective
    - In relation to diffusing current geopolitical hotspots
  - 2. Simulations
    - Crisis intervention
    - Problem solving as they apply to controversial world issues
  - 3. Class Discussion
    - Ongoing throughout the course
    - Both teacher and student developed topics and projects

**II. Citizenship Skills**

- A. Comparing and Evaluation of Political Process
  - Examining of growth and development of specific political systems in international areas in the news and evaluating those systems
  - Compare and contrast these political systems to other models.
- B. Investigating Historical and Geopolitical Interrelationships
  - Evaluate political and economic systems
  - Identification of the factors that directly relate to the rise and fall of an area's geopolitical power
  - Compare and contrast the politics of geopolitical relationships
- C. Evaluating the Contributions of Cultures and Regions
  - Ongoing process throughout the discussion and study of current events
  - Identify ethnocentrism, xenophobic, multi-culturalism and globalism
  - Evaluate the contributions of US immigrants upon the growth and development of this nation
- D. Comparing Different Values, Traditions and Religious Beliefs
  - Ongoing throughout the course as topical

***(Content Strands cont.)***

- E. Exploring Social, Psychological and Economic Forces
  - Psychological aspects of poverty, nationalism, ethnic strife and terrorism
  - Dynamics of different economic systems
  - Modern technology and future economic trends in the global community
- F. Critical and Analytical Skills
  1. Drawing Inferences
    - Ongoing throughout this course of study
  2. Distinguishing Fact, Bias and Propaganda
    - Through the study of current geopolitical problems, periodicals, text, classroom discussion and internet use
    - Ongoing throughout the course
    - Political cartoons
  3. Understanding Cause and Effect Relationships
    - Realization that events on this planet are interrelated and determine the future of planet earth
    - Through the study of ozone depletion, the greenhouse effect, toxic wastes, eco-terrorism and de-forestation; future scenarios will be explored
  4. Interpreting charts, graphs, tables, diagrams, and visuals
    - Ongoing throughout the course
  5. Developing hypotheses and gathering and evaluating data
    - Student research on the background and implications of particular issues and events
    - Written reports on specific events and people making the news
  6. Using primary and secondary sources
    - Guest speakers
    - Research projects
    - Internet use and research
  7. Relating the past to the present
    - Ongoing throughout classroom lectures, discussions, and student projects
  8. Predicting the future using past and present trends
    - Use of the future's wheel
    - Effects of rapid technological changes o the need for future planning

**Social Studies Content Standards and Benchmarks**

**Standard 1:** Students will explain and discuss the basic concepts and organizational dynamics upon which our representative democracy is based. (SSCS—2, 4, 6)

**Benchmarks**

**1.1** Students will recognize and analyze the role of the United States government in the world community. (2.12.1, 2.12.3-4, 2.12.6, 2.12.8, 4.12.4, 6.12.7)

***Students will:***

	<b>Essential Learnings</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Map</b>
1.1.1	summarize relevant background information on the current presidential administration.	V, W,P	D
1.1.2	examine the role of the President’s Cabinet and key advisors.	V, P	D
1.1.3	develop biographical sketches of the cabinet members and advisors through Internet access.	V, W, O	I, D
1.1.4	discuss and analyze the current Congress and the role it plays in developing US domestic and foreign policy.	V, W,P	D
1.1.5	identify and explain terms such as gridlock, partisan politics, pork barrel legislation and term limits.	V, W	D
1.1.6	discuss recent Congressional controversies such as soft money, conflict of interest, political action committees, and campaign finance reform.	V, W, P	D
1.1.7	examine and analyze the role of the Supreme Court in the governmental process.	V, W	D
1.1.8	summarize the history and background of the Supreme Court.	V, W, P	D
1.1.9	present biographical sketches on the Supreme Court Justices.	V, W, P	I, D
1.1.10	discuss the role that a President may play in shaping the Court and the rationale of “Justices for life”.	V, W	D
1.1.11	identify recent important Supreme Court cases and discuss their relevance to the world around us.	V, W, P	I, D

**Standard 2:** Students will comprehend how technological advances and global issues are impacting and molding our ever-changing planet. (SSCS—2-4)

**Benchmarks**

**2.1** Students will recognize and examine the background of global events that relate to contemporary issues. (2.12.7, 3.12.1, 3.12.3-6, 4.12.2)

***Students will:***

	<b>Essential Learnings</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Map</b>
2.1.1	identify and analyze sovereign states that are classified as underdeveloped or impoverished areas.	V, W, O, P	D

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2.1.2	describe and discuss some of the problems that are specific to these regions.	V, W, P	I, D
2.1.3	compare and contrast these regions to the world's more affluent developed areas.	V, W, P	D
2.1.4	explain and critique the "global village" concept.	V, W	D
2.1.5	evaluate the inter-relationship between problems such as overpopulation, allocation of resources, disease, deforestation, ethnic hostility to contemporary world hot spots.	V, W, O, P	D
2.1.6	identify current regions that are political, economic, or military flashpoints world wide.	V, W, P	I, D
2.1.7	brainstorm and analyze possible diplomatic solutions or compromises that might be applicable to these problem areas.	W, P	D
2.1.8	examine and discuss the role of the United States in global issues as an economic and military leader.	V, W	D
2.1.9	define and discuss the role that national security plays in US foreign policy.	V, W	D
2.1.10	summarize the past and present role of the United Nations in world affairs.	V, W, P	D
2.1.11	identify possible future problems that threaten the planet.	V, W, O, P	I, D
2.1.12	brainstorm possible problem solving techniques and/or solutions that may apply to these global issues.	V, W, P	D

**Standard 3:** Students will analyze how national issues shape the federal government's public policy. (SSCS—1-6)

**Benchmarks**

**3.1** Students will identify and analyze domestic issues that impact the United States. (1.12.1-3, 2.12.4, 2.12.7-8, 3.12.3, 4.12.3-4, 5.12.1-3, 5.12.5, 6.12.1, 6.12.3, 6.12.6)

***Students will:***

	<b>Essential Learnings</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Map</b>
3.1.1	recognize the federal budget process and how it can go from a deficit to surplus.	V, W	I, D
3.1.2	identify and discuss the national debt, mortgaging the future, the Presidential and Congressional role in the budget process, corporate welfare, COLAs and social security.	V, W, P	I, D
3.1.3	identify and discuss the nature and importance of Constitutional rights.	V, W, P	D
3.1.4	discuss and analyze our fundamental freedoms and how they insure a democratic future.	V, W	D
3.1.5	examine particular hot topics such as right to bear arms, privacy, free speech and prayer in schools.	V, W, O, P	D
3.1.6	examine the problems related to crime and drugs in American society.	V, W, P	D

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3.1.7	discuss the causes, casualties and possible solutions to crime and drug-related issues.	V, W, O, P	D
3.1.8	evaluate and discuss mandatory sentencing, gun control, juvenile crime, the drug war, and the possible implications to the decriminalization of soft drugs.	V, W, P	I, D
3.1.9	summarize and discuss the factors involved in shaping the US economy.	V, W	I
3.1.10	examine and discuss relevant issues such as inflation, unemployment, Federal Reserve Board, recession, productivity, supply-side economics, minimum wage, tax reform and anti-trust laws.	V, W	I
3.1.11	evaluate and discuss the current status of education in the United States.	V, W	I, D
3.1.12	analyze and discuss current educational issues such as vouchers, prayer in school, school uniforms, violence in schools, teacher salaries, teacher training, charter schools and bilingual education.	V, W, O, P	I, D
3.1.13	brainstorm and discuss possible solutions to the educational dilemma.	V, W, P	D
3.1.14	recognize and discuss the problems and issues that are related to health care and aging.	V, W, P	D
3.1.15	outline and identify the issues of health care accessibility, Medicare, Medicaid, managed care, baby boom generation, retirement, aids, FDA and a patient's bill of rights.	V, W, O, P	D
3.1.16	identify the controversial issues related to US immigration policy.	V, W, P	D
3.1.17	evaluate and discuss illegal immigration, English as an official language, lifeboat ethics, Garrett Hardin, Ellie Weizel, quotas, 1986 Immigration Reform Act, Proposition 187, social services, visas and costs to the economy.	V, W, P	D
3.1.18	recognize the role that the media plays in shaping and informing a democratic society.	V, W	D
3.1.19	summarize and discuss journalistic ethics, free press, censorship, Internet access, national security, Pentagon papers, television and politics and journalistic freedom in school newspapers.	V, W	I, D
3.1.20	recognize and analyze the causes and problems related to poverty in America.	V, W	D
3.1.21	discuss and evaluate the welfare system, earned income tax credits, who are the poor, the New Deal, the Great Society, Federalism and the housing crisis.	V, W, P	I, D
3.1.22	identify the role that women and minorities play in American society.	V, W, P	D
3.1.23	examine and discuss issues related to women and minorities.	V, W, O, P	D
3.1.24	summarize and brainstorm solutions for issues such as racial discrimination, affirmative action, equal work/equal pay,	V, W, O, P	D

Native American reservation system, hate crimes and sexual orientation.		
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**Standard 4:** Students will examine international issues and relate them to US national interests as well as to the benefit of mankind as a whole. (SSCS—1-3)

**Benchmarks**

**4.1** Students will recognize and evaluate US foreign policy issues that impact our “global village”. (1.12.1-2, 2.12.4, 2.12.6-8, 3.12.2, 3.12.4-6)

***Students will:***

	<b>Essential Learnings</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Map</b>
4.1.1	identify the role and issues related to US defense policy.	V, W	I, D
4.1.2	discuss and analyze conventional weapons, SDI, nuclear proliferation, MAD policy, the Cold War, NATO, the War Powers Act, terrorism, humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, nuclear triad, the military establishment and defense spending.	V, W, P	I, D
4.1.3	examine and discuss the issues related to democracy and human rights.	V, W	D
4.1.4	summarize and explain human rights, cultural and ethnic diversity, democratization, linking human rights and trade, engagement and the international court system.	V, W	D
4.1.5	recognize the dangers and issues that are threatening our global environment.	V, W, O, P	I, D
4.1.6	discuss and analyze global warming, nuclear energy, the Endangered Species Act, de-forestation of tropical rain forests, ozone depletion, environmental treaties, the politics of conservation, renewable energy and recycling.	V, W, O, P	I, D
4.1.7	brainstorm possible creative solutions to threatening environmental issues.	V, W, O, P	D
4.1.8	identify the inherent dangers associated with nuclear weapons proliferation.	V, W, P	D
4.1.9	evaluate and discuss expanding the nuclear club, non-proliferation treaties, Star Wars, terrorism, India/Pakistan and the selling of nuclear missiles and technology.	V, W, P	D
4.1.10	identify the issues involved in world poverty and the role of US foreign policy in addressing this problem.	V, W, P	D
4.1.11	discuss and analyze possible solutions to world hunger, patterns of poverty, security assistance, multilateral aid, IMF (international monetary fund), the population explosion and US national interest.	V, W, O, P	D
4.1.12	recognize and evaluate the problems and issues associated with particular geographical regions.	V, W, P	I, D
4.1.13	study and analyze specific areas depending on current	V, W, O, P	I, D

geopolitical problems and issues (i.e., East Asia, Europe and Russia, Latin America, Middle East).		
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**Standard 5:** Students will identify and critique the role of the media in disseminating information to the public. (SSCS—1)

**Benchmarks**

**5.1** Students will recognize, identify, evaluate and problem solve contemporary news articles. (1.12.1-2)

***Students will:***

	<b>Essential Learnings</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Map</b>
5.1.1	comprehend the background, relevance, and factors involved in the news.	V, W, O, P for all.	I, D
5.1.2	present and discuss news events explaining significant background information and future implications.		D