

CENTER FOR NEWS LITERACY NOTE TO USERS: Janis Schachter, who teaches News Literacy at Northport High School in Long Island, was kind to share with us the proposal she submitted to her district, which accepted the course. Since then, the course has also been accepted for full Stony Brook University credit, through Stony Brook's ACE (Advanced College Experience) program.

Janis Schachter
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Participation in Government and Economics Through News Literacy

Course of Study	Concepts in Participation in Government and Economics
<p>Unit 1: Introduction to News Literacy An introduction and overview of the course, highlighted by a multi-media show of coming attractions, including examples of timely print and broadcast stories that illustrate why news literacy matters to students – and society. We define “the news media,” and put the course in the context of the accelerating communications revolution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the Electoral Process: How do you become a more effective media consumer?
<p>Unit 2: The Power of Information We explore the universal need to receive and share information and the function news has played in every recorded society: to alert, to connect and to divert. We examine the role technology has played in amplifying information and how this also has enabled the sender to control the news. This leads to a broader discussion of how information is power and why there is a global battle for information control. Students will understand why there is a need for a free flow of information and will examine the role of corporations and government in the struggle for information control.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophical Foundations of Government, Citizenship • Participation in the Electoral Process • Public Policy and Political Participation. • How is the role of the corporation an integral part of American society?
<p>Unit 3: Know Your Neighborhood What makes journalism different from other kinds of information? The first rule for a smart news consumer is this: Always know what information “neighborhood” you’re in. Students will explore the differences between news, propaganda, publicity, advertising, entertainment and raw information, and will see how the lines between them have blurred. They will learn that in the journalism neighborhood, a news consumer should always find three key values: verification, independence and accountability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the Electoral Process
<p>Unit 4: The Mission of the Press: The First Amendment and the Fourth Estate We will look at the philosophical and practical underpinnings of a free press in America and the ongoing tension in a democracy between the press and the government. We examine the First Amendment and what freedom of the press really means, looking at</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophical Foundations/Citizenship • Participation in the Electoral Process • Legal Obligations • Public Policy and Political Participation

<p>landmark Supreme Court cases (<i>Near vs. Minnesota</i>, <i>Pentagon Papers</i> and others). We examine the role of the press in wartime, issues of censorship and press responsibility and the role of the press as a “watchdog.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Rights and Responsibilities
<p>Unit 4B: Covering Government and the Courts Students will explore news coverage of local, state, and national governments, including the courts, and the role, rights and responsibilities of the citizen/journalist. They will also look at politics – political parties, campaigns and elections – and explore how one becomes a more effective media consumer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophical Foundations/Citizenship • Participation in the Electoral Process • Legal Obligations, Public Policy and Political Participation, • Legal Rights and Responsibilities
<p>Unit 5: What is News and Who Decides We will look at news drivers, news values and how the news process works. What is the decision-making process that determines whether a story gets published or broadcast? Who decides? How do editors balance the interesting and the important? What is “news play,” or presentation, and why does it matter? What is proportionality? What is sensationalism? Are news decisions driven by the profit motive or social responsibility or some combination of the two?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Policy and Political Participation
<p>Unit 6: Opinion Unit 7: Fairness and Bias Unit 8: Truth and Verification Unit 9/10: Deconstructing the News What is the difference between news and opinion within the journalism neighborhood and why are the lines blurring so rapidly? How can you differentiate news from opinion in a newspaper, on television, on the Internet? What is a columnist? A commentator? Are bloggers journalists? How can a news consumer identify the difference? And why does it matter? Is the news media fair and balanced? What do those terms mean? How can a news consumer tell? What is bias? What is the “truth”? Students will “deconstruct” news stories to judge their credibility and reliability by asking a series of key questions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship • Participation in the Electoral Process
<p>Unit 10B: Thinking Like an Economist Against the backdrop of current economic stories, students will look at how news consumers should assess stories on business and economics, how statistics can be used and misused by journalists, and how a savvy news consumer can tell when the numbers in stories really add up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to think like an economist? • How do people and governments resolve the economic conflict of unlimited wants and limited resources? • What is the individual’s role in the global economy? • What challenges does the United States face from globalization? • Explain the economic concepts of supply and demand. • What are the types of business models? • How is the role of the corporation an integral part of the American society? • What are the specifics of personal finance? • Describe the basis of the national economy through an understanding of unemployment, inflation and taxation.

<p>Unit 10C: News You Can Use: Taxes, Budgets, and Personal Finance How well did the media cover the most recent economic downturn? What do citizens need to understand, and journalists need to explain, about mortgages, credit cards, and personal debt? What key factors influence the national economy? How do the rates of inflation, employment and taxation play a role? How well are these explained by the news media and what does a savvy news consumer need to watch for? In a look at business reporting, students will examine the role of the corporation in U.S. society, and how publicly owned corporations are covered in the media. What does an investor need to look for in the “news?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the individual’s role in the global economy? • What are the types of business models? • How is the role of the corporation an integral part of American society? • What are the specifics of personal finance? • How do students navigate the maze of credit cards, loans, interest and taxes? • Describe the basis of the national economy through an understanding of unemployment, inflation, and taxation.
<p>Unit 11: The Power of Images Unit 12: Deconstructing TV News Unit 13: News on the ‘Net Students apply the principles of deconstruction to TV news stories. They examine the special challenges and opportunities for news consumers navigating the net: the potential for unprecedented sources of information, but also the potential to be deceived, and they learn to evaluate news Web sites, online stories, blogs and sources to avoid deception and maximize the Internet’s advantages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation and the Electoral Process
<p>Unit 14: The Responsibilities of an Informed Citizenry What is the future of news? Who will report the news and who will pay for it? What are the influences on our government and our economic lives, and what role do we, as informed, news-literate citizens (consumers and publishers), play in it all?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophical Foundations, • Citizenship • Participation in the Electoral Process • Legal Obligations • Public Policy and Political Participation • Legal Rights and Responsibilities • What does it mean to think like an economist? • How do people and governments resolve the economic conflict of unlimited wants and limited resources? • What is the individual’s role in the global economy? • What challenges does the United States face from globalization? • Explain the economic concepts of supply and demand. • What are the types of business models? • How is the role of the corporation an integral part of the American society? • What are the specifics of personal finance? • Describe the basis of the national economy through an understanding of unemployment, inflation and taxation.