

TAMALPAIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Larkspur, California

COURSE OF STUDY

STREET LAW: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE U.S. LEGAL SYSTEM

1. INTRODUCTION

Street Law is a course designed to provide knowledge and problem-solving opportunities in practical law. It will cover areas in individual rights, or constitutional law, as well as business and consumer law. Student interest expressed in Social Studies classes, as well as student reaction to both on and off campus legal issues, has created the need for this course. We are confronted with issues that are raised daily, both in the classroom and through the media concerning rights and responsibilities of family members, rights and responsibilities of employers/employees in the workplace and rights of students at school.

II. OUTCOMES

- A. Through case studies and role plays, students will practice the procedures and content of various levels of judicial decision making from local to Supreme Court (municipal, traffic court, small claims, county superior, appellate court, state and U.S. Supreme).
1. Every student will assume roles in one or more mock trials (e.g. judge, defense attorney, bailiff, juror, defendant, prosecutor, special interest group representative, relatives of defendant, victim). Students will play different roles in different mock trials. They will perform all aspects of preparation for the trial relevant to the roles they play.
  2. Every student will be part of a team which will present at least one scenario from small claims court. Each student will prepare for and play at least one role.
- B. Using a real case, the student will generate a mini brief including the components: (facts, analysis, rule of law, findings) Then, after analyzing a given case using the mini brief, assume the role of an appropriate justice official to write an opinion.
- C. After analyzing a case provided by the teacher, students will defend their position both orally (such as informal debate) and in writing.
- D. Students will write an historical analysis of a contemporary controversial issue selected from a list provided by the teacher showing the impact of social forces, special interest groups, changing values and the political issue evolution of the

related law. Then they will formulate their own position and be prepared to present either their own view point or opposing view point in a group setting.

- E. After developing a decision or position on a legal situation, students will describe, in writing or orally, their reasoning process using principles of judicial decision making (e.g. balancing of rights).
- F. Students will prepare a portfolio of documentation and preparation needed to bring a case to various levels of the justice system (e.g. small claims to Supreme Court).
- G. Each student will select and investigate careers related to the legal system and develop a personal plan to prepare for one specific career of his/her choice.

### III. Means

#### A. Course Content

- 1. Introduction to Law
  - a. Constitutional
  - b. Civil
  - c. Criminal
- 2. Family Law
  - a. Husbands & Wives
    - 1. Marriage
    - 2. Divorce
    - 3. Financial Responsibilities
    - 4. Spouse Abuse
  - b. Parents & Children Responsibilities
    - 1. Child abuse and neglect
    - 2. Adoption
    - 3. Emancipation
    - 4. Custody & Support
  - c. Legal Rights of Single Parents
- 3. Consumer Law
  - a. Consumer Protection
    - 1. Federal, State, and Local Laws
    - 2. Deceptive Sales Practices
  - b. Contracts
    - 1. Minors
    - 2. Written and Oral
    - 3. Warranties

- 4. Credit
  - 5. Cars and the Consumer
4. Housing Law
    - a. Housing Discrimination
      1. Landlords/Tenants-Rights and Duties
      2. Small Claims Court
  5. Criminal Law
    - a. Crimes, Police, and the Arrest Process
    - b. Crimes against the person
    - c. Crimes against property
    - d. Substance Abuse
    - e. Defenses
  6. The Criminal Justice Process
    - a. Search and Seizure
    - b. Interrogation
    - c. Proceedings before Trial
    - d. The Trial
    - e. Sentencing
    - f. Juvenile Justice
  7. Torts
    - a. Taking your case to court - Who can be sued?
    - b. Resolving Tort cases out of court
    - c. Intentional Torts
    - d. Negligence
    - e. Strict Liability
  8. Individual Rights and Liberties
    - a. Freedom of Speech, the Press, of Religion, Association and Assembly
    - b. The Right to Bear Arms
    - c. The Right to Privacy
      1. Privacy in the Home
      2. Privacy at School
      3. Birth Control and Abortion
    - d. Due Process
      1. Discrimination  
Race, National Origin, Sex, Age
    - e. Rights and Responsibilities in the Workplace
- B. Skills
1. Critical Thinking Skills
    - a. Basic data-collecting

- b. Information processing
- c. Problem solving
- d. Producing results
- e. Thinking process assessment (Metacognition)

- 2. Social Participation
  - a. Group dynamics
  - b. Intra-group decision making
  - c. Inter-group action

- 3. Values and Valuing
  - a. Values Awareness
  - b. Values identification
  - c. Value analysis
  - d. Values Reasoning and Reflection

C. Suggested Materials

- 1. Text, STREET LAW
- 2. Assorted supplementary readings
- 3. Videos
- 4. Materials from Community Agencies- pamphlets, brochures, etc.

D. Major Activities and Learning Strategies

- 1. Role playing
- 2. Debates
- 3. Simulations-Hearings, Arrests, Interrogations, Search and Seizure scenarios, Jury Duty
- 4. Case Studies
- 5. Small group exercises
- 6. Speakers - Planned Parenthood, Rape Crisis Center, Children's Rights, Victims of Abuse, Divorce Lawyer, Family Court Counselor, Police Officer, Probation Officer, Defense/Prosecution Attorney, Paralegal, et al.
- 7. Investigations - Consumer Protection Agency, Consumer Fraud
- 8. Visual analysis activities
- 9. Visit local Jail or Prison
- 10. Tour Small Claims Court - Hold mock trial
- 11. Tour Court - Hold mock trial
- 12. Police Ride-Alongs

E. Expectations of Students, Means of Evaluation

Students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in the course outcomes listed in #II. above. Rubrics will be provided, in advance, so students clearly understand the level of proficiency expected.

- a. Participation in class discussions
- b. Written and oral assignments

- c. Reports on investigations, visits and tours
- d. Role playing, mock trials
- e. Quizzes and tests

#### IV. GENERAL INFORMATION

This course fulfills 5 units of elective credit for graduation.

Only Juniors and Seniors may take the class.

There are no special fees or materials required.

This course is accepted as part of the University of California's "g" requirement.