

# **CIVICS SYLLABUS**

**MR. MACDONALD**

---

mmacdonald@town.hull.ma.us

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Students in grade eight study United States civics and government. In Civics, we'll explore the origins of the American republican system of government, while looking at how the Constitution embodies the values and purposes set up by the founding fathers. We'll also analyze the structure and function of the government on a national, state, and local level, and see how each level is interrelated.



This learning will enable us to talk about the problems we face today and possible political solutions to those problems. We can also discuss how our constitutional values relate to other nations and world affairs. Throughout the course we will focus on how people can and should play an active role in government and the importance each citizen contributes to society.

## **WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR CLASS**

- ☐ Your Chromebook charged and updated
- ☐ Hard-copy reading material (your choice) every day!
- ☐ A pen or pencil, for quick-writes, exit tickets, and Jeopardy games
- ☐ A folder and notebook for Civics class, if you prefer paper assignments

\*Paper assignments will only be allowed if students use a separate folder to keep them organized.\*

# HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF CIVICS

## Self-Advocate!

One of the most important things to learn as an 8th grader is to *ask for help when you need it*. That's self-advocacy. Whether that means you're having trouble understanding something for an assignment, or you're experiencing a conflict with another student, or Mr. Mac needs a reminder about supports you need in class, we all need to speak up for ourselves appropriately.

## Be Prepared & On-time

Come to class with your *Chromebook charged* and be ready to review the agenda. I request that students *wait for the first 5-10 minutes before leaving class*. Emergencies happen, but please try to use the bathroom in the middle or at the end of the period, or between classes.

## Give Your Best Effort & Participate

Complete assignments with effort and turn them in on-time. Participate and show you are engaged by responding (positively or negatively, but respectfully!) to others' ideas. Language that attacks or ridicules other people is unwelcome. Participation doesn't always mean physically using your voice. It means using your mind to engage with the topic at hand.

This *doesn't* mean you have to be happy or "nice" all the time - but you *do* need to make sure your words and actions meet minimum expectations of respect. If you need to self-advocate, or take a break from class because you're concerned you can't do the right thing, *we can always talk privately* outside the room and figure out a solution.

## Use Technology Appropriately

Only school-related sites should be open on your device during class. Unfortunately, and as much as I truly love them personally, that means no video games. Our school is not a surveillance state; please reciprocate that trust and respect by using your device appropriately.

Phones should be "away for the day", which during class time means "in your locker". Do your best to remember to silence your phone. You are not permitted to record or take pictures of other students or myself. Conversations with other students should be taking place in our room, not on your device. Disciplinary measures will be taken if technology is used inappropriately.

## Do Your Own Work

I expect students to have academic integrity. In other words, you do your own work, even when it stinks. Cheating in any form is not tolerated, nor is assisting another person to cheat. If you complete your own work with effort, even if it isn't 100% accurate all the time, you *will* be successful in Civics class.

When students pass off others' work as their own, they are stealing the intellectual property of another person. This is called **plagiarism**. Plagiarism will result in an automatic zero on any assignment. You can use someone else's words or ideas, but only if you cite them correctly. We'll learn how to do that this year.

## Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

When you submit your assignments, they will be analyzed for text production by AI systems such as ChatGPT-4, Bard, etc. *If your work is flagged for AI use, I will pull you for enrichment to revise that work with me*, if not revised as part of HW before then.

During Terms 3 and 4, we will start to use AI in Civics class as an aid to our learning. Before we do so, I need some time to learn more about using AI responsibly. **Until then, the use of AI systems to complete schoolwork is a violation of expectations and a breach of academic integrity, and may result in disciplinary action.**

## GRADING (HINT: SPELLING, CAPITALIZATION, AND PUNCTUATION ALWAYS COUNT)

Your grade in this class will be made up of the following categories:

<b>25%</b> <b>Preparedness &amp; Participation</b>	Students are expected to be prepared, participate in class, and complete assignments in a timely manner. In the case of an excused absence, students will have an extended due date for specific assignments.  Please see the <a href="#">Preparedness &amp; Participation Rubric</a> in our Civics Google Classroom.
<b>25%</b> <b>Classwork and Homework</b>	This category is for short assignments completed during or outside of class and may be <u>graded based on completion and effort</u> . Points are taken off for errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading or video response questions</li><li>• Quickwrites/exit tickets</li><li>• Other individual or small group assignments</li><li>• Having hard-copy reading material every day!<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ (Weekly HW: 1 point per day)</li></ul></li></ul> Please see the <a href="#">Classwork Rubric</a> in our Civics Google Classroom.
<b>25%</b> <b>Civics Project Assignments</b>	This category is for work related to your Civics Project. We'll talk about this project, including how project work is graded, in more detail after Thanksgiving. This category starts during Term 2. For Term 1, all grading categories are temporarily worth 33.3% each.
<b>25%</b> <b>Assessments</b>	This category is for assessments, which are <u>graded for accuracy</u> . This means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quizzes</li><li>• Tests</li><li>• Writing Assignments (see the <a href="#">Rubric here</a>)</li></ul>

## LATE WORK POLICY

You need to try your best to turn all assignments in on-time. Classwork assignments will lose an automatic **10%** credit each school-day late. Students will be assigned no more than 2 homework assignments per week, but those assignments lose **20%** credit each school-day late. Late credit is taken off *in addition* to any other points lost due to rubric criteria.

Any assignment submitted 4+ days late will only earn 60% (D-) credit. Weekends and holidays/breaks do not count towards late credit. Work that is not turned in before the end of the term will result in a 50% (F) on that assignment in Aspen. *Taking the time and effort to revise work will always result in extra credit, even if it was originally turned-in late.*

How often you turn in work on-time is part of your Preparedness & Participation grade. **Failure to hit "Turn In" on Google Classroom will result in late credit.** Extensions for assignments must be requested at least one day before the due date, and are at Mr. Mac's discretion.

## COMMUNICATION

I am excited to get back to work and to be able to learn and grow with you through it all. I take pride in responding to student emails in a timely manner. My goal is to help you understand a little more about the world around you and develop a sense of agency as you prepare yourself for high school and life beyond. I am *usually* available for help after school on Tuesdays - but please let me know in advance. Please do not hesitate to reach out by email if you have a problem. My email address is at the top of this syllabus.

If you need to email me, please do so professionally: [How to Write an Email to Your Teachers](#).

# SYLLABUS ASSIGNMENT:

## Directions:

1. Read this syllabus. A parent/guardian should do the same.
2. Read and sign the agreement below by typing your first and last name in the box. You may use a cursive or script font if you'd like. A parent/guardian also needs to type their first and last name.
3. Turn in this assignment on Google Classroom.

"Both my parent/guardian and I have read this course syllabus, understand it, and agree to adhere to its expectations. I will try to give my best effort in class this year, even when I get frustrated or when something is difficult for me. If I am struggling or confused I will ask for help, be patient, and put forth an equal share of the work required for my success as a student."

*\*Student Signature*

*Date*

--	--

*\*Parent/Guardian Signature*

*Date*

--	--

*\*Best Email Address to reach your Parent/Guardian:*

--

*\*Best Phone Number to reach your Parent/Guardian:*

--

*\*Parent/Guardian's Preferred Contact Method*

☐ Email

☐ Phone