

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

June 7, 2005

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 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 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 laws of supply and demand affect everything.

Preparation for the Senior Project 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.

In this class you will work in groups, write position papers, complete simulations, take traditional notes and quizzes, be expected to demonstrate and exhibit learning through portfolios, use technology and go beyond the class for learning. Through these activities,

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

One of the major assumptions of the class is that it will be student, not teacher, centered. This means that you will be active participants in the learning process. The course will be project oriented with students serving as worker and the teacher acting as the coach. I am not the deliverer of information you are the discoverer of new ideas. Only through individual initiative can knowledge is gained.

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 theme for the government classes is:

"How is individual liberty best preserved?"

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

For American History the course theme is:

"How can knowledge of the past be used as a tool for success in the present?"

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. You are an adult.

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