



September 2, 2020

Dear Parents of Vineyard Academy Students,

In my excitement of beginning the school year and preparing for a new way of interacting with students, I neglected to introduce myself. So let me start with some basic information: my name is Chris Mitts and I am the Social Science teacher in the Vineyard Academy. This is my 14th year of teaching (sixth year at WHS), and while I have taught a wide variety of classes during my career, I most enjoy helping students learn government and economics (the two subjects being addressed in Social Science this year).

One of the best things about teaching government and economics is that real-time world events get to be our curriculum, which means that students should be able to learn the basics of these subjects while also learning about what is occurring in our community, state, country, and the world. Instead of having students check out a government textbook, I extracted the information students would need from a textbook and converted it into my notes for the class. So students will see the notes on my weekly slides and hear me elaborate on the information via recorded lectures (while they will answer questions about the notes). This allows me to channel the students' reading to government websites, news sources, etc., enabling the students to be informed about current events and apply the lecture/academic notes to real-world events. (The application discussions will occur in our twice-weekly videoconferences.) My past experience of teaching government through current events has shown that students better understand and retain the content through this process and with increased engagement and interest. Additionally, some students that do not read as fast found it challenging to read both the textbook and current events, and I would prefer that they read news and reliable websites than give up after reading the textbook.

Student grades will be calculated on the quality of work completed in three categories: projects (35%), homework/classwork (35%), and tests/quizzes (30%). In fact, students have already begun their first project and I encourage you to ask your Vineyard student how they are doing with the Island Project. If you would like more information about the class, students have visibility of the syllabus and online behavior expectations in their Google Classroom so you can review these files on your student's site, or please contact me and I will send you a copy electronically.

Despite the challenges of this year (quarantine, an early fire, and social turbulence), I am excited to work with your students and I hope that their time in my class helps them understand government and economics in practical ways. Thank you for the opportunity. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me via email at cmitts@wusd.org.

Sincerely,
Chris Mitts
Social Science Teacher
Vineyard Academy, WHS