

LAW IN AMERICAN SOCIETY  
GRADES 11-12  
(1 Semester)

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This class is an introduction to the legal system in the United States. Students will learn about the need for laws; how the court system works; how criminals are punished in the U.S.; the variety of rights which Americans enjoy; the juvenile justice system; and family law topics such as marriage, divorce, abortion, and the right to die. Students attend a field trip to the Cook County Jail during the course. Many current legal issues are discussed in small group seminar discussions. Teacher lectures are limited.

UNITS OF INSTRUCTION:

- UNIT I - Society's Need for Law
- UNIT II - The United States, Illinois, & Local Court Systems
- UNIT III - Crime and Punishment
- UNIT IV - Juvenile Justice System
- UNIT V - Family Law

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

1. Acquaint students with society's need for law. (14.D, 4A)
2. Acquaint students with the judicial process in the United States as outlined in the U.S. Constitution & Illinois Constitution as well as how the courts work in practice. (14A)
3. Familiarize students with landmark legal decisions in recent American history. (4A, 14D)  
Provide opportunities for students to gain skill in analyzing cases and arriving at and defending
4. decisions related to both real and hypothetical court cases. (4A, 14C, 16B)
5. Acquaint students with information related to individual rights and the responsibilities which accompany these rights. (4A, 14D, 16D)
6. Acquaint students with information related to family law. (16B)
7. Acquaint students with information related to the juvenile justice system. (16B)
8. Develop a working vocabulary for students in the area of legal terminology. (16B)

MAJOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES TO ACHIEVE OUTCOMES:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li><li>2.</li><li>3.</li><li>4.</li></ol> | <p>Attend a field trip to the Cook or DuPage County Jail.</p> <p>Write a paper on the student's philosophy of punishment.</p> <p>Participate in small group seminars on legal issues related to topics such as capital punishment, abortion, the right to die, and society's need for law.</p> <p>Draw personal conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of the criminal justice system in America.</p> |
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ADOPTED TEXT OR PRINCIPAL MATERIALS USED:

Arbetman, McMahon, O'Brien. <i>Street Law</i> . New York: West Publishing, 1999. (adopted 2000)
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(01/21/03)  
(04/28/00)