

A letter to my students My teaching philosophy

*The storyteller makes no choice –
Soon you will not hear his voice-
His job is to shed light and not to answer.
Jerry Garcia*

July 30, 2008

As your teacher I feel that my job is to shed light, not to give answers. I hope that I challenge you, and that you find this course valuable. Every topic studied in class can be applied out of class in a variety of situations. No matter what you choose to do with your life, the government and the economic system will affect your life deeply. For that reason you must understand what is going on in the government and economy so you can make it work for you rather than you working for it.

The Econ/Gov class has two themes, one economic and one constitutional; both reflect my philosophy of curriculum in the classes.

- ✓ Economic Theme: Apply "enlightened" self interest and decide what's important with marginal analysis; luck has nothing to do with it, action everything. Take the "Road less traveled."
- ✓ Constitutional Theme: "How is individual liberty best preserved?"
- ✓ World History: "How can knowledge of the past be used as a tool for success and self-defense in the present?"

The government and economics curriculum is designed to give students a fundamental knowledge of the basic principles and institutions of United States and Arizona government and economy. I will focus also on our local government and issues in an attempt to demonstrate the power of one citizen on her government and how one person can make the economy work for them. You will learn how the free market is a remarkable engine of freedom and innovation.

Preparation for the Senior Exhibition will be an important component of this class. The skills a student exhibits in the Senior Exhibition process are central to success in the world. I am proud of the students who have completed their Senior Exhibitions at Nogales High School. I seek to give the future citizen the skills and knowledge to be functioning members of the polity and economy.

World history will be in-depth studies civilization and geography and both history and geography have created you. Forget the old saying that those who don't study history are doomed to repeat it, smart people that have studied history repeat it all the time; the reason history gets repeated is because history is a book on what works and what doesn't, how other people have helped and manipulated others; you need history of ideas of success and for self-defense so you can see it coming when some one tries to manipulate you.

I will do my best to get you ready for the world outside this school.

You will write a lot in this class and I will read it all. You will always have the chance to re-write (following the rules). In the future of the possible poor economy, only those with the skills to speak and write will be truly successful. Writing is the heart of education, politics and business.

Only through individual initiative can knowledge is gained; so you can be sure that this will be an easy class.

Above all you will learn to use your minds well. You will hear me talk endlessly about the "habits of mind." Habits of mind are ways of learning to use your mind well. I want to teach you **how** to think not **what** to think. Everything you write or speak will apply the habits of mind.

We will also study and apply Steven Covey's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." We'll learn to apply Habit Two, "Begin with the end in mind," or Habit Three, "Put first things first." The habits of mind and the Seven Habits of Effective People are such valuable life skills that we must connect these ideas to life and to citizenship. These habits are also essential for success in the Senior Project.

The attainment, the protection, the drive for economic and political freedom is what it means to be human. "Live free or die."

The knowledge of what happened, the conflicts people have faced, the success attained can be directly applied to any one's life because human nature hasn't changed much; learn for the past because many people will miss it; you don't have to.

We have one rule in the class, it is "Trust until abused" I trust you until you show me that I shouldn't and I have a low BS tolerance level.

I look forward to teaching you. Please review all the information in this packet closely.

We will refer back to it often in the class.

Your life is a treasure.

Sincerely,
George Thomson
Instructor