

High School Elective Courses

Overview

Mountain Brook students of the twenty-first century are uniquely equipped to investigate the social sciences. They have experienced great social and technological changes which have left them inquisitive about the world in which they live and the societal groups within that world. Elective courses for Grades 9-12 provide students with opportunities to pursue their interests in the social sciences. Content standards for Contemporary Issues and Psychology are dictated by the State Course of Study. Although elective courses may provide additional social science options for students, they do not replace any of the four courses required for graduation. The elective courses vary somewhat from year to year depending on student interest and availability of instructors.

Advanced Placement European History

Advanced Placement European History is a full year academic elective course in which students study the development of the major cultural, social, economic, and intellectual concepts as well as the traditional political subjects. Examples from each of the above categories are, respectively, secularization of learning, the role of cities in changing cultural values, the development of the modern industrial system, the development of political theory, and the rise of the modern state. In essence, the course covers the modernization of many aspects of European history, plus their impact on the world from 1450 to the present. As in other AP courses there is the increased opportunity for supplemental reading, interpretation of primary sources, development of writing skills, and the opportunity for college credit.

AP Government and Politics: Comparative

AP Government and Politics: Comparative is a one-semester academic elective course for seniors which is offered as a “zero period course.” Class time is arranged with students and the instructor during lunch periods and before and after school; students meet with the teacher at least twice a week for the entire school year, as well as additional time required for viewing relevant videos. The course is designed to provide students with the conceptual tools necessary to develop an understanding of some of the world’s diverse political structures and practices. The course will encompass the study both of specific countries and their governments and of the general concepts used to interpret the political relationships and institutions found in virtually all national polities. The countries forming the core of the course are Great Britain, France, China, Russia/the former Soviet Union, and one of the following: India, Mexico, or Nigeria (we usually study Mexico) (Note: These core countries are subject to change by AP College Board. We change in response to their change.) The course is designed both as a for-credit academic elective course and as preparation for the AP exam in May.

Advanced Placement Macroeconomics

Advanced Placement Macroeconomics is a one-semester academic elective course designed to give students a thorough understanding of the principles that relate to economics on a national or aggregate level. Attention is given at the beginning of the course to a study of basic economic concepts, with a special focus on the workings of demand and supply forces. Additionally, the course is designed to give students a thorough understanding of the principles of economics that apply to an economic system as a whole. Particular emphasis is placed on the study of national income and price level determination and how monetary and fiscal policies are used to promote income growth, low unemployment, and price stability. The class also explores the functioning of different financial markets within the economic system. As with Advanced Placement Government and Politics: Comparative, this course is a “zero period course” requiring individual arrangement with the instructor. It is designed both as a for-credit academic elective and as preparation for the AP exam in May.

Contemporary Issues

Contemporary Issues is a one-semester academic course designed to acquaint students with current events of local, state, national and international significance. This course is included as a one-semester elective in the State Course of Study with required content standards; the specific content of this course is consistent with the content standards of the State Course of Study for Contemporary Issues. Knowledge about and analysis of current events are vital elements in students’ educational development as they prepare for their roles as active citizens. This course allows students to acquire knowledge of key contemporary personalities and events that impact their lives.

Daily and weekly news sources serve as primary references for organization of the content of this course. Using a variety of resources, students acquire skills to evaluate news for content, fact, opinion, reliability, bias, and validity and to utilize different elements of news sources to develop an understanding of events and issues. Mastering the content standards in this course requires students to investigate issues by looking beyond the presentation given in the media. An essential component of Contemporary Issues is the inclusion of a variety of instructional strategies that actively engage students.

Students will:

1. Describe current news stories from various perspectives, including geographical, historical, political, social, and cultural.
 - Evaluating the impact of current news stories on the individual and on local, state, national, and international communities
 - Comparing current news stories with related past events

- Analyzing news stories and their implications for nations of the world
 - Locating areas affected by events described in news stories
2. Compare the relationship of governments and economies to events occurring in specific nations.
 - Identifying recurring historical patterns that may be evidenced around the world
 - Analyzing costs and benefits of trade among nations in an interdependent world
 - Analyzing viewpoints presented in editorial writing and political cartoons
Example: use of symbols to represent viewpoints
 - Comparing ways used by different countries to address individual and national economic and social problems, including child care, tax rates, economic regulations, health care, national debt, and unemployment
 3. Compare civic responsibilities, individual rights, opportunities, and privileges of citizens of the United States with those of citizens of other nations.
 4. Analyze the impact of scientific and technological changes in the United States on the world.
 5. Analyze how cultural elements facilitate global understanding or cause misunderstanding.

Examples: language, art, music, literature, belief systems
 6. Compare information presented through various media, including television, newspapers, magazines, journals, and the Internet.
 - Discussing the reliability of news stories and their sources
 - Describing the use, misuse, and meaning of different media materials, including photographs, artwork, and film clips
 - Interpreting statistical data related to political, social, and economic issues in current events
 - Discussing the role of intentional and unintentional bias and flawed samplings
 7. Identify strategies that facilitate public discussion on societal issues.

Examples: debating various positions, using a deliberative process

Critical Studies in Film

Critical Studies in Film is a one-semester elective course which traces the history of movies in the United States as film became the leading popular culture art form of the 20th Century. This course examines film genres in a historical context. Based on the American Film Institute's one hundred best films of the 20th Century, the content of the course will emphasize films that reflect the history and culture of the 20th Century.

Humanities

Humanities is an academic elective open to all students. The course involves the study of the cultural arts as they reflect historical trends of western civilization. An interdisciplinary, thematic approach is used to explore societal transitions. Emphasis is placed on the study and analysis of art, literature, philosophy, and music. In the first semester (Fall) topics include the Renaissance, the Reformation, The Age of Reason, and the Rise of 18th Century revolutions. In the second semester (Spring) Napoleon and 19th Century Nationalism, Industrialization, The World War Era, and Post-War modernism will be covered. Students may register for both semesters (1 credit) or either semester (1/2 credit). Semesters do not have to be taken consecutively.