

Course Outlines

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Religion

Religion for this year centers on the Catechism of the Catholic Church. We begin by looking at the Creed, in depth, as the starting point to understanding our faith. We will focus on liturgy and the sacraments of the church, next, with special attention to Confirmation. Morality follows, and our year should end with understanding the importance and variety of prayer.

Please take note of the text they are provided, as it is different from what has been previously used. They will need to refer to it numerous times throughout the year for homework and tests, and would always be better served if you spend time helping them to understand the concepts in greater depth than what they may have gotten from classroom discussion.

There will be a handful of long term projects, both group and individual. Please make sure your son or daughter is not procrastinating, as rushing through these assignments can diminish the value.

In addition, the students will be expected to memorize a number of prayers that they will be expected to know throughout the entire year.

As adults of the church, I expect each 8th grader to participate in mass on more than one occasion. This may be through doing readings or as gift bearers. Expect that they may need help practicing a reading at home.

As a requirement, each 8th grader will need to lead a Rosary for our class at least once during the year. We say a rosary on a regular basis, and this seems to be a more connected and meaningful experience when the students have their own Rosaries with them. Please make sure, however, that they do not bring one of exceptional personal value to school.

Social Studies

8th grade U.S. history includes the time between the arrival of Europeans through the Civil War. Additionally, there is a government unit that we will spend time with following the American Revolution. For the duration of the year, the

students will have map work, essay assignments, and tests that may be a bit more challenging than what they are accustomed to.

Our year culminates with a trip to Washington D.C. in May. The students and a small number of staff members will take a bus to our Nation's Capital, for two nights. There, we will be touring a number of sights that are connected back to the curriculum, as well as to spots that make connections to the world history and government courses they have in their near futures.

Science

We will focus on two main units in physical science this year. The first, force and motion, is taught in a somewhat non-traditional way. I recently learned a "modeling" approach to teaching physics, which is considerably more hands-on and discussion oriented, involving the use of whiteboards and student theorizing. I have utilized this method, now, with tremendous feedback from the students, and am very encouraged by it's success.

Our second unit is chemistry, which can be challenging to 8th graders, and includes many complex concepts. As a result, Miss Gelonese and I spend ample time for the remainder of the year on teaching those concepts. Please remember, as I always remind the students, I am available to offer additional assistance at the end of most school days, and am more than happy to aid anyone, should they choose.

Health

Each month, the students receive a new issue of *Current Health* magazine. I find this resource to be valuable in its presentation and ability to connect to the students with information on issues that truly concern them. The magazine touches on all aspects of health, including physical and social, and makes them consider personal choices very carefully, with case studies and evidence presented at the junior high level. I do encourage parents to look at each monthly issue, and use it as a way to open dialogue with your child about these concerns you or they may have. The students have a homework assignment with each issue. We discuss some of the articles in class. And they can expect some assessments that they will certainly need to prepare for.

7th Grade Science

Grade 7 is the year for the Life Sciences.

Ecology, will incorporate lessons that can be applied at our environmental camp. These include species interactions, the water, carbon and nitrogen cycles, and environmental problems and solutions.

During the unit, the students will be expected to write a research paper on a symbiotic relationship. They will receive a handout that has specific questions that must be answered in the paper.

Cellular biology follows with an in-depth look at the structures and functions of cells. Simultaneously, students will learn from the science lab how to use microscopes and examine cells closely.

Microorganisms is the final unit, with particular attention to bacteria and viruses.

7th grade Social Studies

The curriculum is a study of geography and world cultures. We will start with a basic look at the five themes of geography, followed by an in-class group project that tends to be quite memorable to the students for years to come!

The remainder of the course will involve looking at the specifics of each continent, beginning with Asia, understanding history, physical geography, and the varied cultures of the people.

Throughout the year, the students will be expected to learn the locations of countries, landforms and waterways that they will then be tested on. In addition, political and economic systems will be compared and critiqued.

6th grade Social Studies

Ancient world history is the focus for this year. We begin with a look at how physical geography impacts the culture of a group of people, what constitutes a region, and a study of the geography of the first River Valley civilizations.

Units exploring specific ancient peoples follow including Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. At the end of the year, we will take some time to learn about the middle ages and feudalism.

Every other year, the 5th and 6th grade pair up for an opportunity to learn about business economics through the Junior Achievement BIZTOWN program. We spend approximately a quarter visiting various concepts in economics and running a business. It culminates in a very exciting day where the students run a “town” at the Junior Achievement building in Columbus. We will be asking for parent volunteers, so please consider helping if possible!