CLOSE UP
WASHINGTON DC

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY





HIGH SCHOOL COURSE REGISTRATION & COMPLETION INSTRUCTIONS
CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

This year, Close Up is offering graduate credit through Colorado State University to teachers who participate in Teacher Program. High school teachers can receive 2 credits if they participate in at least one component of Teacher Program each day and complete the required assignments. The cost of the courses is $65.00 per credit; $130.00 (2 credits).

REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Alert your Teacher Program Specialist of your interest in receiving graduate credit. For more information or questions, visit our website or contact Luke Stallings, Senior Director of Account Engagement, at lstallings@closeup.org or (703) 706-3486.
2. Attend daily Teacher Program elements and have your TPS sign your verification form.
3. You will receive a link to register at Colorado State University Online from Luke Stallings, lstallings@closeup.org. CSU Online Enrollment Services will process your registration and send confirmation within 24–72-hours. Your registration confirmation will have instructions on how to complete the process and make payment. If you do not receive a registration confirmation or have any questions, please contact Program Assistant, Sally Ketchum, and the CSU Online Enrollment Services team at csu_online_contract_courses@colostate.edu

GRADING

Grades will be submitted on a rolling basis November 8th, 2026 through July 10th, 2027.

COURSE SYLLABUS: CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY FOR HIGH SCHOOL

I. RATIONALE:

It is the mission of the Close Up Foundation to inform, inspire, and empower young people to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. One of the most basic responsibilities of a citizen is to register and vote in local and national elections. In the 2020 elections, however, only half of eligible young people between the ages of 18 and 29 turned out to vote and, in 2022, this dropped to 23%. Clearly, more needs to be done to encourage youth political participation. New research findings have proven that the practices Close Up employs are most effective in engaging young people in political life. This course is meant to encourage teachers to incorporate aspects of Close Up's methodology in their own classrooms and continue developing the democratic dispositions of their students beyond their week in Washington.

II. COURSE AIMS AND OUTCOMES:

Aims:
A large part of Close Up's methodology is focused on experiential learning. This includes students actively engaging with controversial issues, historical sites and interacting with experts and practitioners in order to shed light on enduring tensions in democratic government, as well as a better understanding of their historic connections.

Furthermore, "when parents encouraged their adolescent children to express opinions and disagreements, these young people had higher electoral engagement, political knowledge, and informed voting" (Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement).

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A large part of Close Up methodology is based on students actively engaging with controversial issues that shed light on the enduring tensions inherent in a democratic government. In this way, not only do students become familiar with the structure and processes of the American political system and its theoretical underpinnings, but they also develop a variety of citizenship skills, including: acquiring and interpreting information; communicating with fellow citizens (both listening and promoting one's interests); and making informed decisions about policy alternatives.

The specific aims of this course are to:

- Explain the civic benefits of teaching high school courses with controversial issues
- Explain the benefits and demonstrate the use of essential questions in framing units of study, particularly with regard to the Common Core
- Demonstrate the use of controversial issues in illuminating enduring conceptual questions inherent in democratic systems
- Demonstrate how historical events can provide context for current policy or political issues
- Consider how on-site experiences can enhance student understanding of history and government
- Explore various methods of experiential learning and consider how these modes aid student's understanding of historical events, long standing tensions, elements of citizenship and connections to current events

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of participating in this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the benefits of teaching with controversial issues, from a civic perspective
- Develop a social studies curriculum based on a series of essential questions, some of which illustrate the inherent tensions that exist in democratic societies
- Identify current controversial issues that relate to a unit's essential question
- Plan relevant experimental learning components and describe how they enhance a unit's objectives and outcomes
- Design group projects that assess issue-centered student learning

III. FORMAT AND PROCEDURES:

This course is only open to participants enrolled in the Close Up Foundation's Teacher Program. In order to enroll in the course and receive credit, students must participate in at least one component of the Washington-based Teacher Program, from Sunday evening through Thursday evening.

On Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, students must participate in at least one of the options available to Teacher Program participants.

This course will be taught unconventionally, with discussions taking place during bus transfers, at site visits, and even during meals. Students will be expected to be actively engaged in program components and to participate in group discussions

IV. INSTRUCTOR ASSUMPTIONS:

It is assumed that students who enroll in this course have had classroom experience and are teaching -- or recently have taught -- a high school social studies class. It is assumed that participants will have some background knowledge in educational theory, classroom management, and curriculum development.

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V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

A. Attendance and Participation – (60% of grade)
Participants must attend and participate in the Close Up Teacher Program in its entirety.

B. Assignments (40% of grade)
Students will use Essential Questions; Opening Doors to Student Understanding by Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins as the framework in answering the 1st question.

At a minimum the plan for using the sites should include:

1. Essential Question(s)
2. Exploration of history and a current controversial issue/ issues that relates to the essential question
3. A list of of texts and or media that provide diverse perspectives on controversial issue;
4. Anticipation of varied student reactions to the controversial issue and problems that might arise in addressing the issue
5. Plan for in-depth student inquiry leading to a culminating project
    - Specific resources for background information that you would have students read/view
    - Select specific models of discussion and/or debate and explain how you would use them
    - Describe a culminating project that students would complete that would best relate to the question/ issue.
    - Explain how the students will be assessed.
6. Techniques in assessing student projects and conversations. Please reference **The Political Classroom (Critical Social Thought) by Diana E. Hess**

Students can choose to answer Question 1 or 2:

Question #1 (4-5 pages)

Close Up's Program includes a mix of interactive workshop learning using onsite study. Having experienced how onsite visits to monuments, national parks, museums and government buildings can contribute to student understanding in history, government, civics and other social studies, identify three (3) sites in your local area that would be appropriate for students to visit.

Please explain and describe:

1) How each site is relevant to the curriculum;

2) How would you use the site to connect it to current issue discussions? What would be the specific issues and essential question?

3) What specific tasks and/or activities would you use to engage students at the site?

4) How would the overall lessons connect to the C3 Framework, or Educating for American Democracy Framework, or standards relevant where you work?

Question #2: (4-5 pages)

To answer this question, you must have observed students participating in the Close Up program, had conversations with them about the program, and read the student methodology at the memorials sections of the Close Up website (QR codes in the Teacher Guidebook).

Thinking about the times you observed students participating on the Close Up program, as well as the results of conversations you had with them about the program, explain:

1) How Close Up uses issue-centered education and methodology throughout its student program;

2) Using specific examples, how is using issue-centered methodology effective? Are there specific tactics to use that could make it more effective?

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3) What tools and strategies does Close Up use to connect students to their role as effective citizens? What are some effective ways to follow-up with this goal in the classroom?

4) Please reference **The Political Classroom (Critical Social Thought) by Diana E. Hess**

Question #3: For Close Up Staff Only (4-5 pages)

How has your experience working at Close Up shaped the way you think about political and social issues and politics? Specifically, how if at all, has it shifted the way you engaged with others when you talk about challenging issues.

C. Required Readings

The Teacher Guidebook is required along with one other, which is the student's choice.

Close Up Foundation. (2027*). Teacher Guidebook: Close Up Program* (Unpublished document). Close Up Foundation: Arlington, VA. *Given on program.*

Grant, S. G. and Lee, John K. and Swan, Kathy. (2018). *Inquiry Design Model.* National Council for the Social Studies and C3 Teachers

Hess, Diana and Journell, Wayne and Lo, Jane C. (2022). *Making Classroom Discussions Work: Methods for Quality Dialogue in the Social Studies (Research and Practice in Social Studies Series).* Teachers College Press

Hess, Diana and McAvoy, Paula. (2014). *The Political Classroom (Critical Social Thought)* New York, NY: Routledge.

National Council of the Social Studies. (2013). *Social Studies for the Next Generation: Purposes Practices, and Implications of the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*. Silver Spring, MD: Kathy Swan. *PDF will be provided.*

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MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSE REGISTRATION & COMPLETION INSTRUCTIONS
CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

This year, Close Up is offering graduate credit through Colorado State University to teachers who participate in Teacher Program. Middle school teachers can receive 1 credit if they participate in at least one component of Teacher Program each day and complete the required assignments. The cost of the courses is $65.00 per credit; $65.00 (1 credit).

REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Alert your Teacher Program Specialist of your interest in receiving graduate credit. For more information or questions, visit our website or contact Luke Stallings, Senior Director of Account Engagement, at lstallings@closeup.org or (703) 706-3486.
2. Attend daily Teacher Program elements and have your TPS sign your verification form.
3. You will receive a link to register at Colorado State University Online from Luke Stallings, lstallings@closeup.org. CSU Online Enrollment Services will process your registration and send confirmation within 24–72-hours. Your registration confirmation will have instructions on how to complete the process and make payment. If you do not receive a registration confirmation or have any questions, please contact Program Assistant, Sally Ketchum, and the CSU Online Enrollment Services team at csu_online_contract_courses@colostate.edu

GRADING

Grades will be submitted on a rolling basis November 8th, 2026 through July 10th, 2027.

COURSE SYLLABUS: CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

I. RATIONALE:

It is the mission of the Close Up Foundation to inform, inspire, and empower young people to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. One of the most basic responsibilities of a citizen is to register and vote in local and national elections. In the 2020 elections, however, only half of eligible young people between the ages of 18 and 29 turned out to vote and, in 2022, this dropped to 23%. Clearly, more needs to be done to encourage youth political participation. New research findings have proven that the practices Close Up employs are most effective in engaging young people in political life. This course is meant to encourage teachers to incorporate aspects of Close Up's methodology in their own classrooms and continue developing the democratic dispositions of their students beyond their week in Washington.

II. COURSE AIMS AND OUTCOMES:

Aims:

A large part of Close Up's methodology is focused on experiential learning. This includes students actively engaging with controversial issues, historical sites and interacting with experts and practitioners in order to shed light on enduring tensions in democratic government, as well as a better understanding of their historic connections.

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- Consider how on-site experiences can enhance student understanding of history and government
- Explore various methods of experiential learning and consider how these modes aid student's understanding of historical events, long standing tensions, elements of citizenship and connections to current events

Learning Outcomes:
As a result of participating in this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the benefits of teaching with controversial issues, from a civic perspective
- Develop a social studies curriculum based on a series of essential questions, some of which illustrate the inherent tensions that exist in democratic societies
- Identify current controversial issues that relate to a unit's essential question
- Plan relevant experimental learning components and describe how they enhance a unit's objectives and outcomes
- Design group projects that assess issue-centered student learning

III. FORMAT AND PROCEDURES:

This course is only open to participants enrolled in the Close Up Foundation's Teacher Program. In order to enroll in the course and receive credit, students must participate in at least one component of the Washington-based Teacher Program.

On Monday and Tuesday, students must participate in at least one of the options available to Teacher Program participants.

This course will be taught unconventionally, with discussions taking place during bus transfers, at site visits, and even during meals. Students will be expected to be actively engaged in program components and to participate in group discussions.

IV. INSTRUCTOR ASSUMPTIONS:

It is assumed that students who enroll in this course have had classroom experience and are teaching -- or recently have taught -- a social studies class. It is assumed that participants will have some background knowledge in educational theory, classroom management, and curriculum development.

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4) How would the overall lessons connect to the C3 Framework, or Educating for American Democracy Framework, or standards relevant where you work?

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