

***BROCKTON HIGH SCHOOL  
SOCIAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT  
GUIDELINES AND POLICIES***

**I. Course Requirements for Students**

- A. Students must successfully complete a minimum of five semesters of Social Science between the freshman and senior years, to include:
1. Freshman World History II (full year)
  2. United States History I (1 semester)
  3. United States History II (full year)
  4. One Elective course (optional) (1 semester)
- B. Students must successfully complete Freshman World History II in order to enroll in United States History. Students must successfully complete all required coursework in order to enroll in any Elective course. Elective courses are reserved for seniors who have met all core Social Science requirements.

**II. Guidelines for Student Placement**

A. Level Changes

Students are placed into Social Science courses according to Brockton High School's Grade Achievement Policy. If a level change is necessary, the parent or teacher should initiate it through the guidance counselor. Students meeting grade achievement enabling them to move into the next academic level may only do so if there is room available in the course requested. The Department Chair makes final approval.

B. Recommendations for Scheduling

Keeping the Grade Achievement Policy in mind, teachers may consult with students, parents and guidance counselors as to the most appropriate placement for each student for the following year.

**III. Policy on Parental Objections to Teaching Materials**

Occasionally, objections are raised by students or their parents to specific materials assigned to a course. Individual objections may be handled through substitution, for the student involved, of alternative material which meets the same objective as the original. Broader objections are handled through the policy established by the School Committee to address such issues. Any complaints about materials should go through the teacher first. Follow-up with the Department Chair is encouraged.

**IV. Policy on Examination**

Students in the core Social Science courses will be given the opportunity to take a final exam. Students in Freshman Modern World History II and United States History I will take end of course exams. Students in the elective courses are required to complete an end of course assessment created by the

course instructor, with final approval by the Department Chair. The assessment can be, but is not limited to, a performance assessment or a traditional exam format.

Students taking United States History II, beginning with the 2008-2009 school year, will take the History / Social Science MCAS as their end of course assessment.

Each final exam will:

- Emphasize skills as outlined in the listed objectives of the course.
- Require students to write clearly, reflecting their ability to communicate through writing.
- Include content appropriate to the course.
- Count as 10% of the student's final grade in the course.

Teachers are responsible for teaching all of the objectives for each course and for evaluating students' performance in them. Each teacher will be able to identify the methods by which particular objectives not covered in a given exam have been taught and tested.

## **V. Policy on Research Assignments**

Teaching of research skills is an integral part of the Social Science curriculum and is addressed in some form in each course.

Because of teachers' reports of problems with plagiarism and of other departments' assignments of research papers, we are identifying the following steps as essential to a good final research product:

### **Writing Skills**

Forming thesis statements  
Note taking  
Paraphrasing  
Precis Writing  
Organizing materials from various sources  
Outlining

### **Research Skills**

Use of books, periodicals,  
CD-ROMS, online  
databases, and other sources  
In-text citations  
Works Cited  
Annotated Bibliography

When research papers or projects are assigned, equal emphasis should be placed on the content and the reinforcement of the skills involved in the research process. At the least, this means monitoring (and grading) the steps of (1) proposal writing, (2) note taking, (3) outlining, and (4) documenting sources. At the most it might mean practice activities in each of these areas prior to the final research assignment itself.

It is Social Science Department policy that:

1. Papers should be focused on a thesis statement answering questions posed on the topic area rather than a survey of materials in the field.
2. Assimilation of material from several different sources should be required.
3. A grade should reflect not only the finished product, but the entire process of note taking, outlining, and drafting as well.

4. Research assignments at the high school level should, for the most part not exceed five pages. The process of organizing materials from different sources in a short paper is more difficult than the writing of an open-ended work of ten or twenty pages. When the student is guided through the research process, his/her skills in each area of the process are reinforced, the result is an experience in critical thinking.

## **VI. Policy on Using Technology**

The Learning Strands of the Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework are based on a principle that students should become skilled readers, writers and thinkers through a variety of appropriate means. The Social Science Department Computer Lab helps to facilitate these goals. The lab, with 30 desktop computers, offers a technological setting for students to research material for their classes.

In addition, a STAR Board has been installed in the Computer Lab to help facilitate student learning through active demonstration.

## **VII. Guidelines for Taking Field Trips**

### **A. Out-of-school Field Trips**

School policy currently permits a limited number of out-of-school field trips. Budget restrictions require that all costs - travel and other fees - will be borne by the students. Teachers do their best to keep this factor in mind when planning such an activity.

Adequate supervision is important to the success of any field trip. Teachers plan for the appropriate number of chaperones for the activity.

Requirements for student conduct on the field trip are discussed in advance with the class; the same basic standards as those outlined in the Student Discipline Code apply.

### **B. In-school Field Trips**

Teachers are encouraged to arrange in-school field trips to other areas of the school, beyond their regular classroom, when such activities enhance the curriculum of the courses involved. A visit to the Fine Arts Area for viewing and critiquing student artwork is an example of an in-school field trip.