

# Syllabus

## Social Issues

### Course Overview

Social issues affect everyone—they are issues which revolve around governmental policy and enforcement of laws on the civilian population. These laws and policies can have any number of significant outcomes. They can protect minorities and women from discrimination, regulate drug use, give aid to the poor, provide guidelines for education, and much more. Social issues are often controversial and debated, so having the ability to form an educated opinion on them is an important part of your citizenship.

### Course Goals

By the end of this course, you will be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate an understanding of media, including its purpose and formats.
- Explain the roles of the three branches of the federal government.
- Discuss the importance of civil liberties and how they differ from civil rights.
- Summarize trends in the crime rate and explain various approaches to punishment.
- Describe the Supreme Court's historical interpretation of the right to bear arms.
- Define the terms *poverty*, *poverty threshold*, and *poverty rate*.
- Identify the source of the modern welfare system.
- Identify race as a social construction and explain theories of prejudice.
- List and explain six pieces of legislation that came with the civil rights movement.
- Explain the link between abolition and the women's movement.
- List three female activists who led the women's suffrage movement.
- Summarize the events of the gay rights movement.
- Explain the organizational structure of the American school system.
- Explain the impact of the Industrial Revolution and immigration on education.
- Identify two important court cases in establishing the legalization of abortion and the right to privacy.
- Explain the term *culture of life*.
- Identify two cases that contributed to the public's perception of euthanasia and the right to die.
- List key legislation on stem cell research, including the Human Cloning Prohibition Act of 2003.

## General Skills

To participate in this course, you should be able to do the following:

- Complete basic operations with word processing software, such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs.
- Perform online research using various search engines and library databases.
- Some course readings may require a visit to the school library or public library.

*For a complete list of general skills that are required for participation in online courses, refer to the Prerequisites section of the Plato Student Orientation document, found at the beginning of this course.*

## Credit Value

Social Issues is a 0.5-credit course.

## Course Materials

- Notebook
- Computer with Internet connection and speakers or headphones
- Microsoft Word or equivalent

## Course Pacing Guide

This course description and pacing guide is intended to help you keep on schedule with your work. Note that your course instructor may modify the schedule to meet the specific needs of your class.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 1	<b>Syllabus and Plato Student Orientation</b> <i>Review the Plato Student Orientation and Course Syllabus at the beginning of this course.</i>	Course Orientation

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
5 days: 2–6	<p><b>The Media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Define media and mass media.</i></li> <li>• <i>List media forms.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify the main purposes of media.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify key terms associated with the Internet.</i></li> <li>• <i>Demonstrate the role of the media in shaping societal norms.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the constitutional issues surrounding freedom of the press and freedom of speech.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify important court cases that deal with censorship and the media such as Schenck v. the United States (1919) and Brandenburg v. Ohio (1969).</i></li> <li>• <i>Recognize bias and slant in writing.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define how slant and bias relate to the media.</i></li> <li>• <i>Evaluate the differences between a national news source and a local news source.</i></li> <li>• <i>Evaluate the differences between a left-wing news source and a right-wing news source.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson
5 days: 7–11	<p><b>The Federal Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify the three branches of the federal government and summarize the roles of each.</i></li> <li>• <i>Describe the makeup of Congress.</i></li> <li>• <i>List the powers of the legislative branch.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the law-making process.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify the president, vice president, and key administration figures.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the organization of the executive branch, including the cabinet.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify the president's role in setting the public agenda with regard to social issues.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the organization of the federal court system.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define the role of the Supreme Court.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the breakdown of conservatives and liberals on the Supreme Court.</i></li> <li>• <i>Describe the histories of the Democratic and Republican parties, and describe where each stands on various social issues.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define and distinguish between interest groups and political parties.</i></li> <li>• <i>Write an opinion essay on an issue in the federal government.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
5 days: 12–16	<p><b>Civil Liberties</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize the basic philosophical foundations of civil liberties.</li> <li>• Define civil liberties.</li> <li>• Distinguish between civil liberties and civil rights.</li> <li>• Identify the ten articles in the Bill of Rights.</li> <li>• Identify and explain six incidents in American history when civil liberties were compromised, including the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, the Civil War, the Espionage Act of 1917, World War I, Japanese internment during World War II, and McCarthyism.</li> <li>• Explain the government’s rationale for limiting civil liberties during war, and cite a court case that supports this opinion.</li> <li>• Explain the rationale for not limiting civil liberties during war.</li> <li>• List one organization that works to protect civil liberties.</li> <li>• Summarize the main terms of the USA Patriot Act.</li> <li>• Write an opinion essay on civil liberties during war.</li> </ul>	Lesson
6 days: 17–22	<p><b>Crime and Drugs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define deviance and crime.</li> <li>• Identify the classification of crimes, including violent crimes, property crimes, and victimless crimes.</li> <li>• Identify and compare the Uniform Crime Reports and the National Criminal Victimization Survey.</li> <li>• Summarize trends in the crime rate.</li> <li>• Identify a possible reason for the decrease of crime rates in the early 1990s and the increase in 2005.</li> <li>• Identify the roots of crime in American society.</li> <li>• Explain four approaches to punishment: retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation, and societal protection.</li> <li>• Identify commonly used illegal drugs.</li> <li>• Summarize the history of United States’ anti-drug policies.</li> <li>• Explain three current debates relating to crime and drugs, including the death penalty, prevention vs. treatment, and medical marijuana.</li> <li>• Write an opinion essay on a current debate about crime, drugs, or both.</li> </ul>	Lesson

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
5 days: 23–27	<p><b>Gun Control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify which amendment guarantees the right to bear arms.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain how English tradition contributed to the right to bear arms.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the two ways of interpreting the Second Amendment.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify important court cases that contributed to the interpretation of the Second Amendment.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the Supreme Court’s historical interpretation of the Second Amendment.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify important pieces of gun control legislation.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify groups that lobby for gun control.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the history, purpose, and power of the National Rifle Association.</i></li> <li>• <i>Develop an argument in favor of or against stricter gun control legislation.</i></li> <li>• <i>Write an opinion essay on gun control.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson
5 days: 28–32	<p><b>Poverty in America</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Define poverty, poverty threshold, and poverty rate.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify causes and risk factors of poverty, including individual causes, structural causes, the “culture of poverty” perspective, and fatalism.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify risk factors associated with poverty in the United States.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define welfare.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the history of welfare programs in the United States.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify precursors to modern welfare.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the causes and consequences of the Great Depression and the New Deal.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify the source of the modern welfare system.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify key pieces of legislation designed to combat poverty since the New Deal.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the purpose of welfare reform.</i></li> <li>• <i>Compare and contrast TANF and AFDC.</i></li> <li>• <i>Develop an argument regarding the poverty line, welfare reform, or faith-based service providers.</i></li> <li>• <i>Write an opinion essay on poverty in America.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
6 days: 33–38	<p><b>Prejudice and Racism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify race as a social construction.</i></li> <li>• <i>Distinguish between race and ethnicity.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define race, ethnicity, minority, prejudice, stereotypes, and racism.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify and explain four theories of prejudice.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify and explain the relationship between prejudice and discrimination.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define pluralism, assimilation, segregation, and genocide.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define racial profiling.</i></li> <li>• <i>Give three examples of racial profiling.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the purpose and function of the End of Racial Profiling Act of 2004.</i></li> <li>• <i>Write an opinion essay on the End of Racial Profiling Act of 2004.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson
6 days: 39–44	<p><b>Women and Minorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify ways in which African Americans, women, and homosexuals have been discriminated against.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the laws and practices of Reconstruction and segregation.</i></li> <li>• <i>List the amendments that ended slavery and established African Americans as citizens.</i></li> <li>• <i>Give three examples of Jim Crow legislation.</i></li> <li>• <i>List and explain six pieces of legislation that came with the civil rights movement.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain American women’s social and legal status in the 18th and 19th centuries.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the link between abolition and the women’s movement.</i></li> <li>• <i>List three female activists who led the women’s suffrage movement.</i></li> <li>• <i>Compare the Declaration of Sentiments to the Declaration of Independence.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define the wage gap and pay inequity.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define homosexual and homophobia, and summarize the gay rights movement.</i></li> <li>• <i>Write an opinion essay on affirmative action, pay inequity, or gay marriage.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
5 days: 45–49	<p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify the Tenth Amendment as the foundation of public education in the United States.</i></li> <li>• <i>Recognize public education as a state responsibility.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the organizational structure of the American school system.</i></li> <li>• <i>Recognize and summarize different periods in the development of the American education system, including early America, early 20th century, and the 1950s through the 1990s.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the impact of the Industrial Revolution and immigration on the development of America’s public schools.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify the basic components of the school voucher program, including the pros and cons of the program.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify the main components of No Child Left Behind (2001), including arguments for and against its implementation.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the debate over teachers’ salaries.</i></li> <li>• <i>Write an opinion essay on one of three topics: school vouchers, No Child Left Behind, or teachers’ salaries.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson
1 day: 50	<b>Midterm</b>	Assessment
5 days: 51–55	<p><b>Abortion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Define abortion.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the history of abortion in the United States.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify how abortion is linked to birth control.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the achievements of Margaret Sanger, and recognize Sanger as an early abortion rights advocate.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify two important court cases in establishing the right to privacy and the legalization of abortion.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify the three types of abortion procedures, including medicine, vacuum aspiration, and intact dilation and extraction.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the Partial Birth Abortion Ban of 2003.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain why the Partial Birth Abortion Ban does not actually ban intact dilation and extraction.</i></li> <li>• <i>Write an opinion essay on the abortion debate.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
6 days: 56–61	<p><b>The Culture of Life</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explain the term “culture of life.”</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify stem cell research and euthanasia as two issues on the culture of life agenda.</i></li> <li>• <i>Distinguish between voluntary, involuntary, non-voluntary, passive, and active euthanasia.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify two cases that contributed to the public’s perception of euthanasia and the right to die.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the practice and methods of Dr. Jack Kevorkian.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize Oregon’s Death with Dignity Law.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define stem cells and stem cell research.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the history of the stem cell debate.</i></li> <li>• <i>List key legislation on stem cell research, including the Human Cloning Prohibition Act of 2003.</i></li> <li>• <i>Write an opinion essay on euthanasia or stem cell research.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson
6 days: 62–67	<p><b>Immigration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explain the terms “melting pot” and “nation of immigrants.”</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify the African American experience as forced immigration.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the history of immigration to the United States.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify two points of entry to the United States: Ellis Island and Angel Island.</i></li> <li>• <i>Define the term quota, and explain its importance in immigration legislation.</i></li> <li>• <i>Describe the waves of immigration in American history.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain how immigration policies have evolved since 1882.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize the results of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act.</i></li> <li>• <i>List the key components and effects of California’s Proposition 187.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize recent developments in the immigration debate, including the effects of September 11, 2001.</i></li> <li>• <i>Write an opinion essay on a key issue in immigration.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
6 days: 68–73	<b>Foreign Aid</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe at least three types of U.S. foreign aid.</li> <li>• Name four countries that receive aid from the U.S.</li> <li>• Identify the foreign policy objectives that U.S. foreign aid serves.</li> <li>• Compare U.S. foreign aid to foreign aid from other wealthy countries.</li> <li>• Evaluate two specific foreign aid projects in terms of benefits they give to the U.S.</li> <li>• Explain moral arguments for and against foreign aid.</li> <li>• Evaluate economic and political arguments for and against foreign aid.</li> <li>• Write an opinion essay on whether the U.S. should give more or less in foreign aid.</li> </ul>	Lesson
5 days: 74–78	<b>The Middle East</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and explain the main religions in the Middle East.</li> <li>• Explain the general relationship between the U.S. and the Middle East.</li> <li>• Identify the key players in the region.</li> <li>• Summarize current relations between the United States and Israel, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq.</li> <li>• Identify the major conflicts and policies between the U.S. and the Middle East.</li> <li>• List five situations in which the United States has supported a Middle Eastern country in a conflict.</li> <li>• List five countries that currently oppose a specific U.S. policy.</li> <li>• Write an opinion essay on the United States' political, economic, and social role in the Middle East.</li> </ul>	Lesson
5 days: 79–83	<b>Terrorism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define terrorism.</li> <li>• Distinguish between the different types of terrorism, including state terrorism, nationalist terrorism, state-sponsored terrorism, and religious terrorism.</li> <li>• Identify specific weapons of mass destruction.</li> <li>• Explain recent United States history with terrorism.</li> <li>• Summarize the American people's response to George W. Bush's Global War on Terror.</li> <li>• Summarize the Bush Doctrine, and explain preemption.</li> <li>• Write an opinion essay on the Bush Doctrine's policy of preemption.</li> </ul>	Lesson

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
5 days: 84–88	<b>The Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Define environmentalism and different types of pollution.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the United States' role in combating issues concerning the global environment.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain what factors cause climate change and why scientists are concerned.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize how human actions modify the physical environment.</i></li> <li>• <i>List the effects of pollution, and explain environmental laws.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain the importance of the Kyoto Protocol.</i></li> <li>• <i>Describe how humans influence the environment currently and in the past.</i></li> <li>• <i>Summarize environmental issues that have affected the world.</i></li> <li>• <i>Recognize how humans are placing the environment at risk.</i></li> <li>• <i>Write an opinion essay on a key environmental issue.</i></li> </ul>	Lesson
1 day: 89	<b>Semester Review</b>	
1 day: 90	<b>Final Exam</b>	Assessment